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APPENDIX 6 - PETER IN ROME?

AN EXAMINATION OF QUOTATIONS USED TO PROVE PETER'S PERSONAL PRESENCE IN ROME

"On the other hand, the chief value for historical study of these late texts, which now in increasing number assert that Peter was in Rome and became a martyr there, concerns only the history of dogma; they attest the development of the tradition. In theory the possibility cannot be excluded that perhaps here and there the basis of the tradition is a good earlier source which we no longer possess. Yet even if this is so, we must be fundamentally skeptical toward these later texts, when we see how in this very period the development of Christian legend flourishes and how it seeks to fill out the gaps in the New Testament narrative. Where, in addition, contradictions between these texts and the early sources appear, their trustworthiness must be challenged from the start. With this reserve, however, it is interesting to get acquainted with at least the earliest of these witnesses, those of the second and third centuries."

Oscar Cullmann, Peter — Disciple, Apostle, Martyr, trans. Floyd V. Filson (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1953), p. 115.

THE QUOTATIONS WITH COMMENT

Braces {} in the text of a quotation contain observations on the text, square brackets [] contain aids to understanding the translation

1. [Dionysius of Corinth](#)
2. [Irenaeus](#)
3. [Clement of Alexandria](#)
4. [Gaius \(Caius\) of Rome](#)
5. [Tertullian](#)
6. [The pseudo-Clementines](#)
7. [Eusebius of Caesarea](#)

The historical evidence that Peter was present in Rome resolves itself into a few short quotations from six, reliable, Early Church writers, which are capable of divergent interpretations, and more extensive material found in an expurgated version of a heretical tract dating from the first half of the third century AD. The six quotations, beginning in chronological order with the earliest, are examined in detail below, and the heretical tract summarized at the appropriate place in chronological sequence.

[1] DIONYSIUS BISHOP OF CORINTH c. AD 150-170 (apud Eusebius Hist. Ecc. II. xxv. 8, for the original Greek, click [here](#)):

"You** have thus by such an admonition*** bound together the planting of the Romans and Corinthians that came from Peter and Paul. For both of them indeed, having planted INTO**** our Corinth, likewise taught us. And likewise, having taught together INTO**** Italy,† they suffered martyrdom at the same time."

NOTES

* Eusebius introduces the quotation from Dionysius with the following assertion: "And that they [Peter and Paul] both suffered martyrdom at the same time is stated by Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, in his epistle to the Romans, in the following words"

** The First Church of Rome.

*** Dionysius is here referring to an ecclesiastical letter sent to him and the Church in Corinth over which he presided by Soter, Bishop of the First Church of Rome.

**** My emphasis. Greek *eis*, "into", "towards", not "in" in a simple locative sense.

† Note: Italy not Rome.

Dionysius is replying to a missive from Soter, bishop of the First Church of Rome, for which he expresses fulsome praise. In his reply, he dwells on the common, apostolic, roots of the Church in Corinth and the Church in Rome, mentioning that Peter "planted into" (Greek *phuteuô + eis*) "Corinth" and "directed teaching into" (lit. "taught into", Greek: *didaskô + eis*) Corinth and Italy (not into Rome itself). Dionysius uses the common New Testament and early ecclesiastical figure of "planting" to describe the original impartation of the Word of God (as though of a seed) in the hearts of its hearers, and the founding thereby of the local Church.

There are three things to say immediately about this passage. One is that the directing of teaching INTO a country or city, or "planting" a Church or the Gospel INTO a place, is a far different thing from preaching or teaching there *viva voce*, or being personally present there. In fact, Dionysius uses these expressions in elucidation of his earlier statement, literally translated, that a "planting of the Romans and the Corinthians came AWAY FROM [Gk. *phuteia genêtheisa apo*] Peter and Paul" - which clearly, or at least most naturally, represents a process going on at a remove.

The second point relates to the detail of the "planting of the Romans and Corinthians that came from Peter and Paul". As regards the precise meaning of this phrase, the possibilities are these:

- A. Peter and Paul planted (in Dionysius' sense) the Romans and Peter and Paul planted the Corinthians
- B. Peter planted the Romans and Peter and Paul planted the Corinthians
- C. Paul planted the Romans and Peter and Paul planted the Corinthians
- D. Peter and Paul planted the Romans and Peter planted the Corinthians
- E. Peter and Paul planted the Romans and Paul planted the Corinthians
- F. Peter planted the Romans and Paul planted the Corinthians
- G. Paul planted the Romans and Peter planted the Corinthians.

Dionysius proceeds to narrow down the choice to A, B, or C, by saying that Peter and Paul both planted into Corinth. The New Testament, however, discounts Paul's participation in the planting of the Roman Church (see below), so the choice is further narrowed down to B: Peter planted the Romans and Peter and Paul planted the Corinthians. Now, the proponent of the Peter in Rome theory might say, this proves Peter was in Rome, because here he is demonstrated to have planted the Roman Church. Of course, it proves no such thing, because the unique phraseology of Dionysius indicates a planting at a distance, a planting INTO (*eis*), or a planting that came AWAY FROM (*apo*) Peter and Paul.

Dionysius, in further explanation or elucidation of the phrase "planting of the Romans and Corinthians", provides us with another, pertinent, item of information. "Both Peter and Paul planted into our city of Corinth," he says, "and further, they both TAUGHT INTO our Corinth, and both the apostles TAUGHT INTO ... " - we would expect him to say: "both the apostles taught into Rome." Now, we know they did not both "plant into" Rome - only Peter "planted into" Rome - but both, surely "taught into" Rome, did they not? Paul was personally present in Rome for a considerable time and taught the Roman Christians by his epistles as well as by his *viva voce* preaching and teaching. And the proponents of the Peter in Rome theory, holding up Dionysius' statement that Peter "planted into" Rome as evidence that Peter was personally present there, would be

expecting this final "... and both the apostles taught into Rome". But what does Dionysius say? "... AND both the apostles taught into ITALY (!)" Now, he has been talking about Corinth and ROME up to now. Why change the subject to ITALY? This is such a pointed change of emphasis that only one conclusion can be drawn naturally from it: Dionysius believed at least ONE of the apostles DID NOT teach into Rome, but rather directed teaching into some other location in Italy. Now, everyone knows, and Dionysius knew, that Paul "taught into" Rome. The Acts of the Apostles and the New Testament Epistles prove that point. The most reasonable conclusion to be drawn, therefore, from Dionysius' remarkable change of emphasis IS THAT DIONYSIUS KNEW PETER DID NOT TEACH INTO ROME AT ALL, which is as much as to say, PETER NEVER WAS PERSONALLY PRESENT IN ROME. So, the earliest traditional proof offered of Peter's presence in Rome turns out to be strong, prima facie, evidence of exactly the opposite.

The deductions gleaned here from the fragment of Dionysius' epistle are confirmed by the few items of information bearing on this subject that can be extracted from other sources. It could not be said, on the strength of the contemporary, historical, evidence of Paul's Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles, that Paul ever was responsible for a "planting of the Romans"; he did not set up, directly or indirectly, a new fellowship there, as the Church in Rome was already fully established when Paul first communicated with it. In fact, Paul says that he was reluctant to visit Rome at first because he did not wish to build on another man's foundations (Romans 15. 21-22). Peter, on the other hand, does seem to have been responsible for such a "planting of the Romans", at least in the indirect sense that his preaching and his authority was what influenced and motivated the founders of the first Christian community in Rome. (For more on this, see below, [Secondary Quotations \[5\]](#).) The evidence outlined in the document, "[The First Church of Rome](#)", indicates that the earliest Church in the capital sprang up as a consequence of the ministry of Peter in Jerusalem immediately after Pentecost. One probable scenario envisions Jewish residents of Rome who had been pilgrims to the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem in AD 33, as mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2. 10), and who had been converted by the preaching of Peter, returning to Rome with their new-found faith. Alternatively, or, additionally, the missionaries Andronicus and Junia, mentioned in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, organized the earliest Messianic, or Jewish Christian, community in Rome, having been originally members of the apostolic circle in Jerusalem after Pentecost (Romans 16. 7), and, consequently, under the spiritual influence of Peter, who was the spokesman of the apostles in Jerusalem, and the leader of the Jewish mission.

On the other hand, both Peter and Paul could be counted as having "planted into" Corinth. Paul planted the Word originally in Corinth by the first viva voce preaching there, according to the Acts of the Apostles (18. 1-18) and his Epistles to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 4. 15, 9 passim, II Corinthians 10. 13-16), and also there was a group in Corinth who claimed Peter ("Cephas") as their chief doctrinal authority, and this group was schismatic, i.e. it formed at least a loose fellowship of its own (I Corinthians 1. 10-12, cf. 3. 1-15, 9. 7, where Paul uses the word "plant", i.e. found the church in Corinth, in this very context, 3. 22, 4. 14-15, 9. 1-12, and cf. 9. 11-12, where Paul uses the word "sow" of the Word preached to the Corinthians): Peter might be said to have "planted into" Corinth in the sense that he was responsible, to whatever degree, for the existence of this schismatic group. As regards Peter's directing teaching INTO ITALY, the New Testament confirms an indirect connection between Peter and Italy, for it was through Peter (and a vision that he had in Joppa) that the first Gentile was converted, and that was Cornelius, the Roman centurion of the "Italic Company", Acts 10. 1ff. The Cohors Italica, or Italian Cohort, is what is referred to here, which consisted of Italian volunteers, and which is known to have served in Syria (Gruter, Inscr. p. 434: Cohors militum Italicorum voluntaria, quae est in Syria). Any of these soldiers, who had been positively influenced by the testimony of Cornelius, or Cornelius himself, could have taken the Gospel message back home to Italy. Such incidental confirmations of Dionysius' account inspire our confidence in the passage that effectively denies Peter ever exercised a personal teaching ministry in Rome.

[2] IRENAEUS OF LYONS (1) c. AD 180, Adv. Haer. III. i. 1, apud Eusebius Hist. Ecc. V. viii. 2-4 (for the original Greek, click [here](#)):

"Matthew also produced amongst the Hebrews, in their own dialect, a written account of a Gospel of Peter and Paul, in Rome, whilst they* were [still] evangelizing and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure,** Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter; and Luke, for his part, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish the Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia."

NOTES

* Peter and Paul.

** Lit. "exodus", here, seemingly, a reflection of the use of the word by Peter himself in II Peter 1. 15, and in

Luke 9. 31.

The usual translation of this passage, based on the very early, but inaccurate and barbarous, Latin translation of *Adversus Haereses*, is that Matthew issued his Gospel "whilst Peter and Paul in Rome were evangelizing and founding the Church". However, a glance at the original Greek text of Irenaeus reveals a more probable interpretation of the text, reproduced above, viz. that Matthew issued "in Rome" a written account of the "Gospel of Peter and Paul", whilst they were still evangelizing and founding the Church, in contrast to the Gospel of Mark which was transmitted to posterity after their "departure" (i.e. death). Clearly, an altogether different thing! Tertullian refers tantalizingly to just such a gospel (see below, [Secondary Quotations 4](#)): "quibus [sc. Romanis] evangelium et Petrus et Paulus sanguine quoque suo signatum reliquerunt." "To whom [the Romans] Peter and Paul conjointly bequeathed a gospel even sealed with their own blood."

The faulty Latin translation is as follows: "Ita Mattheus in Hebraeis ipsorum lingua scripturam edidit Evangelii CUM PETRUS ET PAULUS ROMAE EVANGELIZARENT ET FUNDARENT ECCLESIAM {"whilst Peter and Paul in Rome were evangelizing and founding the Church"}. Post vero excessum Marcus discipulus et interpres Petri et ipse quae a Petro annuntiata erant per scripta nobis tradidit, et Lucas autem sectator Pauli quod ab illo praedicabatur Evangelium in libro condidit. Postea et Johannes discipulus Domini qui et supra pectus ejus recumbebat et ipse edidit Evangelium Ephesi Asiae commorans." Normally, the Latin is very literal, so much so that the underlying Greek, if it is no longer extant, can be reconstructed from it with tolerable certainty. In this case, the translator has allowed himself more freedom, but has botched the interpretation. A literal translation would have preserved the form of the original Greek better: Ita Mattheus in Hebraeis ipsorum lingua scripturam edidit Evangelii Petri et Pauli Romae evangelizantium et fundantium Ecclesiam [or, a little less literally, cum evangelizarent et fundarent Ecclesiam].

The external and internal evidence supports the corrected version. As for the external evidence: let us assume that the traditional interpretation is correct, that Matthew issued his Gospel "whilst Peter and Paul in Rome were evangelizing and founding the Church". Now, on the supposition that the phrase "in Rome", specifying the geographical location of the evangelizing, should be read as applying to both apostles, Peter and Paul, and not to the latter only (whose name, nevertheless, it immediately follows), then the passage presumes that Peter was at some time personally present in Rome. How likely is it that Irenaeus would introduce, in this rather oblique and obscure way, such an idea, unless he had traditional authority for doing so? Hardly anything at all is said about Matthew in the New Testament or early, ecclesiastical, tradition, except for what is said here, and in a few notes preserved by Eusebius, so it should not surprise us that Irenaeus simply records the anecdote about Matthew without further comment, but Peter is a different matter altogether. Peter's activity is well attested in the New Testament, and his story, as the chief spokesman of the apostles in Jerusalem and leader of the Jewish mission, would be of obvious interest to the Church worldwide. Is it likely that Peter could have visited the capital of the Roman Empire at roughly the same period as Paul and it have escaped the notice of every ecclesiastical historian and commentator between the New Testament writers themselves and Irenaeus? And if so, is it credible that Irenaeus would have inserted this priceless, historical, datum as a kind of aside to his anecdotal information about the production of the Gospels? If a tradition antedating Irenaeus could be proved to have existed which did attest Peter's presence in the capital, there might be some external grounds for accepting the usual interpretation; but no such tradition existed (only Dionysius conclusively predates Irenaeus). Therefore, Irenaeus' words must be interpreted in the light of the historical evidence of the New Testament, as it relates to the whereabouts of Peter and Paul. Irenaeus is well known to have had the greatest respect for the New Testament Scriptures, to which he deferred in preference to extrabiblical tradition, and the New Testament evidence unequivocally favours the corrected interpretation, or, at the minimum, the interpretation which restricts the geographical expression to Paul. Peter is not connected with Rome anywhere in the New Testament.

The internal evidence, too, favours the corrected interpretation. The corrected interpretation explains the otherwise pointless reference to Peter and Paul: what would Peter and Paul's evangelization of Gentile Rome have to do with the Gospel of Matthew which was specifically targeted at a Hebrew audience? On the traditional interpretation, no special reference is included to Jews in Rome. And why introduce the particular period of Peter and Paul's ministry as a marker, when no other connection is drawn, on the traditional interpretation, between these apostles and Matthew's Gospel? In the corrected interpretation, Matthew's Gospel is designated the Gospel of Peter and Paul, and the temporal and topical reference is introduced as an understandable expansion on that designation. Also Matthew's Gospel is specifically said to have been produced amongst the Hebrews in Rome.

Secondly, the corrected interpretation brings into proper relief the contrast between the time when Matthew's Gospel was published, that is, during the lifetime of Peter and Paul, and the time when Mark handed down his Gospel to posterity, that is, after their "exodus" (= martyrdom). This contrast is sharper in the corrected version, because, in that, it is the "Gospel of Peter and Paul" that Matthew produces in their lifetime, whilst Mark "also" hands down Peter's Gospel, but after the apostles' death. In the traditional interpretation the contrast is dulled, inasmuch as Matthew's Gospel is not there designated the "Gospel of Peter and Paul". Furthermore, in the corrected version, the Gospel of Peter and Paul published by Matthew in the

apostles' lifetime, is contrasted successively and appropriately with (1) the Gospel of Peter transmitted to posterity by Mark and (2) the Gospel of Paul written up by Luke, only after the apostles' death.

Thirdly, Peter and John were chief Apostles, and Paul had equivalent status, according to Paul himself (Gal. 2. 9, II Cor. 11. 5, 12. 1). Paul refers to Peter and John as foundational "pillars" (Gal. 2. 9). Matthew, whilst being one of the original Twelve, is not bracketed with these chief Apostles either in the New Testament or in later ecclesiastical literature. The reference in this tradition to the authoritative foundations of the Church Universal, as well as of Irenaeus in the context in which it appears to the Gospels themselves as the authoritative foundational pillar of the Church (see the fifth point below), suggests the emphasis here in each instance should be on the foundational Apostles as authorities behind the Gospels rather than on any lesser Apostle, such as Matthew. The omission of a superior Apostolic authority behind the Gospel of Matthew, on the traditional interpretation, makes it the only one of the four Gospels in this tradition which lacks an ascription to a particular chief Apostle. However, in the corrected version, Matthew is the Gospel of Peter and Paul, Mark is the Gospel of Peter, Luke the Gospel of Paul, and John, the Gospel of John himself.

Furthermore, fourthly, the publication or transmission of the other Gospels in this tradition is, in each case, described in terms of two elements: (1) the superior Apostolic authority behind the Gospel, and (2) the time of publication or transmission. Additionally, in the last case, John's Gospel, a third element is added (3) the city where the Gospel was published. So, Mark's Gospel was (1) based on Peter's message, and (2) handed down to posterity after the "exodus" of Peter and Paul; Luke's Gospel was (1) based on Paul's message, and (2) written up likewise after the "exodus" of Peter and Paul; John's Gospel was (1) based on the message of John himself, and (2) issued after the writing of Mark and Luke, during John's residence in Asia; finally - the additional element - (3) John's Gospel was published in the city of Ephesus. On the traditional interpretation, Matthew's Gospel would be the exception to the rule, as only one element (2) would be present (viz. relating to its publication during the supposed ministry of Peter and Paul in Rome). On the corrected interpretation, not only two, but actually three elements are present, as in the case of John's Gospel: (1) the chief Apostles whose message it was based on, viz. Peter and Paul, (2) the time it was published, viz. during the lifetime and foundational ministry of Peter and Paul, and (3) the city where it was published, viz. the city of Rome.

Fifthly, the Church referred to as being founded by Peter and Paul seems to be the Universal Church, not some local assembly in Rome, as would be required by the traditional interpretation (i.e. if we were to read: "whilst Peter and Paul in Rome were evangelizing and founding the Church"). In this passage relating to Matthew's Gospel, the foundation "of the Church" by the Apostles is mentioned, and then Irenaeus says Mark "did ALSO hand down TO US in writing what had been preached by Peter." I.e. "the Church" in the earlier phrase seems to be equivalent to the "us" in the following phrase, which means that the reference in the former instance is to the foundation of the Universal Church - the Body of Christ's followers worldwide - not to any local Church in Rome. Earlier in the same passage, also, and in the immediately succeeding section, Irenaeus uses the word "us" to denote the Christian recipients IN GENERAL of the doctrine of the Apostles, Adv. Haer. III. i. 1 ad init., 2 ad init., and he also refers to the Gospel transmitted to "us" by the Apostles, both in its spoken and written form, as being the FOUNDATIONAL ground and pillar of "our" faith (Adv. Haer. III. iii. 1 ad init.): "We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the GOSPEL {my emphasis} has come down to US {my emphasis}, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to US in the Scriptures, TO BE THE GROUND AND PILLAR OF OUR FAITH {my emphasis}." The context, accordingly, inclines one to interpret this phrase ("whilst they [Peter and Paul] were [still] evangelizing and laying the foundations of the Church") as a reference to the founding and evangelizing of the Universal Church, not specifically the Church in Rome, by the two principal Apostles, Peter mainly to the Hebrews, and Paul mainly to the Gentiles. Now, the Universal Church was founded in Jerusalem at Pentecost, before Peter had ever been out of Palestine, and, by Paul amongst the Gentiles, on his first missionary journey to Cyprus and Asia Minor, so it could not be said to have been founded in any sense by them at Rome.

Sixthly, though this is harder to prove, as the "feel" of a language is a subjective thing, the flow of the Greek favours the corrected version. The accents, whether tonal or accentual, in the phrase *graphên exÊnegken euaggEliou tou pEtrou kai tou pAulou* favour the connection of "Gospel" with "Peter and Paul" (the accute accent is represented in upper case): the word *euaggEliou* would be left hanging if it was not followed by a word or words connected with it, and there would be a disjunction in order to start the supposed new temporal phrase *tou pEtrou kai tou pAulou en rÔme euaggelizomEnôn kai themeliOuntôn tèn ekklêsIan*. This disjunction is made worse by the long build up to the word *euaggEliou*, (1) Matthew (2) amongst the Hebrews (3) in their own dialect (4) a written version (5) produced (6) OF A GOSPEL The last word needs further definition, as in the corrected version. My own experience reading the Greek for the first time was automatically to read *euaggeliou* in connection with *tou Petrou kai tou Paulou*.

Seventhly, if *euaggeliou* is detached from Peter and Paul, it means Matthew produced a written version (lit. a writing, *graphên*) of A GOSPEL, *euaggeliou*, not THE Gospel, as one would expect (and as the Greek reads in the case of the other Gospels: *ta ... kêrussomena* [Mark], *to ... euaggelion* [Luke], *to euaggelion* [John]). However, if Peter and Paul are attached

to *euaggeliou*, then the use of the indefinite is explained: it is actually a written account of A Gospel culled from both Peter and Paul. To have said THE Gospel of Peter and Paul would have put unwanted emphasis on the definite article, i.e. on the identity of the Gospel preached by Peter and Paul as written down in the Gospel, rather than on the source of the information, which is what was intended.

(There is an apparent contradiction between Clement of Alexandria [[see below](#)] and Irenaeus: Clement says the Gospel of Mark was composed during the lifetime of Peter, whereas Irenaeus says that the Gospel of Mark was handed down to posterity after the "exodus" [Gk. *exodos*, meaning here the martyrdom] of Peter and Paul. This is only an apparent contradiction, as it was the "handing down" of the Gospel that Irenaeus says occurred after the "exodus" of Peter, not the actual writing of it. Irenaeus' point is that the Church worldwide still had access to Peter's authentic teaching in the form of the Gospel of Mark, "handed down" to the Christians of succeeding generations, despite Peter's departure. In fact, Peter seems to have been martyred shortly after the writing of the Gospel of Mark. This follows, because Clement of Alexandria connects Mark with Rome in his traditional account of how the Gospel came to be written, and the only time Mark is known to have had contact with Rome was during the time of Paul's imprisonment in the early 60s, i.e. in the same decade, and in the same half of the decade, when Peter and Paul were martyred by Nero. Cp. II Timothy 4. 11, Colossians 4. 10, Philemon 24 and Clement of Alexandria on I Peter 5. 13.)

If it seems strange that Matthew should have been present in Rome at such an early period, prior to the composition of Mark's Gospel during Paul's imprisonment, and during Peter's public ministry, that is prior to c. AD 61-62, and there have composed the first Gospel narrative, without leaving a trace in the New Testament of his presence in these western regions or of his remarkable literary work, perhaps we should reevaluate a passage in one of Paul's epistles, which has long been held to refer to a different Gospel writer. The passage is II Corinthians 8. 16-24, particularly verse 18:

II Cor. 8. 16-24: "16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. 17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. 18 *And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;* 19 *And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind* [for the Greek, click [here](#)]: 20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: 21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. 22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you. 23 Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ. 24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf."

Since ancient times verse 18 has been taken to be a reference to the Gospel of Luke, and certainly Luke was one of Paul's "fellow-travellers" and was also the author of a Gospel. But if the phrase "praise in the gospel" is in fact an allusion to a written Gospel, this could not be Luke's, for, according to the traditions preserved by Irenaeus and Eusebius (and there is no reason to doubt them) Luke's Gospel was composed after Mark's, which in turn was composed during Paul's imprisonment c. AD 61-62. Here Paul refers to the existence of a Gospel long before his imprisonment, and one which was commended throughout all the churches. According to the traditions referred to, this could only be Matthew's Gospel. In that case, the passage provides evidence of the historical background of Matthew's visit to more westerly regions, viz. that he accompanied Paul for at least part of his last missionary journey with a commission from the churches of Judaea to attend upon the collection of donations from the Gentile churches meant for the poor brethren in Judaea. Who better for this job than Matthew the tax-collector? Certainly the Jewish brethren, especially those who questioned Paul's motives, would have thought Matthew an acceptable candidate: Luke's interests were too closely bound up with those of Paul himself for him to have been trusted by the anti-Pauline faction in Jerusalem. The statement that this Gospel was highly regarded in *all the churches*, which would include Gentile as well as Jewish churches, suggests further that it had already been translated into Greek. Now, Luke could have been responsible for such a *translation* of Matthew's Gospel, which would have been an obvious boon to Paul's missionary work, and would also have provided Luke with material for his own Gospel later, and in that sense the ancient tradition could be correct that saw in this verse a reference to the literary work of Luke.

An examination of Eusebius' traditions relating to Matthew's Gospel tends to confirm this conclusion. One passage is recorded as a *logos* (traditional account) in Hist. Ecc. III. xxiv. 6:

"For Matthew, having previously preached to Hebrews, as he was about to go to others, committed to writing in his native tongue the Gospel according to himself, and thus supplied through the written word the lack of his own presence to those from whom he was sent forth."

The Hebrews who were the recipients of Matthew's Gospel, according to this passage, do not seem to have had any other means of hearing an eyewitness account of the life story of Jesus except by the personal presence of Matthew. That could hardly be said of the Hebrews in the Jewish homeland, as they were well served in this regard by Peter, James the brother of the Lord, and many other eyewitnesses. It would, however, aptly describe the situation of believing Hebrews in Rome. Their distance from the homeland and their separation from other major centers of the Jewish Diaspora made their need of a written record of the Gospel more urgent. In fact, this passage replicates the sentiments expressed a little later by believers in Rome, according to a tradition recorded by Clement of Alexandria (see [Quotation \[3\]](#) below), when they induced Mark to put in writing for them the Gospel preached by Peter. As on this similar occasion in Mark's case, the Roman Hebrew Christians seem to have used the limited opportunity they were afforded, presumably whilst he was present in Rome for the Jewish charitable collection, to elicit from Matthew the priceless written account of the life story of Jesus. Note also that this passage refers to Matthew's immediate intention to go amongst the Gentiles ("others"), as he seems, in fact, to have done, according to this understanding of II Cor. 8. 18. The date of Matthew's visit to Rome would have been some time between AD 54 (the death of Claudius and the return of Jews to Rome) and AD 58 (the date of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which does not mention Matthew as present in Rome at that time).

Papias on Matthew's Gospel apud Eusebius Hist. Ecc. III. xxxix. 16:

"Matthew, however, made an orderly arrangement of the sayings [Gk. *logia*, viz. of Jesus] in the Hebrew dialect, then each interpreted [or, translated] them as he had the capacity to do so."

Here is a reference to translations of the Gospel of Matthew such as, it is suggested, are referred to in II Cor. 8. 18.

A tradition (*logos*) about Pantaenus of Alexandria apud Eusebius Hist. Ecc. V. x. 3:

"The tradition is that he [Pantaenus] found there [in India] that, among some of those there who had acquired a knowledge of Christ, the Gospel according to Matthew had preceded his coming; for Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them and had left them the written account of Matthew in Hebrew letters, which was preserved until the time mentioned [viz. the time of Pantaenus towards the end of the 2nd century AD]."

This passage confirms the inference drawn from II Cor. 8. 18 that the Gospel of Matthew had spread far and wide amongst the Jewish and Gentile churches in the early Apostolic age.

From Origen's Commentaries on the Gospel according to Matthew apud Eusebius Hist. Ecc. VI. xxv. 4:

"Having learnt by tradition concerning the four Gospels, which alone are unquestionable in the Church of God under heaven, that first was written that according to Matthew, who was once a tax-collector but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, who published it for those who from Judaism came to believe, composed in an orderly arrangement in Hebrew letters. Secondly, that according to Mark, who wrote it in accordance with Peter's instructions"

It is remarkable that in all these fragments of tradition the location of the composition is not stated to have been the Jewish homeland, but reference is made only to the nationality or earlier religion of the Jewish believers for whom the Gospel was composed, as would be expected if the Gospel was written amongst the Hebrew Christians at Rome.

Another passage of Irenaeus is held up as evidence of the founding of the Roman Church by Peter and Paul, but that is also based on a mistranslation:

IRENÆUS OF LYONS (2), Adv. Haer. III. iii. 2-3 (the original Greek is no longer extant for §2, only the early Latin translation; the Greek of §3 is found in Eusebius Hist. Ecc. V. vi. 1-3, for which click [here](#)):

"2. Quoniam valde longum est in hoc tali volumine omnium ecclesiarum enumerare successiones, maximæ et antiquissimæ et omnibus cognitæ a gloriosissimis duobus apostolis Petro et Paulo Romæ fundatæ et constitutæ ecclesiae eam quam habet ab apostolis traditionem et annunciatam hominibus fidem, per successiones Episcoporum pervenientem usque ad nos, indicantes, confundimus omnes eos, qui quoquomodo, vel per coecitatem et malam sententiam præterquam oportet colligunt. Ad hanc enim Ecclesiam, propter potentiorem

principalitatem, necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam, hoc est eos, qui sunt undique fideles; in qua semper ab his qui sunt undique, conservata est ea, quæ est ab apostolis traditio. 3. [The Greek is preserved from this point on, click [here](#).]

"Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings, by pointing for evidence to that tradition derived from the apostles of the Church founded and organized at Rome, [that] most great, and [that] most ancient [Church], and [that] which was approved to all by* the two most famous Apostles, Peter and Paul, as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For the whole Church is bound to agree with this Church,** on account of a more authentic*** primacy, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere. ****3. The blessed apostles,† then, having founded and built up the Church,†† committed into the hands of Linus the ministerial office of the episcopate. Of this Linus Paul makes mention in the Epistle to Timothy.††† To him succeeded Anencletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric, who had both been an eye-witness of the blessed apostles, and had conversed with them, and still had the message of the apostles ringing in his ears and their tradition before his eyes. And he was not the only one, for many were still living at that time who had received instruction from the apostles. In the time of this Clement no small dissension arose amongst the brethren in Corinth, and the Church in Rome despatched a most powerful letter†††† to the Corinthians, urging them to peace, and reinvigorating their faith and that tradition which it¶ had recently received from the apostles."

NOTES

* Lit. granted recognition to everyone from: omnibus cognitae a.

** Viz. the earliest Church of Rome which ALSO preserved the apostolic faith, that is, under the bishops Linus through Alexander, and, by implication, not any later, "unauthorized", fellowship there, even if it traced its "succession of bishops" back to that early, apostolic, church (see the following note).

*** (This note is strictly incidental to the present discussion, but relevant in other ways. To understand the historical context, the reader should refer to [The First Church of Rome HTML-Page 3](#).) "More authentic" for the following reasons. Literally or chronologically speaking, the First Church (at Santa Prassede) had the primacy, because it was the earliest church organized in the capital. However, it was not the earliest Church which was ALSO "approved to all by the two most famous Apostles Peter and Paul". The other Church in Rome (at Santa Pudenziana) was the earliest Church to be so accredited. The bishops Linus through Alexander served in that other Church: according to second-century tradition, its first bishop, Linus, had been an acquaintance of Paul (II Tim. 4. 21) and its third and most famous pastor, Clement, had been [ordained by Peter \(probably in Caesarea in Palestine\)](#) and had been a fellow-worker of Paul (Phil. 4. 3). Then Sixtus, originally ordained a bishop by the fifth pastor, Alexander, crossed over to the apostate First Church and became the first bishop there (as opposed to the heretical "fathers" Simon Magus and Cerdo it had been led by prior to this). Now, Irenaeus accepted that the Bishops of the First Church in Rome in his day could trace their line back, through the apostate Sixtus, to the early, truly apostolic, Bishops, Clement and Linus etc. of Santa Pudenziana. The First Church claimed "apostolic succession" through these early Bishops. For this reason also the First Church preserved amongst them the apostolic writings of Clement (the Letter to the Corinthians). Irenaeus turned this "apostolic succession" idea against the Gnostics of the First Church. He claimed that the literal or chronological primacy of the First Church was trumped by the "more authentic" primacy of the other Church. The latter possessed a true "primacy" of doctrine and life. Theirs was the authentic, original (or "primal"), faith of the Apostles Peter and Paul. Any church which did not have this "more authentic primacy" was an "unauthorized meeting". The truly apostolic primacy of those early Bishops of Rome could be proven by the doctrine preserved till Irenaeus' own day in the Letter of Clement, and by the fact that all the Catholic churches throughout the world agreed with that doctrine, and traced it back to the New Testament Apostles. The First Church was compelled to acknowledge this apostolic doctrine because it recognized the writings of Clement. By this argument, Irenaeus "put to confusion" the Gnostics who found a home in the First Church.

**** The original Greek is preserved from this point on.

† Irenaeus does not name these apostles, and does not use the same designation "most famous" as he does a little earlier (§2) when referring to Peter and Paul. A little later he uses the words "blessed apostles" and "apostles", seemingly, to refer to the apostles in general, whose teaching the next generation reverently preserved.

†† This could be the local Church in Rome or the Universal Church, though, on balance, the former is more probable.

††† II Timothy 4. 21.

†††† I.e. what is now known as I Clement.

¶ Seemingly the Church in Rome, though some have thought the Church in Corinth is what is referred to. Perhaps it should be translated "which he [viz. Clement] had received"

In the earlier part of this citation (§2), where the passage occurs which juxtaposes the names Peter, Paul and Rome, no Greek original is extant and we have only the poor Latin version to rely on, but even the Latin has been bungled by modern interpreters. The Latin of the phrase in question reads as follows: *maximae et antiquissimae et omnibus cognitae a gloriosissimis duobus apostolis Petro et Paulo Romae fundatae et constitutae ecclesiae eam quam habet ab apostolis traditionem*, lit. "the tradition which it [viz. the Church] has from the apostles, [namely that] Church [which is] the greatest and most ancient and has been accredited to all by the two most famous apostles, Peter and Paul, founded and constituted at Rome". In this passage, the juxtaposition of the words *Romae fundatae et constitutae ecclesiae*, "the Church founded and constituted at Rome" to the words *a gloriosissimis duobus apostolis Petro et Paulo*, "by the two most famous apostles, Peter and Paul", has led to the conclusion that Irenaeus is saying the Church in Rome was founded and constituted by Peter and Paul. Though this is a possible interpretation of the Latin, it is more natural to connect the phrase specifying the active agents, viz. *a gloriosissimis duobus apostolis*, with the preceding phrase, *omnibus cognitae*, i.e. "accredited to all by the two most famous apostles, Peter and Paul", as it follows that immediately, whereas, on the other interpretation, the phrase specifying the active agents is separated from the phrase to which it supposedly belongs (*fundatae et constitutae ecclesiae*) by the locative *Romae*. (The use of the past participle *cognitus* with the dative, comparable to *omnibus cognitae* here, meaning "known, acknowledged, approved to [one]", is attested in the [Perseus online Lewis-Short Latin Dictionary](#), s.v. *cognosco* III. B. 2.) Those who wish to hold doggedly to the less probable interpretation, in order to use this text as evidence of Peter's personal presence in the city, will have to prove further that Peter and Paul founded and constituted the Church in Rome by going to Rome themselves, for, as we have already seen, Dionysius of Corinth indicates by his particular phraseology that the founding (or "planting") and constituting (or "teaching") of a Church could be done at a distance. It is remarkable that Eusebius failed to preserve the original Greek of this passage, though he did cite what would be, on the Petrine theory, a less significant passage immediately following it, and was careful otherwise to cite any passage from Irenaeus (and other writers) which marked important milestones in the history of the early Church. His omission is incomprehensible if the passage in the original Greek did actually refer, or even could have been understood as referring, to a founding of the Church in Rome by Peter and Paul.

[3] CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (1) c. AD 200 (from *Adumbrationes*, a translation into Latin, ascribed to Cassiodorus, of Clement's biblical commentaries, written originally in Greek, this from the commentary on I Peter, 5. 13, "Marcus, my son, saluteth you"):

"Marcus, Petri sectator, praedicante Petro evangelium palam Romae coram quibusdam Caesareanis equitibus et multa Christi testimonia proferente, petitus ab eis, ut possent quae dicebantur memoriae commendare, scripsit ex his, quae a Petro dicta sunt, evangelium quod secundum Marcum vocitatur."

"Mark, the adherent of Peter, whilst Peter, by his preaching, was bringing the Gospel to public attention in Rome amongst certain noblemen* of Caesar's [household], along with many evidences of Christ's authenticity,** [Mark, I say,], being requested by them*** to provide a means whereby they could commit to memory what had been communicated verbally, wrote, based on what had been communicated verbally by Peter, the Gospel which is ascribed to Mark."

NOTES

* Latin: equites, lit. knights.

** Lit.: "Mark, the adherent of Peter, whilst Peter, [as he was] preaching, was bringing to public knowledge in Rome before certain noblemen of Caesar the gospel and many evidences of Christ" This translation reads both *euangelium* and *testimonia* as objects of the verb *proferente*, rather than *euangelium* as the object of

praedicante.
 *** Viz. the noblemen.

According to Clement of Alexandria (as quoted loosely by Eusebius of Caesarea [see below] and in the Latin translation ascribed to Cassiodorus [above]), the writing of Mark's Gospel came about in the following way: Mark wrote down his account of Peter's public preaching at the request of certain Roman noblemen who had heard in Rome testimonies of the great miracles performed in Peter's ministry. Peter himself was made aware of Mark's literary endeavour by a spiritual revelation (implying, if not demanding, Peter's absence from the scene of composition) and approved it.

The best representation of Clement's actual words is found in what is believed to be Cassiodorus' translation into Latin (above) of the original Greek work of Clement, which was a commentary on some of the New Testament Epistles (the so-called Catholic Epistles). This translation is called *Adumbrationes*. Some think it formed part of the larger work known as *Hypotyposesis*, which was Clement's commentary on the books of the whole Bible. The tradition recorded here in *Adumbrationes* is identical to the one Eusebius paraphrases from the *Hypotyposesis*, but in this case we have the advantage of possessing a direct translation of Clement's words into Latin rather than Eusebius' paraphrase.

The idea that this passage provides evidence of Peter's presence in Rome has arisen by the juxtaposition of the word translated "in Rome" (*Romae*) to the phrase about Peter's preaching. The Latin would indeed allow the kind of translation which is favoured by the majority of modern commentators: "... as he [Peter] was preaching publicly [*palam*] in Rome before [*coram*] certain noblemen of Caesar's household, and was providing many testimonies of the truth of Christ" On this, the modern, popular, interpretation, Peter is present in Rome preaching. However, the translation offered above is equally viable, from a linguistic point of view, and has other recommendations in its favour.

The preferred translation envisages a situation in which Peter's public preaching, attended by miraculous demonstrations of the Holy Spirit's power, has brought to the attention of certain noblemen in Rome the claims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On this interpretation, the emphasis is not on Peter's dealings with Rome, but on Mark's (we may presume, during the time of Peter's continuing, public, ministry, and of Paul's imprisonment, as hinted at in the New Testament, II Timothy 4. 11, Colossians 4. 10, Philemon 24). I.e. Mark, perhaps during a visit to Rome in the 60s, was requested by the Roman noblemen to write an account of Christ's ministry, based on the message he himself had heard from the lips of Peter. Understood like this, the passage implies Peter was absent from Rome. It accords with the historical evidence of the New Testament, connecting Mark with Rome at the time of Paul's imprisonment and during the public ministry of Peter, whereas the popular interpretation introduces the idea, unattested in the New Testament, that Peter was personally present in Rome.

This rather weighty, historical, consideration is one reason why the passage should be translated along the lines suggested here. Another is the context of the passage. The Latin being ambiguous, and the original Greek no longer extant, except as it can be reconstructed from the paraphrase of Eusebius, the context must be conclusive as to which interpretation best represents the original.

The wider context is preserved by Eusebius in his paraphrase of Clement's *Hypotyposesis* in the passage immediately following the reference to the composition of Mark's Gospel. This context makes plain that Peter required to be shown the whole of what had transpired between the noblemen and Mark BY A VISION OR SPIRITUAL REVELATION, and that, in turn, implies, if not demands, that he was absent from the scene of the original request put to Mark by the noblemen in Rome, and from the scene of Mark's subsequent writing activity, whether that was in Rome or not. The context is brought out in both the following paraphrases of the *Hypotyposesis* by Eusebius.

(2) A loose rendition of Clement's words is found in Eusebius *Hist. Ecc.* II. xiv. 5 - xv. 2 (for the Greek, click [here](#)):
 EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA PARAPHRASING CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (A): (The emphases in this translation, represented by CAPITALS, are my own) "{First Eusebius tells the story of Simon Magus and his arrival in and worship at Rome:} 14. [5] But this did not last long. [6] For immediately, during the reign of Claudius, the all-good and gracious Providence, which watches over all things, leads Peter, that strongest and greatest of the apostles, and the one who on account of his virtue was the speaker for all the others, against* Rome as against** some great destroyer of natural life. He it was who like a noble commander of God, clad in divine armor,*** [earlier] carried off the precious merchandise of the light of the understanding from the East to those who dwelt in the West,**** proclaiming the light itself, and the Word which brings salvation to souls, and preaching the kingdom of heaven. 15. [1] So, then, THROUGH THE VISIT OF THE DIVINE WORD TO THEM,† the power of Simon [Magus] was extinguished, and immediately was destroyed along with the man himself. And such a RAY OF GODLINESS shone forth on the minds of Peter's hearers,†† that they were not satisfied with the once hearing or with the unwritten teaching of the divine proclamation, but with all manner of entreaties importuned Mark, to whom the Gospel is ascribed, he being the companion of Peter, that he would leave in writing a record of the teaching which

had been delivered to them verbally; and did not let the man alone till they prevailed upon him; and so to them we owe the Scripture called the Gospel by Mark. [2] On learning what had been done THROUGH THE REVELATION OF THE SPIRIT, ††† it is said that the apostle [Peter] was delighted with the enthusiasm of the men, and sanctioned the composition for reading in the Churches. Clement gives the narrative in the sixth book of the Hypotyposeis, †††† and with him agrees the bishop of Hierapolis named Papias. And Mark is mentioned by Peter in his first epistle which THEY SAY he¶ put into an ordered form¶¶ in Rome itself, as is indicated by the latter himself, when he calls the city, by a figure, Babylon, as he does in the following words: "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son."

NOTES

* Gk. *epi*, with the accusative, "against" or "in opposition to" Rome, not "to" or even "toward" Rome, as is clear from the immediately following phrase. Almost identical wording is used in Hist. Ecc. VII. xxvii. 2, relating to the ecclesiastical opposition offered to Paul of Samosata the Bishop of Antioch: (for the Greek click [here](#)) "But the rest of the pastors of the churches, different ones from different places, AS THOUGH AGAINST A DESTROYER (Gk. *ὅς ἐπι λυμῶνα*, the same words as in the paraphrase of Clement) OF THE FLOCK OF CHRIST, gathered together in synods, every one of them IN OPPOSITION TO (*epi*) ANTIOCH, brooking no delay." This passage, too, has been understood as indicating a physical movement to Antioch, but the idea that all the bishops gathered physically to Antioch is inherently improbable, given the difficulty of movement in those days (second half of the third century AD), and rendered more unlikely by Eusebius' comment a little later on in the passage (VII. xxviii. 2) that the synods occurred "frequently on different occasions". The context of the words in this case is revealing. These synods were assembled to oppose Paul of Samosata who had adopted, as bishop of Antioch, the doctrine that the heretic Artemon (or Artemas) had originally propounded in Rome in the late second to early third century. (It was even alleged that this heresy of Artemon was, in some form or another, the doctrine espoused by ALL the leaders of the First Church of Rome from the time of the Apostles up to the days of Bishop Victor in the second half of the second century, Anonymous Treatise against the Heresy of Artemon, apud Eusebius, Hist. Ecc. V. xxviii. 3.) That, presumably, is why the city name in the case of Antioch is treated by Eusebius as if it was a personal enemy of the Catholics. It was the RECOGNIZED BISHOP of Antioch and the WHOLE CHURCH of Antioch under him that the Catholic bishops were opposed to, not simply a lone heretic or a single, heretical, congregation. The similar wording in Eusebius' paraphrase of Clement suggests a similar situation (Eusebius himself being aware of the connection between early Roman Artemonism and the doctrine of Paul of Samosata, Hist. Ecc. V. xxviii. 1): that Peter organized opposition in the Catholic Church to the whole of the First Church in Rome which had gone into Artemonizing heresy under the leadership of Simon Magus. The phraseology is Eusebius' way of pointing out the parallel between the Monarchian heresy of Paul of Samosata that was still a danger in his day and the ancient Gnostic heresy of Simon Magus.

** Gk. *epi*, with the accusative.

*** Note the similar, martial, imagery in Cyril of Jerusalem ([see below](#)), and Cyril describes Peter's contest with Simon as a SPIRITUAL battle conducted through the power of prayer, whilst in the Apostolic Constitutions ([see below](#)), the spiritual battle is prosecuted at a remove from the scene of Simon's activity.

**** Seemingly a reference to the conversion of Cornelius.

† Viz. to the Romans; not "through the visit of PETER to them", but through the visit of the WORD or message of Peter to them, suggesting indirect transmission of this Word to Rome, as in the Apostolic Constitutions.

†† A rather flowery and vague phrase, but again emphasizing the transmission of the message, not the personal presence, of Peter.

††† Implying, if not demanding, the absence of Peter from the scene of the action in Rome.

†††† Here Eusebius adds a few other items of information not derived from Clement, but of relevance because they relate to the same verse, I Peter 5. 13, that Clement is commenting on.

¶ Mark or Peter? Mark, apparently, as a reference is made in the next phrase to the "latter" [Gk. *touton*], meaning Peter, which implies this earlier unidentified "he" is the former, viz. Mark.

¶¶ Gk. *Suntaxai*, in this case, perhaps a reference to the translation of the epistle from Peter's Aramaic to Greek and the improvement of the syntax and literary structure.

A version of the same source drawn on by Eusebius or an alternative form of the text of Eusebius itself is preserved in a citation of Sophronius (fl. early 7th century AD) on the Life of Mark preserved in the 1550 Textus Receptus of Stephanus (p. 58), as an introduction to the Gospel of Mark. The wording of this excerpt is almost identical to that of the Latin translation of Cassiodorus, and seems to reproduce some of the original Greek of Clement (for the Greek click [here](#)):

Mark, a disciple and interpreter of Peter, since he had been a hearer of Peter's preaching, having been (so) requested in Rome by the brethren, put into a brief ordered form a Gospel. Peter, having prayed about this, approved it, and gave it forth with his authentication to be read out in the Church. So Clement wrote in the sixth book of the Hypotyposeis. Also Papias the bishop of Hierapolis preserves a record of this Mark, as does Peter in the First Epistle, designating Rome symbolically by the name Babylon. 'The Church which is in Babylon,' he says, 'along with the elect (lady), salutes you, as does Mark my son.'

In this citation the words "in Rome" are clearly associated with Mark, not Peter, no location is specified for Peter's "preaching," and the subject of the verb *suntassô* ("put into ordered form"), applied to the written Gospel, is Mark, not Peter, which tends to confirm the interpretation of the original of Clement suggested here.

(3) Another paraphrase of the same account of Clement is found in Eusebius (with my emphasis in capitals): Hist. Ecc. VI. xiv. 4-7 (for the Greek, click [here](#)): EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA PARAPHRASING CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (B): "Again, in the same books [Hypotyposeis] Clement has set down a tradition which he had received from the elders before him, in regard to the order of the Gospels, to the following effect. He says that the Gospels containing the genealogies were written first, and that the Gospel according to Mark received this formalization from Peter,* before witnesses in Rome, when he had [already] preached the Word and given forth the Gospel by the Spirit.** Those present [there], being numerous, entreated Mark, inasmuch as he had attended him from an early period, and remembered what had been said, to write down what had been spoken. On his composing the Gospel, he handed it to those who had made the request to him; WHICH COMING TO PETER'S KNOWLEDGE,*** he made no vigorous attempt either to hinder or encourage."

NOTES

* A stop is usually placed after "formalization" (*oikonomia*). In this translation, the stop - which has no ancient authority - is removed. Retaining the stop allows (though it does not necessitate) an interpretation which represents Peter as present in Rome, contrary to the implication of the last phrase in this citation. With the stop retained, the passage reads: " the Gospel according to Mark received this formalization: Peter having preached the Word to popular approval [or, less precisely, "publicly", Gk. *dêmosiai*] at Rome and by the Spirit proclaimed the Gospel, those present [there], being numerous etc. ..."

** A comparison with the earlier paraphrase in Eusebius, where the events in Rome are said to have been transmitted to Peter by a "revelation of the SPIRIT," suggests that in this paraphrase, too, Eusebius is reproducing the account of the indirect, SPIRITUAL, not physical, contact Peter had with Rome in the original work of Clement.

*** Again implying Peter's absence from the scene of action in Rome in the underlying tradition.

A citation from Theophylact, Archbishop of Bulgaria, in Stephanus' Textus Receptus 1550 (p. 58), confirms the visionary nature of Peter's involvement and the presence of Mark in Rome (not Peter) as a companion of Paul when he wrote the Gospel (for the Greek, click [here](#)):

The Gospel according to Mark was put together in Rome ten years after the Ascension of Christ. For this Mark was a disciple of Peter, and Peter calls him his 'son', evidently meaning his spiritual son. He was also called John., and nephew of Barnabas. He was, furthermore, a fellow-traveller with Paul - though he mostly used to accompany Peter - and accompanied (him) in Rome. Now the believers in Rome requested him not only to preach without writing, but also to compose for them in writing the polity according to Christ. And so, persuaded with difficulty by them, he put it down in writing. Then it was revealed to Peter from God that Mark had put a Gospel into writing. And thus, having seen it, and having confirmed it as the truth, he afterwards despatched him as bishop to Egypt.

This SPIRITUAL contact of Peter with events in Rome in Clement of Alexandria is reminiscent of an account in the Apostolic Constitutions of how Peter defeated Simon Magus in Rome. Peter is only specifically located at Caesarea in Palestine, in this passage of the Apostolic Constitutions, but by the Spirit (i.e. a vision) he is made aware of the false miracle of levitation that Simon Magus is at that very point in time performing in Rome, and, by the Spirit, Peter binds the demonic power working in Simon Magus and causes him to fall down to earth, thus ruining Simon Magus' reputation and his health. It is significant that Eusebius mentions Peter's routing of Simon Magus in the same context as the account which he paraphrases from Clement of Alexandria, and the account from Clement likewise implies the physical absence of Peter from Rome as well as his spiritual interest in events going on there. There seems, in other words, to be a connection between Clement's tradition and that incorporated in the Apostolic Constitutions. Here, precisely as in the Adumbrationes and Eusebius' paraphrase, Peter is WELL KNOWN and has PUBLIC APPROVAL in Rome, and is also physically absent from the scene of action in Rome.

(The account in the Apostolic Constitutions [perhaps third century AD] reads as follows [Book VI. viii]: ".... And Simon [Magus] meeting me Peter, first at *Caesarea Stratonis* {Caesarea is the only location in this account specifically represented as being frequented by Peter}, where the faithful Cornelius, a Gentile, believed on the Lord Jesus by me {the Roman centurion Cornelius, of the "Italic Company", was converted at Caesarea through a *vision* that appeared to Peter, Acts 10. 1 - 11. 18}, endeavored to pervert the word of God; there being with me the holy children, Zacchaeus, who was once a publican, and Barnabas; and Nicetas and Aquila, brethren of Clement the bishop and citizen of Rome {note the potential connection between Rome and Caesarea through these brethren}, who was the disciple of Paul, our fellow-apostle and fellow-helper in the Gospel. I thrice discoursed before them with him concerning the True Prophet, and concerning the monarchy of God {the

tradition preserved in a quasi-orthodox form here, relating to the disputation between Peter and Simon Magus on the True Prophet, was expanded in the early third century AD, by a heretical writer with Elkesaite leanings, into the pseudo-Clementine romance, see below, [Quotation \[6\]](#)}; and when I had overcome him by the power of the Lord, and had put him to silence, I drove him away into Italy {in this more orthodox tradition, there is a geographical separation between Peter, seemingly in Caesarea, and Simon, in Italy}. [ix] Now when he was in Rome {not "when he and I were in Rome"}, he mightily disturbed the Church, and subverted many, and brought them over to himself, and astonished the Gentiles with his skill in magic, insomuch that once, in the middle of the day, he went into their theater, and commanded the people that they should bring me also by force into the theater, and promised he would fly in the air; and when all the people were in suspense at this, *I prayed by myself* {Peter is absent from the Roman theater, in this tradition, but is in contact with the situation spiritually}. And indeed he was carried up into the air by demons, and did fly on high in the air, saying that he was returning into heaven, and that he would supply them with good things from thence. And the people making acclamations to him, as to a God, *I stretched out my hands to heaven, with my mind* {still Peter is *spiritually* apprised of the situation}, and besought God through the Lord Jesus to throw down this pestilent fellow, and to destroy the power of those demons that made use of the same for the seduction and perdition of men, to dash him against the ground, and bruise him, but not to kill him. And then, *fixing my eyes on Simon* {implying, in the light of the earlier statements about Peter's whereabouts, that Peter is here in a visionary state}, I said to him: "If I be a man of God, and a real apostle of Jesus Christ, and a teacher of piety, and not of deceit, as thou art, Simon, I command the wicked powers of the apostate from piety, by whom Simon the magician is carried, to let go their hold, that he may fall down headlong from his height, that he may be exposed to the laughter of those that have been seduced by him." When I had said these words, Simon was deprived of his powers, and fell down headlong with a great noise, and was violently dashed against the ground, and had his hip and ankle-bones broken; and the people cried out, saying, "There is one only God, whom Peter rightly preaches in truth." {In this tradition, as in the less dramatic account of Clement of Alexandria, the Romans have certainly *heard* of Peter and his message, and his preaching has PUBLIC APPROVAL, the approval of the assembled *dêmos*, or people, of Rome} And many left him; but some who were worthy of perdition continued in his wicked doctrine. And after this manner the most atheistical heresy of the Simonians was first established in Rome; and the devil wrought by the rest of the false apostles also."

Similarly in the apocryphal Vercelli Acts of Peter, which go back to a heretical, Docetic, source *c.* AD 200, Peter is shown what Simon is doing in Rome by a vision given to him in Jerusalem (*op. cit.* ch. v) "[V.] And as they [the few faithful Christians left in Rome after Simon had deceived the majority] prayed and fasted, God was already teaching Peter at Jerusalem of that which should come to pass. For whereas the twelve years which the Lord Christ had enjoined upon him were fulfilled, he showed him a vision after this manner, saying unto him: Peter, that Simon the sorcerer whom thou didst cast out of Judaea, convicting him, hath again come before thee (prevented thee) at Rome. And that shalt thou know shortly (or, and that thou mayest know in few words): for all that did believe in me hath Satan made to fall by his craft and working: whose Power Simon approveth himself to be." In these apocryphal Acts Peter then makes his way immediately to Rome.

Another account, clearly from a similar line of tradition, is summarized as follows by Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, VI. 14f.:

"14. The inventor of all heresy was Simon Magus: that Simon, who in the Acts of the Apostles thought to purchase with money the unsaleable grace of the Spirit, and heard the words, Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, and the rest: concerning whom also it is written, They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us. This man, after he had been cast out by the Apostles, came to Rome, and gaining over one Helena a harlot, was the first that dared with blasphemous mouth to say that it was himself who appeared on Mount Sinai as the Father, and afterwards appeared among the Jews, not in real flesh but in seeming, as Christ Jesus, and afterwards as the Holy Spirit whom Christ promised to send as the Paraclete. And he so deceived the City of Rome that Claudius set up his statue, and wrote beneath it, in the language of the Romans, "Simoni Deo Sancto," which being interpreted signifies, "To Simon the Holy God." 15. As the delusion was extending {as it was extending, not as it finally flourished in Rome}, Peter and Paul, a noble pair, chief rulers of the Church, arrived {i.e. where it was extending: Rome is not specifically mentioned here} and set the error right; and when the supposed God Simon wished to shew himself off, they straightway shewed him as a corpse. For Simon promised to rise aloft to heaven, and came riding in a demons' chariot on the air; but the servants of God fell on their knees, and having shewn that agreement of which Jesus spoke, that If two of you shall agree concerning anything that they shall ask, it shall be done unto them, they launched the weapon of their concord in prayer {here again it is very clearly a SPIRITUAL battle, and note the martial imagery as in [Eusebius, paraphrase \(A\)](#)} against Magus, and struck him down to the earth. And marvelous though it was, yet no marvel. For Peter was there, who carrieth the keys of heaven: and nothing wonderful, for Paul was there, who was caught up to the third heaven, and into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter {again the SPIRITUAL means of combat is emphasized}. These brought the supposed God down from the sky to earth, thence to be taken down to the regions below the earth. In this man first the serpent of wickedness appeared; but when one head had been cut off, the root of wickedness was found again with many heads.")

[4] **GAIUS (or CAIUS) OF ROME** c. AD 200 (apud Eusebius, Hist. Ecc. II. xxv. 7, for the Greek, click [here](#)):

"And I can show the trophies* of the apostles.** For if you choose to go to the Vatican or to the Ostian Way, you will find the trophies of those who founded this church .***"

NOTES

* Greek *tropaia* = memorials, or, more specifically, sepulchral memorials.

** He refers only to unnamed "apostles" as founders of the Church of Rome, as Irenaeus does ([§2 above](#), Adv. Haer. III. iii. 3); he does not mention Peter and Paul.

*** Viz. the First Church of Rome.

Gaius says that "trophies" of the apostles who founded the Roman church were located on the Vatican Hill and on the Ostian Way in Rome in Gaius' own day. This is anti-Montanist apologetic, therefore presumably Montanists were disputing the apostolic origin or authority of the First Church and Gaius was defending it against them.

Eusebius introduces this quotation with the following statement (ibid. II. xxv. 5-6): "It is, therefore, *found on enquiry* that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was impaled [or, crucified] under Nero {here he details the traditional time, but not the location, of Peter's martyrdom}. This information gains credit from *the designation "of Peter" and "of Paul" which has clung to the cemeteries of that place TO THE PRESENT DAY* (Gk. *kai pistoutai ge tēn 'istorian 'ê Petrou kai Paulou eis deuro kratēsasa epi tōn autothi koimētērion prosrēsis*), and no less from Gaius, a member of the Church, who arose under Zephyrinus, bishop of Rome, who, in a published disputation with Proclus, the leader of the Phrygian [or, Montanist] heresy, speaks as follows concerning *the places where the sacred corpses of the aforesaid apostles ARE laid* (Gk. *katatetheitai*)" Note the tense here. Eusebius says Gaius is referring to the places in Rome where the tombs of Peter and Paul stood IN EUSEBIUS' OWN DAY (c. AD 324). That may well be true, if, as seems most probable, the bodies of Peter and Paul were transferred to Rome in the middle of the third century AD (see further on this below); but Eusebius cites no evidence whatsoever that in Gaius' day (c. AD 200) there were tombs of Peter and Paul in those locations, only, as Gaius says, "trophies" of the UNNAMED "apostles who founded" the Church of Rome.

Eusebius' argument concerns the chronology, not the location, of the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul. He expressly quotes Gaius and Dionysius of Corinth to confirm the information that Paul was martyred under Nero - the location, Rome, in this case specified - and that Peter likewise was impaled or crucified under Nero - *no location specified in his case*. He points to the cemeteries in Rome which in his day were named after Peter and Paul and cites Gaius as a witness that these cemeteries marked the burial-places of the earliest, martyred, (and unidentified,) missionaries to the city. In the immediately preceding section (II. xxv. 4) he cites the testimony of Tertullian (a Greek rendering of Apol. 5) that this first assault on Christianity in Rome was the work of Nero. He proceeds in the immediately following section to cite Dionysius of Corinth [1] to the effect that Peter and Paul suffered contemporaneously. His reasoning is that the cemeteries in Rome on the Vatican and the Ostian Way mark the burial-grounds of the earliest Christians to be martyred in Rome during the reign of Nero and that the traditional designation "of Peter" (the Vatican site) and "of Paul" (the Ostian Way site) CONNECTS the martyrdoms of both Peter and Paul with that period of persecution. No more and no less can be read into Eusebius' words.

Returning now to the citation from Gaius. He refers to the memorials of some otherwise unidentified "apostles" who founded the First Church of Rome. One possibility is that these apostles included Andronicus and Junia, who, at the time when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans (c. AD 58), were in prison for the Faith, and may well have been martyred and buried in Rome thereafter. In that case, and later in the third century AD, the Bishop of Rome used the locations of these memorials to reinter the translated bodies of Peter and Paul - where they were when Eusebius wrote this account - as he now wished to promote the two latter as the real apostolic founders of the Roman Church.

The transfer of the Apostles' remains seems to have been a consequence of the Paschal controversy ([see the concluding paragraphs below](#)). It was, apparently, an attempt to provide an apostolic authority for Rome such as the Asians claimed for their churches, evidenced by the presence amongst them of apostolic tombs. Gaius' dispute with the Montanists, whose cult originated in Asia, had also to do with the rivalry between Asia and Rome. One group of Roman Montanists, the adherents of Blastus, even had the same Paschal practice as the Asian churches. Though Gaius' dispute was with a different sect of Montanists, viz. the followers of Proclus, these Montanists also seem to have argued that their Asian practices had an apostolic authority superior to that of Rome, since, like the orthodox Asian Christians, they pointed to the tombs of Philip the Evangelist and his prophetess daughters in Hierapolis as tokens of the antiquity of the Asian churches (Eusebius, Hist. Ecc.

III. xxxi. 4). They seem also to have pointed to the ABSENCE of such apostolic tombs in Rome, and Gaius rebutted their polemic by directing their attention to the sepulchral monuments on the Vatican and the Ostian Way, which he claimed commemorated the "apostles" who founded the Church of Rome. An argument along these lines, however, would have been fatally flawed: apostles like Andronicus and Junia, or the long forgotten founders of the Church in Rome who perished in Nero's holocaust in the Vatican gardens, could hardly be held to have had a doctrinal authority equal or superior to the likes of John and Philip. Hence, of course, the "need", so soon to be answered by the translation of the remains of Peter, for the presence of an apostolic tomb of greater weight.

[5] TERTULLIAN (1) c. AD 210, De Baptismo iv. 2-4:

"[2] ne quis ergo dicat, 'numquid ipsis enim aquis tinguimur quae tunc in primordio fuerunt?' non utique ipsis, si non ex ea parte ipsis qua genus quidem unum, species vero complures. quod autem generi attributum est etiam in species redundat. [3] ideoque nulla distinctio est mari quis an stagno, flumine an fonte, lacu an alveo diluatur, nec quicquam refert inter eos quos Ioannes in Iordane et quos Petrus in Tiberim* tinxit: nisi si et ille spado quem Philippus inter vias fortuita aqua tint plus salutis aut minus rettulit. [4] igitur omnes aquae de pristina originis praerogativa sacramentum sanctificationis consequuntur invocato deo. supervenit enim statim spiritus de caelis et aquis superest sanctificans eas de semetipso, et ita sanctificatae vim sanctificandi combibunt."

"Let no one say, "Why then, are we, pray, baptized with the very waters which then existed in the first beginning?" Not with those waters, of course, except in so far as the genus indeed is one, but the species very many. But what is an attribute to the genus reappears likewise in the species. And accordingly it makes no difference whether a man be washed in a sea or a pool, a stream or a fount, a lake or a trough; nor is there any distinction between those whom John baptized in the Jordan and those whom Peter baptized in Tiberias,** unless withal the eunuch whom Philip baptized in the midst of his journeys with chance water, derived [therefrom] more or less of salvation than others. All waters, therefore, in virtue of the pristine privilege of their origin, do, after invocation of God, attain the sacramental power of sanctification; for the Spirit immediately supervenes from the heavens, and rests over the waters, sanctifying them from Himself; and being thus sanctified, they imbibe at the same time the power of sanctifying."

NOTES

* The reading of the oldest witness, Codex Trecensis 523, saec. xij, etc., according to the modern editors; var.: Tiberi. The suggested reading is Tiberiada.

** Reading Tiberiada, "Tiberias", instead of the impossible Tiberim, "Tiber", which latter is held to support the notion that Peter was physically present in Rome.

According to the commonly accepted reading, Tertullian represents Peter as having baptized in the "Tiber", meaning the River Tiber which flows through Rome. Even if the text is read "Tiber", that is a different thing from saying that Peter baptized in Rome itself, because there were a number of cities located on the banks of the Tiber. However, the context of the phrase demands a different reading. Firstly, the other locations Tertullian refers to in the same passage are biblical, New Testament ones, so the Tiber would, to that extent, be out of place. Secondly, and conclusively, the location referred to in this instance COULD NOT BE A RIVER, but must be some other type of water source. This follows, because the statement in which it occurs is put forward by Tertullian as an elucidation or illustration of his argument that there is no essential difference between the various kinds of water source which might be used for baptism, whether river, fountain, lake or sea, or, as he goes on to say, that there is NO DIFFERENCE between (1) John's baptizing in the River Jordan and (2) Peter's baptizing in Tiberias (so we should read it), or (3) Philip's baptizing in a pond or some such chance water by the road. The reading in the second example could not be "Tiber", because the Tiber, like the preceding Jordan, is a RIVER, and it would be a non-sequitur. Tiberias makes perfect sense in the context, as it is an inland LAKE, Lake Tiberias, otherwise known as the Sea of Galilee. There is no difference, Tertullian is saying, between the RIVER that John baptized in and the LAKE that Peter baptized in, or between those and the CHANCE WATER by the roadside in which Philip baptized the eunuch (THREE DIFFERENT water sources). The Roman name Tiberias for this stretch of water occurs in the New Testament, as one of the places frequented by Peter. There is nothing, of course, in the New Testament connecting Peter with the Tiber.

The reading of the oldest witness to the text of Tertullian's De Baptismo, Codex Trecensis 523, saec. xij, as reproduced in modern editions, is "in Tiberim" ("into the Tiber"), which could easily have arisen from an original reading "in Tiberiada" ("into Tiberias"): in medieval manuscripts the cases were commonly represented simply by a stroke over the last

letter of a word, the appropriate vocalisation of the case being expected to be supplied by the reader, so that an original "in Tiberiada", as it would appear if written plene, would normally be written "in Tiberi". (I have not had the opportunity to examine Codex Trecensis 523, but it is possible that the case is actually represented in that MS by a stroke; if so, it would not be the first time that a faulty reading, and with it a theological misinterpretation, has arisen through the carelessness of modern editors.) Now, this same, abbreviated, scribal form could also be read plene as "in Tiberim", "into the Tiber". A poor copy with a faint stroke will further have produced the variant "in Tiberi", which also occurs. A medieval scribe could be forgiven for reading the abbreviated scribal form as the accusative of the common Latin name Tiber (Tiberim), rather than as the unusual and uncouth-sounding Greek accusative of the name Tiberias (Tiberiada), precisely, in part, because of the abundance of medieval myth connecting Peter with Rome.

Another passage in Tertullian is supposed to provide evidence of Peter's physical presence in Rome:

TERTULLIAN (2) Praescriptio Haereticorum xxxvi. 1 - xxxvii. 2:

xxxvi. [1] Age iam, qui uoles curiositatem melius exercere in negotio salutis tuae, percurre ecclesias apostolicas apud quas ipsae adhuc cathedrae apostolorum suis locis praesident, apud quas ipsae authenticae litterae eorum recitantur sonantes uocem et repraesentantes faciem uniuscuiusque. [2] Proxima est tibi Achaia, habes Corinthum. Si non longe es a Macedonia, habes Philippos; si potes in Asiam tendere, habes Ephesum; si autem Italiae adiaces, habes Romam unde nobis quoque auctoritas praesto est. [3] Ista quam felix ecclesia cui totam doctrinam apostoli cum sanguine suo profuderunt, ubi Petrus passioni dominicae adaequatur, ubi Paulus Ioannis exitu coronatur, ubi apostolus Ioannes posteaquam in oleum igneum demersus nihil passus est, in insulam relegatur; [4] uideamus quid didicerit, quid docuerit: cum Africanis quoque ecclesiis contesseratis, [5] unum Deum Dominum nouit, creatorem uniuersitatis, et Christum Iesum ex uirgine Maria filium Dei creatoris, et carnis resurrectionem, legem et prophetas cum euangelicis et apostolicis litteris miscet, et inde potat fidem; eam aqua signat, sancto spiritu uestit, eucharistia pascit, martyrium exhortatur et ita aduersus hanc institutionem neminem recipit. [6] Haec est institutio, non dico iam quae futuras haereses praenuntiabat sed de qua haereses prodierunt. Sed non sunt ex illa, ex quo factae sunt aduersus illam. [7] Etiam de oliuae nucleo mitis et optimae et necessariae asper oleaster oritur; etiam de papauere ficus gratissimae et suauissimae uentosa et uana caprificus exurgit. [8] Ita et haereses de nostro frutice, non nostro genere, ueritatis grano sed mendacio siluestres. xxxvii. [1] Si haec ita se habent, ut ueritas nobis adiudicetur, quicumque in ea regula incedimus quam ecclesiae ab apostolis, apostoli a Christo, Christus a Deo tradidit, constat ratio propositi nostri definientis non esse admittendos haereticos ad ineundam de scripturis prouocationem quos sine scripturis probamus ad scripturas non pertinere. [2] Si enim haeretici sunt, christiani esse non possunt, non a Christo habendo quod de sua electione sectati haereticorum nomine admittunt.

"(36) Come now, you who would indulge a better curiosity, if you would apply it to the business of your salvation, run over the apostolic churches, in which the very thrones of the apostles are still pre-eminent in their places, in which their own authentic writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severally. Achaia is very near you, (in which) you find Corinth. Since you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi; (and there too) you have the Thessalonians. Since you are able to cross to Asia, you get Ephesus. Since, moreover, you are close upon Italy, you have Rome, from which there comes even into our own hands [viz. at Carthage] the very authority (of apostles themselves). How blessed is THAT CHURCH FOR WHICH*† apostles poured forth the complete doctrine along with their blood, in that location where** Peter suffers a death like that of the Lord, in that location where** Paul is crowned with a departure [to higher realms identical to that] of John [the Baptist], in that location where** the Apostle John, after being immersed in burning oil and suffering no ill effects, is remitted to an island [exile]. Let us see what kind of teaching she will have received, and what doctrine she will have promulgated; in common league with the Churches of Africa, she recognizes One Lord God, the Creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus (born) of the Virgin Mary, the Son of God the Creator; and the Resurrection of the flesh; the law and the prophets she unites in one volume with the writings of evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks in her faith. This she seals with the water (of baptism), arrays with the Holy Ghost, feeds with the Eucharist, cheers with martyrdom, and against such a discipline thus (maintained) she admits no gainsayer. This is the discipline which I no longer say foretold that heresies should come, but from which they proceeded. However, they were not OF HER,† because they were opposed TO HER.† Even the rough wild-olive arises from the germ of THE FRUITFUL, RICH, AND GENUINE OLIVE;† also from the seed of the MELLOWEST AND SWEETEST FIG† there springs the empty and useless wild-fig. In the same way heresies, too, come from OUR PLANT,† although not of OUR† kind; (they come) from THE GRAIN OF TRUTH,† but, owing to their falsehood, they have only wild leaves to show. (37) Since this is the case, in order that the truth may be adjudged to belong to US,† "as many as walk according to the rule," which THE CHURCHES† have handed down from the

apostles, the apostles from Christ, and Christ from God, the reason of OUR† position is clear, when it determines that heretics ought not to be allowed to challenge an appeal to the Scriptures, since WE,† without the Scriptures, prove that they have nothing to do with the Scriptures. For as they are heretics, they cannot be true Christians, because it is not from Christ that they get that which they pursue of their own mere choice, and from the pursuit incur and admit the name of heretics."

NOTES

* Latin: Ista quam felix ecclesia cui

** Latin: ubi.

† My emphasis.

This quotation from Tertullian, which is supposed to demonstrate Peter's martyrdom in Rome, refers only to a general "that" [Latin: ista] Church, not specifically the Roman Church at all. The context proves Tertullian is talking about the Universal Church, or, rather, the Universal Church in its several local manifestations. The whole point of his enumeration of different apostolic churches at the beginning of the passage is to show that the Universal Church is a united witness to Truth, in contradistinction to the heretical sects. He happens to mention the Roman Church second but last in his enumeration; then he mentions the Carthaginian Church (nobis, "us", meaning Tertullian's own Church in Carthage), which is able to resort to Rome, at no great distance from Carthage, as a witness to apostolic truth. Then he says "How blessed is THAT CHURCH FOR WHICH [Ista quam felix ecclesia cui] apostles poured forth the complete doctrine along with their blood, in that location where [ubi] Peter suffers a death like that of the Lord, in that location where [ubi] Paul is crowned with a departure [to higher realms identical to that] of John [the Baptist], in that location where [ubi] the Apostle John, after being immersed in burning oil and suffering no ill effects, is remitted to an island [exile]. Let us see what kind of teaching she will have received, and what doctrine she will have promulgated; in common league with the Churches of Africa, she recognizes One Lord God ... etc." The Latin ista looks forward to the cui ("that ... for which"), rather than back to the Roman Church or some other Church Tertullian has already mentioned. Then also the repetition of the word ubi, emphasizes the idea that the same doctrine is to be found in the various apostolic churches WHERESOEVER located. Tertullian exhorts his readers to examine, with him, the kind of doctrine that Church "WILL HAVE" (pluperfect tense) received and promulgated, viz. in whatever location they might choose to look, rather than the kind of doctrine a single, specific, Church (e.g. Rome) actually HAS taught or DOES teach. The whole drift of Tertullian's argument is AGAINST the idea that a single Church in a single location (e.g. Rome) is to be accepted as the sole true witness to the Apostolic faith. Tertullian then proceeds to enumerate the points of doctrine which unite the UNIVERSAL CHURCH or the "Churches" (plural, xxxvii. 1, not any single Church), and which separate this True Universal Church, with which Tertullian himself identifies, from the heretical groups.

[6] THE PSEUDO-CLEMENTINES at earliest c. AD 200-250 - passim: Peter was personally present in Rome opposing Simon Magus: This is the First Church of Rome's own heretical, Elkesaite-like, tradition, dating from the earlier part of the third century AD, falsely ascribed to the orthodox and highly-respected Bishop Clement of Rome (late first century AD). These heretical writings do clearly represent Peter as being personally present in the capital. They emerged, strange to say, after the originator of the Elkesaite heresy himself arrived in Rome around the turn of the third century AD. Bishop Hippolytus, who was no friend of the corrupt bishops of the First Church of Rome, represents this man as being, even before his arrival in the city, when he lived far away in the Near East, aware of the minutiae of ecclesiastical business in the First Church of Rome, and as having constructed his system as a further development of the heretical system of the Roman bishop Callistus (Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies, 9. 8). This implies he and they operated in the same heretical circles. The myth of Peter's presence in Rome can be traced back to the same, highly dubious, source.

[7] EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA c. AD 324, Hist. Ecc. III. i. 1-3 (for the Greek, click [here](#)):

"[1] Meanwhile the holy apostles and disciples of our Savior were dispersed throughout the world. Parthia, according to TRADITION,* was allotted to Thomas as his field of labor, Scythia to Andrew, and Asia to John, who, after he had lived some time there, died at Ephesus. [2] Peter APPEARS** to have preached in Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Asia to the Jews of the dispersion; this latter who also ended up in Rome,*** was impaled down on his head,**** he himself having requested that he should suffer in this way.

[3] What DO WE NEED TO SAY CONCERNING PAUL,† who preached the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and afterwards suffered martyrdom in Rome under Nero? THESE FACTS ARE RELATED BY ORIGEN† in the third volume of his Commentary on Genesis."

NOTES

* Source (a) (refer to the argument below) with my emphasis.

** Source (b) with my emphasis.

*** Source (c). The Greek reads *'os kai epi telei en 'Romēi genomenos*.

**** Greek: *aneskolopisthē kata kephalēs*.

† Source (d) with my emphasis.

Eusebius here records that Peter "ended up" in Rome. One point should be clarified straightaway. This passage about Peter is usually cited as a quotation from or paraphrase of Origen, on the basis of the wording of the lines following it. This ascription is not supported by the contextual evidence. Eusebius immediately follows his reference to Peter with a remark of his own, "What do WE NEED TO SAY concerning Paul etc.", and then goes on to explain his diffidence by citing Origen as an already existing authority, viz. for the martyrdom of Paul in Rome under Nero. In other words, Eusebius did not need to say anything about Paul's martyrdom because that had already been dealt with by Origen. So, Origen was talking about Paul, not Peter. (In this case, too, the original text, the text of Origen, has "gone missing".)

The point about this false ascription to Origen is important, because if the statement had been derived from Origen, and it clearly referred to Peter's personal presence in Rome, it would be much more significant than if it were, as it seems to be, an unauthenticated assertion of Eusebius himself. Eusebius lived at a time when the pseudo-Clementine tradition had been current for a half century - he glances at it himself, with a sceptical eye, in Hist. Ecc. III. xxxviii - and the tomb of Peter on the Vatican, confirming popular confidence in that tradition, was, by the time Eusebius wrote, a well-known landmark in the city. The historical significance of a report about Peter's personal presence in Rome, deriving from the milieu of Eusebius himself, would be minimal.

First, then, (a) Eusebius cites a TRADITION mentioning the dispersal of the Apostles to far-off destinations, next (b) comes Eusebius' SURMISE ("Peter APPEARS to have preached ..." etc.) respecting Peter's missionary labours in Asia, which seems to be based on the locations Peter addresses in I Peter 1. 1, then (c) Eusebius asserts, WITHOUT QUOTING ANY AUTHORITY FOR IT, that Peter, who "also ended up in Rome", was impaled or crucified, as he himself had requested, and finally (d) comes the PASSAGE DERIVED FROM ORIGEN regarding the martyrdom of Paul in Rome, to which he gives automatic credit.

It is Eusebius' invariable custom elsewhere in the Ecclesiastical History to qualify his statements about the connection of Peter and Rome with some such phrase as "they say ...", or by the citation of a respected, traditional, authority. This can be confirmed by an examination of the quotations above from the Ecclesiastical History. In one other case, he does not cite a provably early, ecclesiastical, authority, but refers to a story current in his own day that Philo, the Alexandrian philosopher, had some kind of contact with Peter's circle at Rome in the days of Claudius (II. xvii. 1): "There is also a tradition that he [Philo] at Rome in the reign of Claudius came into the circle of Peter's acquaintance [Gk. *eis 'omilian elthein Petrōi*], since he [Peter] was preaching at that period to some people who [made their way] thither." (For the Greek, click [here](#).) It is highly unlikely that a personal meeting between the two Jews, as well as Peter's public preaching (*kêruttonti*), could have transpired in Rome at the very time when Claudius had banned all religious or other assembling of Jews in the city, or, alternatively (if the latter part of his reign is what is referred to), at the time when he had expelled all Jews from Rome. Therefore, the contact (*'omilia*), if the story (*logos*) is true in any sense, must have been remote, or, as it says, through the circle of Peter's followers in Rome, who had heard his preaching in Caesarea and subsequently travelled to the capital.

The statement about Peter in the passage under consideration here in Quotation [7] is unusual inasmuch as it is presented by Eusebius as an unauthenticated assertion, resting on no authority, named or unnamed. Also, it uses an ambiguous word to describe Peter's presence in Rome, viz. *genomenos*, the past participle of *gi(g)nomai*. If Eusebius had wanted to say that Peter "came to Rome", he could have said it much clearer than this, using the normal Greek words, *erkhomai*, *aphikneomai*, etc., or *paraginomai*, rather than using *gi(g)nomai*. *Genomenos*, in combination with the preceding words *epi telei*, could mean "having been present at the end", or it could mean something like "having ended up". Now, to say that Peter "ended up" in Rome is not the same as saying that Peter came to Rome in his lifetime. It could just as well mean that Peter's remains "ended up" ENTOMBED in Rome, that Rome was, in that sense, Peter's final resting place. Almost certainly that is the meaning Eusebius intended in this passage. It accords with his account earlier in the Ecclesiastical History (II. xxv. 5, see under Quotation [4] above) of how Paul was martyred in Rome, the location of that event being specifically named by Eusebius, and of how Peter was likewise martyred in the reign of Nero, no location in Peter's case being specified by Eusebius, whilst

he refers to the fact that both Peter and Paul lay entombed in Rome at the time he was writing. So likewise in this passage, Eusebius cites Origen as his authority for the martyrdom of Paul in Rome (the location specified) under Nero, and Peter's martyrdom is described, without a location being named, whilst Peter is said "also" to have "ended up" in Rome, i.e., on the interpretation suggested here, entombed in Rome. Again in Hist. Ecc. III. xxxi. 1 Eusebius refers to the era and mode of Peter's martyrdom and to the location of his burial in Rome in Eusebius' own day, but says nothing of the location of his martyrdom.

A rather odd expression is used to define the circumstances or manner of Peter's martyrdom. Peter is said to have been crucified *kata kephalês*. *Kata* is a preposition used to describe motion in a downward, slanting direction, and *kephalê* is the word for head, apex, pinnacle, consummation etc. These two words are not the proper way to say that Peter was crucified "upside down", though many modern translators elect to translate them that way. More probable translations are that the Apostle was impaled "down upon (or, into) the head", or, alternatively, "down upon the apex [of the stake]" (crucifixion could be either by impaling or by suspension on a simple stake or by suspension on a stake with cross-beam), or, on the analogy of I Corinthians 11. 4 and LXX Esther 6. 12, "with covered, or bowed and covered, head" (not "head-downwards"!).

Now Eusebius, contrary to his invariable custom, cites no traditional authority for this assertion, yet speaks of it as though it were a well-known fact. He also comments that Peter had "himself requested that he should suffer in this way" - again as though it were a well-known fact. The failure to cite an authority, named or unnamed, for these assertions is explicable if there was actually nothing new in them that needed substantiation. For the first assertion, this would be the case if Eusebius was relying on his earlier reference to the impalement or crucifixion of Peter in Hist. Ecc. II. xxv. 5; there he says that Peter and Paul "are learned by enquiry" (*istorountai*) to have suffered under Nero, Peter by impalement or crucifixion (*anaskolopizô*, as in this passage). As regards the idea that Peter requested to suffer like his Master by crucifixion, the scriptural references to Peter's martyrdom available to Eusebius include material interpretable in that sense. These references are found in the Gospel of John. John 21. 18f.: "Verily, verily, I [Jesus] say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, *thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.* And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me." Also John 13. 36f.: "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? {In Latin this reads, Quo vadis? - whence the Quo vadis legend.} Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but *thou shalt follow me afterwards.* Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." Eusebius' comment that Peter had "himself requested that he should suffer in this way" is explicable from the same passages of the New Testament, because Peter said "Why cannot I follow thee [Christ] now? I will lay down my life for thy sake."

If Eusebius was relying only on these proof-texts and on the tradition he refers to in Hist. Ecc. II. xxv. 5 for his account of Peter's martyrdom, as seems most likely, in view of his failure to cite any other authority, then the phrase *kata kephalês*, which introduces an extra-biblical detail about the mode of his martyrdom, must have been derived from the same, earlier-mentioned, tradition. Perhaps Eusebius was reluctant to identify the source of this tradition because it was of a dubious character. Evidence has been cited [elsewhere](#) that Peter perished in Jerusalem in the persecution initiated against James the brother of the Lord in AD 62, but was reburied at Rome in the middle of the third century. Elements of this historical context (e.g. the names of Albinus and Agrippa) were preserved like [literary fossils](#) in the apocryphal *Acts of Peter* and *Acts of Peter and Paul*, which latter some believe to have been the work of the Marcellus who became Pope a short time before Eusebius wrote his Ecclesiastical History. Possibly an early form of the *Acts of Peter and Paul* was the source of Eusebius' tradition, as in its extant form it refers to the mode of Peter's crucifixion "upside down" and magnifies the importance of the apostolic tombs in Rome, and Eusebius likewise here mentions both the burial of Peter in Rome and the unusual form of Peter's martyrdom ("the latter [Peter] WHO ALSO ENDED UP {i.e., according to the interpretation preferred here, buried} IN ROME, was impaled down through the head"). It is an interesting fact that the death of James at the hands of a Jewish mob in Jerusalem in AD 62, as recorded by Hegesippus (apud Eusebius, Hist. Ecc. II. xxiii. 17-18), was *by means of a wooden stake brought down upon his head*. The Greek word here is *xulon* = *wooden stake*, lit. *tree*, and it is used in the New Testament as a word for the *cross*, or *execution stake*, upon which Christ perished, Acts 5. 30, 13. 29, Gal. 3. 13, I Pet. 2. 24. Furthermore, the phrase used by Hegesippus to describe the downward motion upon the head is precisely *kata kephalês*. (For the Greek, click [here](#).) The passage reads as follows: "So they went up and threw down the just man [from the Temple wall], and said to each other, 'Let us stone James the Just.' And they began to stone him, for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned and knelt down and said, 'I entreat thee, Lord God our Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And while they were thus stoning him one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of the Rechabites, who are mentioned by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out, saying, 'Cease, what do ye? The just one prayeth for you. And one of them, who was a fuller, took the wooden stake [*xulon*] with which he beat out clothes and struck the just man down on the head [*kata kephalês*]. And thus he suffered martyrdom. And they buried him on the spot, by the temple, and his monument still remains by the temple. He became a true witness, both to Jews and Greeks, that Jesus is the Christ." (The same incident is referred to more briefly by Clement, in the sixth book of his Hypotyposesis, apud Eusebius Hist. Ecc. II. i. 5; Clement too uses the word *xulon*.)

Hegesippus records that this method of murder was resorted to even whilst the stoning was in progress. Since the companions of James were stoned along with James in AD 62, according to Josephus (Ant. XX. ix. 1), and since, on this reconstruction, Peter was included amongst these companions (James, not Peter, was bishop of the Jerusalem church, and was therefore alone mentioned by name by Josephus), what is more probable than that Peter perished the same way? Eusebius himself believed it was so.

CONCLUSION

These are the lynchpins which the advocates of the "Peter in Rome" theory rely on to prove their case, a case, they assure us, which is accepted as proven by the greatest historical authorities. DO THESE QUOTATIONS, THEN, IN ANY WAY PROVE THAT PETER WAS PERSONALLY PRESENT AT ANY TIME IN ROME? The first point to make is that none of these quotations are from a source contemporary with the event itself, viz. Peter's ministry in the middle of the first century AD. The earliest (Dionysius) dates from about one hundred years later! Therefore, they DO NOT CONSTITUTE ANYTHING APPROACHING HISTORICAL PROOF by the normal canons of historical evidence. This fact alone DEMOLISHES THE CASE OF THE ADVOCATES OF THE "PETER IN ROME" THEORY. These quotations represent, at best, a TRADITION, and a late tradition, at that. Furthermore, of these, [1] names Italy, and pointedly excludes Rome, as the recipient of teaching from the Apostle Peter, the effect of which is to make it less credible that Peter ever was personally present in the capital; [2] relies on two ambiguous expressions in Greek and Latin respectively, which the context in both cases and other internal evidence suggest do not represent Peter as being present in Rome, and which must, in the end, be interpreted in the light of the historical evidence of the New Testament: this, likewise, does not support the notion that Peter was personally present in Rome; [3] in its fragmentary state, and in the most natural understanding of the words (with the qualification that all this is transmitted through secondhand authorities) represents Peter as absent from Rome; [4] does not mention Peter at all (!); [5] in one case mentions Tiberias in Galilee, not Rome, and even if the contextually impossible reading "Tiber" is accepted, the Tiber is not the same thing as Rome - there were a number of other cities on the banks of the Tiber; in the other case, an ambiguous Latin expression is explained by the context as referring to the Universal Church, in its several manifestations in different locations throughout the world, not the local Church in Rome; [6] can be dismissed, as it forms the major theme of a heretical, and provably unhistorical, romance, written almost 200 years after the event (though it does show what heretical groups in Rome at the beginning of the third century were saying then about Peter's presence in the imperial capital); and [7] is an unauthenticated assertion of Eusebius which only tells us that Peter "ended up in Rome": in view of its late date, well after the dispersal of the pseudo-Clementine tradition and the reburial of Peter in Rome, this is of practically no historical significance if it refers to a physical presence of Peter in Rome during his lifetime, and is actually, much more probably, a reference to Peter's final entombment in Rome in the third century AD. This, in brief, is the tissue of heretical myth and misinterpreted, overburdened, orthodox, tradition upon which the vast superstructure of the Roman Petrine primacy has been built.

The earliest tradition handed down by sub-Apostolic elders and preserved in fragments, e.g. by Clement of Alexandria, the Apostolic Constitutions, Hippolytus, Tertullian ([see below](#)), etc., seems to locate Peter in Caesarea at the time of the events which form the background to his dealings with Rome. In Caesarea, according to this tradition, Peter came into contact with Clement and Aquila, both originating from Rome (and perhaps soldiers in the Cohors Italica?). In Caesarea also he disputed with Simon Magus on the subject of the True Prophet. Simon Magus thereafter journeyed to Rome. Peter ordained Clement to a ministerial work in his native city of Rome and Clement returned home. The Gospel spread in the noble Roman households to which Clement and Aquila belonged, viz. the household of Flavius Clemens, the later consul of that name, and the household of the Acilii and of Priscilla, the aristocratic mother of the senator Pudens. Two factions developed in the Roman Christian community, one centred on Simon Magus and the other around Clement and the like-minded brethren of the household of Priscilla. The populace of Rome was drawn into this factional dispute by the public acclaim courted by Simon Magus. This culminated in a display of magic power by Simon in a theatre at Rome. Simon attempted to prove his divine status, and his superiority to the Apostle Peter revered by the opposite faction, by levitating himself in public. Peter meanwhile, still resident in the East, was apprised of this situation by the Holy Spirit, and saw the whole thing played out in a vision. He bound the demonic powers which operated in Simon and thus caused him to fall unceremoniously down to earth. The Roman audience proclaimed the doctrine of Peter, preached by the faction of Clement and Aquila, to be superior to the magic of Simon Magus. Members of the believing Roman families requested Mark, Peter's attendant, to write down the Gospel preached by Peter, which Mark did, shortly before Peter's martyrdom. This was what is now known as the Gospel of Mark. These events, too, were made known to Peter, still resident in the East, by spiritual revelation, and he approved of what Mark had done. This seems to be the tradition as it was current up to around AD 200. Peter was closely associated with

Rome, but that association was SPIRITUAL and secondary, through his acquaintance with Roman missionaries and believing brethren.

The First Church of Rome began to emphasize the personal presence of Peter in Rome about the first half of the third century. The heretical pseudo-Clementine traditions reflect this phase. Soon there developed a full-scale cult at his tomb, once Peter's remains had been transported, seemingly (see the next paragraph) from their original location in Jerusalem, to the Vatican, with a temporary removal to the Platonica at San Sebastian, and the idea began to circulate that he had been martyred in the imperial capital under Nero. It is likely that this cult sprang out of the quite recent and very heated controversy over the timing of the Passover or Easter fast which occurred at the end of the second century AD, because apostolic tombs and their locations played an important part in the Passover dispute. At that time the bishop of the First Church of Rome was in conflict with the eastern churches of Asia under Polycrates, who held to the Jewish celebration of the Passover practised by the Apostle John. Now, the Asian churches pointed to the tombs of the apostolic founders of their churches as evidence of the strength of the apostolic presence and the vitality of the apostolic tradition in their area, e.g. John's tomb at Ephesus in Asia and Philip's at Hierapolis. This argument seems to have weighed heavy on the bishop of Rome. To be sure, the Roman bishop claimed Peter - rightly or wrongly - as the apostolic authority for elements of his Passover practice, but he HAD NOTHING TO SAY ABOUT ANY TOMB OF PETER IN ROME, WHICH IS REMARKABLE IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES. If there had been a tomb of Peter in Rome at the time of the Passover dispute (c. AD 170-190), we can be absolutely certain that the bishop of the First Church would have used it as an argument against the easterners and their vaunted tombs.

However, this defect was soon remedied. It was no more than a single generation later that the First Church of Rome claimed they had amongst them an apostolic tomb, in addition to that of Paul, to counter the claims of the easterners, and that was none other than the tomb of the Apostle Peter, the supposed authority for the Roman Church's Passover practice! The evidence outlined in the document, "[The First Church of Rome](#)", shows that Peter's remains were transferred surreptitiously from the East by the First Church and reburied on the Vatican, not without strong resistance from the eastern churchmen. Thereafter the presence of Peter's tomb in Rome was held up as proof of the apostolic authority of the Roman see against the claims of every other church in the world. The fiction of Peter's martyrdom in Rome and of the presence of his tomb in the capital since the time of Nero had become an important prop in the First Church of Rome's Passover argument, and the Passover dispute was used as the Roman Church's excuse to excommunicate the eastern churches. As the Roman Church asserted her dominance over the East, the maintenance of the fiction became essential.

The only traditional connection between Peter and Rome up to that time was the sub-Apostolic one reconstructed here. The First Church of Rome seems to have adapted this tradition by de-emphasizing the visionary experiences of Peter and transporting him physically to Rome. Clement, a major figure in the sub-Apostolic tradition, now became the reputed author of a series of autobiographical dialogues, known as the pseudo-Clementine literature, which provided "historical" evidence of Peter's physical presence in Rome. The Apostle's sojourn in the capital, his martyrdom there and the existence of his tomb on the Vatican, were all conveniently explained. It was a parody of the Asian story of how John came to Ephesus, taught, died and was buried there. Texts which told a contrary story, if there were such in the West, were consigned to the ash-heap. After all, the price of exposure was a steep one: no less than the collapse of the Roman Church's claims to primacy over the Churches of the East, and, indeed, over the Churches of the whole Catholic communion.

SECONDARY QUOTATIONS

There are several other passages in early writers which have been used as evidence of Peter's presence in Rome. In these cases, the straws clutched at are even more insubstantial.

1) I Clement, v. 1 - vi. 2, c. AD 96 (for the Greek, click [here](#)): "But let us cease from the examples of old time, and let us come to those who became champions [of the Faith] in the most recent times. Let us take the noble examples of our own generation. 2. Through envy and jealousy, the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the Church] have been persecuted and put to death. 3. Let us set before our eyes the illustrious apostles. 4. Peter, through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labors, and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him. 5. Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, 6. after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee,

and stoned. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, 7. having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects. Thus was he removed from the world, and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience. CHAPTER vi. 1. To these men who spent their lives in the practice of holiness, there was added [or, was gathered, Gk. *sunêthroisthê*] a great multitude of the elect, who, having through envy endured many indignities and tortures, furnished us with [lit. became amongst us] a most excellent example. 2. Through envy, those women, the Danaids and Dircae, being persecuted, after they had suffered terrible and unspeakable torments, finished the course of their faith with steadfastness, and though weak in body, received a noble reward."

This passage, of course, has nothing at all to say about Peter's presence in Rome. The idea that it does is dependent on a forced and very fanciful interpretation of the word *sunêthroisthê* at vi. 1. Because this letter was an official missive from the Church at Rome, under bishop Clement, to the Church at Corinth, and the passage at vi. 1 says that to Peter and Paul there "was gathered" a great multitude of martyrs who became "amongst us" (taken to mean "us Romans") a most excellent example, some have thought this is a description of great gatherings of Christians at Rome under Peter and Paul, during the persecution of Nero. However, this interpretation depends on a number of assumptions: a) that the verb in vi. 1 is to be translated "was gathered", rather than "was added"; b) that the phrase "amongst us" refers to Roman Christians and not to Christians in general, even though the letter several times in this same passage uses the first person plural to exhort the Corinthian Christians as a body united in fellowship to the Christian Church at Rome ("let US cease from the examples of old time," and "let US come to those who became champions [of the faith] in the most recent times. Let US take the noble examples of OUR own generation," v. 1, "let US set before OUR eyes," v. 3); it also assumes c) that the gathering of martyrs to Peter and Paul (if we are to translate it that way) was to these apostles during their earthly ministry, rather than to them after their martyrdom in heaven, this latter interpretation being much more likely, as a mention of the departure of Paul from this world to the "holy place" (heaven) immediately precedes the passage in question (at v. 7), and Paul, like these other martyrs, is there said to have provided the Church with a grand example of Christian endurance. The departure of Peter to the "place of glory" is similarly mentioned at v. 4.

2) Ignatius, c. AD 108, To the Romans, iv. 3 (for the Greek, click [here](#)): "I do not command you like Peter and Paul; they were Apostles, I am a convict; they were free, I am even until now a slave"

This text, too, has nothing to say about Peter's presence in Rome. Ignatius is writing to the Christians in Rome, and requests, but does not command, as might the Apostles Peter and Paul, that the Roman Christians refrain from attempting to save him from martyrdom. His wish is to die for Christ. The Greek says literally "Not as [or, like] Peter and Paul do I command you" (*oukh 'ôs Petros kai Paulos diatassomai 'umin*). The Greek does not include the idea that Peter and Paul actually commanded the Romans. This would be reading too much into the Greek. Furthermore, Ignatius uses an almost identical expression when writing to the Christians at Tralles in Asia (To the Trallians, iii. 3): "I did not think myself competent, as a convict, to command you like an Apostle" (Gk.: *'ina ... 'ôs apostolos 'umin diatassômai*). No-one has suggested that here Ignatius is referring to an Apostle who actually commanded the Trallians. In both cases Ignatius is renouncing any apostolic authority he might have been held to have over the churches he was writing to. Even if we were to read much more into the Greek than is actually there, and presume that Peter and Paul did command the Romans, the contrast and comparison (*oukh 'ôs*) that Ignatius draws between himself and them, would suggest he was thinking of a WRITTEN instruction sent from abroad by the two Apostles to the Roman Christians, as he himself was communicating now with them in writing from abroad. There is, in any event, no warrant for understanding this text as a reference to a physical presence of the Apostle Peter in Rome.

3) Hippolytus, Refut. VI. xv. = ed. Miller VI. 20 (67r) (for the Greek, click [here](#)): "This Simon, deceiving many in Samaria by his sorceries, was reproved by the Apostles, and was laid under a curse, as it has been written in the Acts. But he afterwards abjured the faith, and attempted these (aforesaid practices). And journeying as far as Rome, he fell in with the Apostles; and to him, deceiving many by his sorceries, Peter offered repeated opposition. This man, ultimately repairing to <Sebas?>te (and) sitting under a plane tree, continued to give instruction (in his doctrines). And in truth at last, when conviction was imminent, in case he delayed longer, he stated that, if he were buried alive, he would rise the third day. And accordingly, having ordered a trench to be dug by his disciples, he directed himself to be interred there. They, then, executed the injunction given; whereas he remained (in that grave) until this day, for he was not the Christ."

Here we have another account drawing on the tradition that connected Peter, Simon Magus and Rome. However, the most

orthodox, complete, version of this tradition is found in the Apostolic Constitutions, which locate Peter at Caesarea, and represent Peter as having disputed with Simon there. Subsequently, when Simon attempted to spread his heresy in Rome, Peter kept in spiritual contact with events in the capital, and defeated Simon by the power of prayer. This may be presumed to be the situation envisioned by Hippolytus when he asserts that "to him [Simon Magus], deceiving many by his sorceries, Peter offered repeated opposition." Just before this statement, Hippolytus says that "Journeying as far as Rome, he [Simon] fell in with the Apostles." A mind influenced by the apocryphal legends which originated from, and expanded on, the orthodox tradition, would immediately think here of Peter and Paul as the Apostles Simon fell in with. However, Hippolytus does not name these Apostles. Peter is mentioned immediately after, but is not specifically identified as one of these "Apostles", and in the preceding sentence the "Apostles" who reproved Simon in Samaria are Peter and John (Acts 8. 14). This text, too, falls far short of locating Peter in Rome. The imprecise wording does not permit a definitive decision as to where Peter was when he "offered repeated opposition" to Simon. If the sequence of events, as recounted, is in strict chronological order, this opposition may be presumed to have been offered subsequent to Simon's arrival in Rome. But that is precisely the sequence of events in the Apostolic Constitutions, and there Peter is absent from the scene of Simon's magical activity in Rome and in contact and in combat with him spiritually. This account in Hippolytus might be held to confirm, if it confirms anything at all, the fragmentary tradition preserved by Hippolytus' contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, and that which is found in a more explicit, but quasi-orthodox, form in the Apostolic Constitutions.

4) Tertullian, Adv. Marc. IV. v. 1-2: [1] In summa, si constat id verius quod prius, id prius quod et ab initio, id ab initio quod ab apostolis, pariter utique constabit id esse ab apostolis traditum quod apud ecclesias apostolorum fuerit sacrosanctum. Videamus quod lac a Paulo Corinthii hauserint, ad quam regulam Galatae sint recorrecti, quid legant Philippenses, Thessalonicenses, Ephesii, quid etiam Romani de proximo sonent, quibus evangelium et Petrus et Paulus sanguine quoque suo signatum reliquerunt. [2] Habemus et Ioannis alumnas ecclesias. Nam etsi Apocalypsin eius Marcion respuit, ordo tamen episcoporum ad originem recens in Ioannem stabit auctorem. Sic et ceterarum generositas recognoscitur. Dico itaque apud illas, nec solas iam apostolicas, sed apud universas quae illis de societate sacramenti confoederantur, id evangelium Lucae ab initio editionis suae stare quod cum maxime tuemur, Marcionis vero plerisque nec notum, nullis autem notum ut non eadem damnatum.

"On the whole, then, if that is evidently more true which is earlier, if that is earlier which is from the very beginning, if that is from the beginning which has the apostles for its authors, then it will certainly be quite as evident, that that comes down from the apostles, which has been kept as a sacred deposit in the churches of the apostles. Let us see what milk the Corinthians drank from Paul; to what rule of faith the Galatians were brought for correction; what the Philippians, the Thessalonians, the Ephesians read by it; what utterance also the Romans give, so very near [to Tertullian's own church at Carthage], to whom Peter and Paul conjointly bequeathed a gospel even sealed with their own blood. We have also St. John's foster churches. For although Marcion rejects his Apocalypse, the orders of the bishops (thereof), when traced up to their origin, will yet rest on John as their author. In the same manner is recognized the excellent source of the other churches. I say, therefore, that in them (and not simply such of them as were founded by apostles, but in all those which are united with them in the fellowship of the mystery of the gospel of Christ) that Gospel of Luke which we are defending with all our might has stood its ground from its very first publication; whereas Marcion's Gospel is not known to most people, and to none whatever is it known without being at the same time condemned."

This text similarly has nothing to say about a physical presence of Peter in Rome. It is comparing the written, canonical, Gospels with the mutilated version of Luke's Gospel used by the heretic Marcion. It appeals to the testimony of the apostolic churches which retained copies of the canonical Gospels, handed down from apostolic times. Tertullian claims that Peter and Paul conjointly bequeathed such a (written) Gospel to the Roman Church and paid for their efforts in this regard with their blood. This statement accords perfectly with the corrected translation offered here of Irenaeus III. i. 1. Irenaeus records that Matthew published in Rome a written account in Hebrew of the Gospel of Peter and Paul. Here is a Gospel bequeathed to the Romans from Peter and Paul conjointly, just as Tertullian describes. The rather loose and rhetorical language of Tertullian might also be held to include a reference to the Gospel of Mark, based on the message preached by Peter, which may likewise have been composed in Rome, but the singular, evangelium, favors the former interpretation.

5) Tertullian, Praes. Haer. xxxii. 2-3: [2] Hoc enim modo ecclesiae apostolicae census suos deferunt, sicut Smyrnaeorum ecclesia Polycarpum ab Iohanne conlocatum refert, sicut Romanorum Clementem a Petro ordinatum est. [3] Perinde utique et ceterae exhibent quos ab apostolis in episcopatum constitutos apostolici seminis traduces habeant.

"For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained in like manner by Peter. In exactly the same way the other churches likewise exhibit (their several worthies), whom, as having been appointed to their episcopal places by apostles, they regard as transmitters of the apostolic seed."

The ordination of bishop Clement of Rome by Peter is an interesting item of information vouchsafed to us here by Tertullian, and coincides with other traditions, like that in the quasi-orthodox Apostolic Constitutions, which represent Peter and Clement as personal acquaintances. However, this tradition cannot be used as evidence that Peter was present in Rome. Ordination in the New Testament Church was a simple consecration by a recognized spiritual authority of a member of the Church to a position of leadership. It had nothing necessarily to do with defined, topographical, ecclesiastical, boundaries. The ordinand might minister anywhere he was led by the Spirit of God to minister, unless he was ordained to minister in a specific area. In this case, it would appear that Clement was ordained by Peter to minister in Rome, as he is said to have been ordained in like manner to Polycarp, who was placed by John in Smyrna. Of course, there was also no necessity for the ceremony, such as it was, to take place in the location where the ordinand might be meant to minister. John is usually associated with Ephesus, and he may well have ordained Polycarp in Ephesus for the position of leadership he was to take up in Smyrna. Likewise, nothing is said here of Clement's ordination in Rome. In fact, in the Apostolic Constitutions, Peter associates with Clement in Caesarea. This tradition in the Apostolic Constitutions shares a number of features in common with the account in Clement of Alexandria's *Hypotyposesis*, already mentioned, which connects Peter with Rome. It is wholly independent of the later legendary material which represents Peter as personally present in Rome, and may well have preserved a reminiscence of the historical circumstances and original location of Peter's acquaintance with and ordination of Clement.

This tradition explains how Peter comes to be at the head of some later lists of the bishops of Rome. As Tertullian says, the apostolic churches were believed to be transmitters of the apostolic seed, because their bishops had been originally ordained by Apostles. (Note the horticultural image, and compare this passage of Tertullian with the "planting" of the Corinthian and Roman Churches in Dionysius of Corinth, [Quotation \[1\]](#).) This had nothing to do with the location of the residence or ministry of the Apostle who ordained that bishop. John might have ordained Polycarp as bishop of Smyrna in Ephesus, where John himself resided, and Peter might have ordained Clement in Caesarea for the work Clement was later to take up in Rome. Also there was no such thing as a monarchical bishop in the early church. There could be several "bishops" (Gk. *episkopoi*, "supervisors") or "presbyters" (Gk. *presbuteroi*, "elders") in one locality at any one time. Thus, when Clement was ordained bishop by Peter and he returned to Rome, there was nothing to stop another bishop ministering in Rome at the same time as Clement. In the case of the fellowship which met in Pudens' house in Rome (see [The First Church of Rome](#)), Linus is recorded to have been the first bishop in that house-church, ordained by unnamed "apostles", but Clement also became bishop, or pastor, in the very same house-church, after one intervening bishop, Anencletus. Clement may have been ministering himself elsewhere, or in another location in Rome, in the intervening years or have been occupied in an inferior or auxiliary leadership position in that same fellowship.

Also, Peter's ordination of Clement to do the work of a bishop in Rome (presumably when Peter was in Caesarea), seems to have occurred much earlier than the ordination of Linus. Clement's acquaintance with Peter, according to the sub-Apostolic tradition preserved in the Apostolic Constitutions, was prior to the removal of Simon Magus to Rome in the reign of Claudius, whereas Linus is mentioned by Paul at a much later date, in the reign of Nero, in his last letter to Timothy (II Timothy 4. 21), without an inkling that Linus had, at that time, any position of spiritual leadership in Rome. Linus' ordination seems to have occurred towards the very end, or just subsequent to the termination, of Paul's ministry. Hence, in one line of tradition, we find Linus, followed by Anencletus and Clement, as the first of the bishops of Rome and, in another, we find Clement as the first bishop. Both were valid ways of representing the original succession of spiritual leadership in Rome, according to the simple, apostolic, canons of the early church.

In fact, in the time of Claudius, when Clement was ordained by Peter, presumably in Caesarea, there seems to have been only one fellowship in Rome, viz. that formed by the Jewish missionaries, Junia and Andronicus. At a later period of time, in the mid second century AD, this fellowship met in a house-church on the Vicus Lateranus called Santa Prassede. It will have been this group that Clement was originally ordained to minister amongst. However, as Clement seems to have been a Jew (the extensive knowledge he had of the Old Testament Scriptures, as displayed in his Epistle to the Corinthian Church, supports this opinion), he would have been unable to return to Rome until Claudius was dead, since Claudius' decrees had banished all Jews from the city. When the Jews and Jewish Christians, including Clement, were able to return, the fellowship of Junia and Andronicus had drifted into Gnostic heresy under the influence of Simon Magus. This would explain why Clement is not recorded as having actually ministered as bishop in Rome till much later, in the reign of Domitian. His original pastoral post had been stolen from him by the Gnostics, and another fellowship had been formed in the meantime for the Bible-believing Christians at Pudens' house (Santa Pudenziana) with Linus as its first pastor. The existence of these two rival churches is reflected, though in a fragmented form, in the divergent succession lists, one starting with Linus (Santa

Pudenziana), the other starting with (Peter and) Clement (Santa Prassede).

It is understandable then, why, finally, when the Gnostic Christians at Santa Prassede accepted Sixtus, an apostate bishop from the rival church, as their leader, and other monarchical bishops succeeded him, these bishops began to claim Peter, who had never been in Rome, along with his ordinand, bishop Clement, as their apostolic authorities and original bishops, rather than the great Apostle Paul, or someone like Linus, who had undoubtedly been physically present in the city. Peter was the Apostle who ordained Clement as the first bishop of their church, which was the earliest church in Rome formed by the missionaries Junia and Andronicus. This became important to them as a mark of distinction between themselves and the rival church. They were the FIRST Church of Rome, and their authority was Peter, the chief of the Twelve. This in spite of the fact that Peter was a vehement opponent of the Gnostic heresiarch Simon Magus, and that Clement had never actually ministered in their church. To obviate the accusation that Peter had not been present in Rome and that both he and Clement were opposed to their Gnostic doctrines, these bishops sponsored the creation of a Gnostic myth, under the pseudonym of Clement, which put into the mouth of Peter, now magically transported to Rome, the kind of doctrine the Gnostics wanted to hear. This myth survives in the expurgated form of the pseudo-Clementine romances.

An example of how the later bishops of the First Church of Rome abused the theory of a succession from Peter, and also of how eastern churchmen reacted to that abuse, is discovered in the following quotation from Firmilian, the noted bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and adherent of Origen.

6) Firmilian apud Cyprian, Ep. 74. 17: "And in this respect I am justly indignant at this so open and manifest folly of Stephen {bishop of the First Church of Rome}, that he who so boasts of the place of his episcopate, and contends that he holds the succession from Peter, on whom the foundations of the Church were laid, should introduce many other rocks and establish new buildings of many churches {i.e. by accepting the baptism of heretical groups as valid}; maintaining that there is baptism in them by his authority. For they who are baptized, doubtless, fill up the number of the Church. But he who approves their baptism maintains, of those baptized, that the Church is also with them. Nor does he understand that the truth of the Christian Rock is overshadowed, and in some measure abolished, by him when he thus betrays and deserts unity. The apostle acknowledges that the Jews, although blinded by ignorance, and bound by the grossest wickedness, have yet a zeal for God. Stephen, who announces that he holds by succession the throne of Peter, is stirred with no zeal against heretics, when he concedes to them, not a moderate, but the very greatest power of grace: so far as to say and assert that, by the sacrament of baptism, the filth of the old man is washed away by them, that they pardon the former mortal sins, that they make sons of God by heavenly regeneration, and renew to eternal life by the sanctification of the divine laver. He who concedes and gives up to heretics in this way the great and heavenly gifts of the Church, what else does he do but communicate with them for whom he maintains and claims so much grace? And now he hesitates in vain to consent to them, and to be a partaker with them in other matters also, to meet together with them, and equally with them to mingle their prayers, and appoint a common altar and sacrifice."

The practice of including Peter at the head of the list of bishops of Rome can be dated back to at least the time of Gaius, c. AD 211, Gaius being a fervent advocate of the claims of the First Church of Rome (Eusebius, Hist. Ecc. V. xxviii. 3). But amongst orthodox churchmen, this indicated nothing about the historical location of Peter's residence or Peter's ministry. That was probably the case, also, in the instances where Eusebius himself adopted the scheme in his Ecclesiastical History (III. iv, III. xxi, IV. i). After the formation of the pseudo-Clementine myth, the same practice came to signify, in certain quarters, that Peter had not only been present in Rome and martyred there, but also that he had exercised an episcopal ministry in the city. One generation later than Gaius, the anonymous Poem Against the Marcionites (iii. 359-367) puts Peter at the head of the Roman bishops, but with a certain, added, emphasis on what is referred to as the "chair" of Peter: "Of these men / Disciples who succeeded them throughout / The orb, men wholly filled with virtue's breath, / And our own masters, have assigned to us / Honors conjoined with works. Of whom the first / Whom PETER bade to take his place and sit / Upon this chair in mightiest Rome where he / Himself had sat, was LINUS, great, elect, / And by the mass approved. And after him / CLETUS himself the fold's flock undertook; / As his successor ANACLETUS was / By lot located (here, as occasionally elsewhere, Cletus and Anacletus, both names, apparently, designating the same person, are treated as two separate bishops): CLEMENT follows him; / Well known was he to apostolic men" From a spiritual to a literal interpretation of the "chair" of Peter is a small transition. The word "chair" could, and probably does in this case, mean nothing more than Peter's episcopal position, but it was not long before a chair was pointed out as the actual chair in which Peter had sat when he was bishop in Rome. It can be viewed in Rome to this day. It is undoubtedly an ancient chair, and it is also undoubtedly a pagan one. Are we really expected to believe that the Apostle Peter selected as his special episcopal throne this gaudy little item of furniture, inscribed all around with the Twelve Labours of the pagan god-man, Hercules? Yet today, the Pope claims this indeed is the "chair of Peter" and sits on it to make his ex-cathedra, "infallible", pronouncements from the Vatican.

Jerome's advocacy of the idea that Peter exercised an episcopal ministry in the capital had a great influence on subsequent historiography. In historical, as well as in theological matters, Jerome was capable of being judicious and critical, on one occasion, and wildly fanatical, on another, the latter, especially, when the authority of the bishop of Rome was questioned. Accordingly, in Jerome's translation and reworking of Eusebius' Chronicle, we find the apocryphal legend of Peter's sojourn in Rome transformed into statements of historical fact, with the addition of an episcopate of Peter in Rome itself, beginning, absurdly, in the reign of Claudius, in the second year of the two hundred and fifth Olympiad (AD 42), and lasting, impossibly, twenty-five years. (Jerome describes in his Preface to that work his method of dealing with Eusebius' Chronicle as follows: "The truth is that I have partly discharged the office of a translator and partly that of a writer. I have with the utmost fidelity rendered the Greek portion, and at the same time have added certain things which appeared to me to have been allowed to slip, particularly in the Roman history, which Eusebius, the author of this book, as it seems to me, only glanced at; not so much because of ignorance, for he was a learned man, as because, writing in Greek, he thought them of slight importance to his countrymen. So again from Ninus and Abraham, right up to the captivity of Troy, the translation is from the Greek only. From Troy to the twentieth year of Constantine [which includes the period under consideration here] there is much, at one time separately added, at another intermingled, which I have gleaned with great diligence from Tranquillus and other famous historians.")

7) Tertullian, Scorpiace, xv. 1-3: [1] ... Quae tamen passos apostolos scimus, manifesta doctrina est. Hanc intellego solam Acta decurrens, nihil quaero. [2] Carceres illic et uincula et flagella et saxa et gladii et impetus Iudaeorum et coetus nationum et tribunorum elogia et regum auditoria et proconsulum tribunalia et Caesaris nomen interpretem non habent. Quod Petrus caeditur, quod Stephanus opprimitur, quod Iacobus immolatur, quod Paulus distrahitur, ipsorum sanguine scripta sunt. [3] Et si fidem commentarii uoluerit haereticus, instrumenta imperii loquentur, ut lapides Hierusalem. Vitas Caesarum legimus: orientem fidem Romae primus Nero cruentauit. Tunc Petrus ab altero cingitur, cum cruci adstringitur. Tunc Paulus ciuitatis Romanae consequitur natiuitatem, cum illic martyrii renascitur generositate.

"And yet, that the apostles endured such sufferings, we know: the teaching is clear. This only I perceive in running through the Acts. I am not at all on the search. The prisons there, and the bonds, and the scourges, and the big stones, and the swords, and the onsets by the Jews, and the assemblies of the heathen, and the indictments by tribunes, and the hearing of causes by kings, and the judgment-seats of proconsuls and the name of Caesar, do not need an interpreter. That Peter is struck, that Stephen is overwhelmed by stones, that James is slain as is a victim at the altar, that Paul is beheaded has been written in their own blood. And if a heretic wishes his confidence to rest upon a public record, the archives of the empire will speak, as, for instance, the stones of Jerusalem. We read the lives of the Caesars: At Rome Nero was the first who stained with blood the rising faith. Then is Peter girt by another, when he is fixed immobile to the stake. Then does Paul obtain a birth suited to Roman citizenship, when in Rome he springs to life again ennobled by martyrdom."

This is another early witness that Peter suffered under Nero. Note, however, that Tertullian does not specify, as he does in Paul's case, that Peter was martyred in Rome. He merely says, "THEN [tunc, viz. in the reign of Nero] is Peter girt by another ..." This confirms the testimony of [Dionysius](#) that Peter and Paul were martyred at the same time. The mode of Peter's death, as related by [Eusebius](#), is also confirmed, viz. crucifixion or impaling. The word caeditur used of Peter has a general and a more specific meaning. The general meaning is "he is slain", but the more specific and proper meaning is "he is *felled, cudgelled*." This is a word used somewhat more appropriately to describe Peter's impalement by a stake than crucifixion by suspension on a stake, whilst the other word used by Tertullian, adstringitur, is ambiguous (*fixed or bound to*). Tertullian further claims that these facts were recorded in the "archives of the empire ... as, for instance, the stones of Jerusalem," or "the Lives of the Caesars." Such public records would seem to be the most likely source of the historical names Agrippa and Albinus which are found in the apocryphal Acts as the names of the Roman authorities under whom Peter suffered, though in the Apocrypha they have been plucked out of their proper, historical, context, viz. Judaea in AD 62. The mention of these "imperial archives" (instrumenta imperii), and "stones of Jerusalem" (lapides Hierusalem), is, in fact, immediately followed by references to the martyrdoms of Paul and Peter in the reign of Nero, it being implied that these events can be thus confirmed. There would be no reason at all for Paul's martyrdom, traditionally, credibly, and by Tertullian himself, located in Rome, to be commemorated on a stone inscription in or from Jerusalem, but there would for Peter's, if, indeed, he was martyred, as suggested here, along with James the brother of the Lord in Jerusalem in AD 62. It is possible that such a stone inscription, describing, or even depicting, Peter's martyrdom, was transferred later to the Vatican, and there provided public evidence of the mode of Peter's death and of the officials who presided over it.

8) Ascension of Isaiah iv. 2, 3, c. AD 70-80: "A lawless king, the slayer of his mother: who himself, even this king, will

persecute the plant which the Twelve Apostles of the Beloved have planted. Of the Twelve one will be delivered into his hands."

This is a remarkably early, if apocryphal, witness. The lawless king, slayer of his mother, and persecutor of Christians, is clearly Nero. It is presumed - on the basis of the later traditions - that the one of the Twelve delivered into his hands is Peter. (In this work, Paul is not reckoned among the Twelve.) Even if Peter is the disciple intended, only the dating of his martyrdom to the reign of Nero is vouchsafed, not the location.

The Ascension of Isaiah, according to the online Encyclopaedia Britannica, is a pseudepigraphal work surviving complete in a 5th–7th-century-AD Ethiopic edition. Fragments exist in Greek, Coptic, Latin, and Old Slavonic. Three separate works comprise the total book, the final version by a Christian editor, which appeared in the 2nd century AD. The first section is entitled "The Martyrdom of Isaiah," a Midrash on the Manasseh story in II Kings 21, possibly written originally in Hebrew or Aramaic in the early 1st century AD. It includes a legendary martyr motif and extensive passages on demonology. The second is the "Testament of Hezekiah," a Christian work, dating from the late 1st century AD, that contains a concept of Antichrist as a spirit dwelling in the Roman emperor Nero (AD 54–68), whose persecution of Christians in 64–65 was thought to be the chaos preceding the advent of the messianic age. The third work is called the "Ascension (or Vision) of Isaiah," also written by a Christian at the beginning of the 2nd century. It contains a description of the seven tiers of heaven paralleling that found in the Second Book of Enoch and in the New Testament. Both of the Christian sections are apocalypses, although they contain certain historical details on the state of the church at the end of the 1st century that coincide with descriptions given in the Second Letter of Peter, Second Letter of Paul to Timothy, and the letters of Clement of Rome.

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