

CHURCH ORGANIZATION IN FIRST-CENTURY ROME: A NEW LOOK AT THE BASIC DATA

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Historians of early Christianity, as well as specialists in NT and Patristic studies, have taken for granted that the basic organizational systems for local Christian congregations of the first century took one or the other of just two forms: (1) the ancient “presbyterial” pattern of a twofold ministry of “elders” (also alternatively called “bishops”) and “deacons”; (2) the monepiscopal pattern of a threefold ministry of *one* bishop, plus elders and deacons. In a previous discussion that dealt broadly with the rise and spread of monepiscopacy¹ I raised a query as to whether the earliest Christian community in Rome might not have had a governance system differing from both of the foregoing—a system patterned after the contemporary political governmental style in vogue in the city of Rome and in municipalities in the Roman West.²

Specifically, the question is whether in the first-century Roman church there may not have been a system of *dual leadership* rather than either the monepiscopal or the presbyterial form of governance. In this article, we first look briefly at the Roman background and then in somewhat more detail at some of the main Christian source materials that have a bearing on our question—both contemporary sources and early (but non-contemporary) lists of Roman bishops. An excursus at the end of the main text elaborates somewhat further on the Roman background.³

¹Kenneth A. Strand, “The Rise of the Monarchical Episcopate,” *AUSS* 4 (1966): 65-88.

²*Ibid.*, 83-84.

³Useful for an overview of Roman history are such standard general discussions as Arthur E. R. Boak, *A History of Rome to 565 A.D.*, 4th ed. (New York, 1955), and *Cambridge Ancient History* (see esp. vol. 10, chaps. 5-18). Especially useful for information on the Roman magistracies is Leon Homo, *Roman Political Institutions from City to State* (London, 1929). Ancient Roman historians providing information on the Augustan Age are Tacitus, *Annals*; Dio Cassius, *Roman History*; and Suetonius, *Life of Augustus* (the last-named often being somewhat unreliable). Very helpful,

In a follow-up essay, our analysis of some of the succession lists will be continued and we will also explore pertinent data from several other early non-contemporary documents. Then that essay will close with a review of certain of the more basic considerations related to our topic, followed by some conclusions and implications that emerge from our study.

1. *The Roman Background*

During the time period in which we are interested here, the basis of government in Roman civil administration was that of institutions inherited from the Roman Republic (ca. 508 B.C. to 27 B.C.), under which the highest magistracy was the consulship. This office consisted of *two* equal "consuls" elected for coterminous one-year terms.

Augustus (d. A.D. 14), whose restructuring of the Roman government in 27 B.C. included a division of the Roman provinces into "senatorial" and "imperial" domains, inaugurated what has come to be known as the "Empire" period of Roman history (27 B.C. to A.D. 476). In his reorganization he was, however, insistent on maintaining his leadership position on the basis of Republican administrative institutions.

Until 23 B.C. Augustus' constitutional basis of authority was the consulship, which he had held continuously since 31 B.C.⁴ In this office, he had more prestige and power than did his colleague by virtue of his holding such a fairly long succession of one-year terms and by his being considered by the Roman people as the savior of Rome from the civil wars and internecine strife that had characterized the late Republic.

too, is inscriptional material published in the massive multivolume *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. This includes, for instance, in 3:769-799, the famous *Res gestae divi Augusti*, which provides Augustus' own detailed account of his accomplishments (it was composed shortly before this emperor's death in A.D. 14). It appears in English translation under the title "The Accomplishments of Augustus (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*)" in Naphtali Lewis & Meyer Reinhold, eds., *Roman Civilization: Selected Readings*, vol. 2, *The Empire* (New York, 1955), 9-19. This document has come down in its most complete form (with text in both Latin and Greek) as an inscription on the walls of a temple at Ankara, the ancient Ancyra. Hence it is also referred to as the *Monumentum Ancyranum*.

⁴He had also held the consulship as early as 43 B.C. (in collegiality with Quintus Pedius).

Beginning in 23 B.C. he utilized as his basis of authority the powers vested in two other Republican institutions—the office of “proconsul” (given him in five- and ten-year grants and defined as “*maius*” or “highest”), and the “tribunician authority.” The latter, which he reckoned in annual terms continuously from 23 B.C. until his death, gave him the wide range of authority held in the Republic by popular representatives known as “tribunes”—an authority which included veto power over legislation and “intercessory” powers that could block proceedings against individuals or groups. Twice after 23 B.C. he again held the consulate for annual terms, in 5 B.C. and 2 B.C. On these occasions he continued, of course, to retain his proconsular and tribunician powers.⁵

Thus from 27 B.C. until his death in A.D. 14, Augustus' position was a superior one, higher than that of his co-consul when he himself was a consul, and higher than that of the two consuls when he was not personally a consul.

The early form of the Roman Empire as it was instituted by Augustus has come to be designated at the “Principate,” from the fact that a “princeps” (or “first citizen”) led out.⁶ In contrast, the later form which emerged when all Republican institutions had been either brought to their demise or had been rendered totally ineffective is designated as the “Autocracy” or the “Dominate.”⁷ Its duration was from the beginning of the reign of Diocletian in A.D. 284 until the fall of Rome in 476. The subordination and disappearance of the Republican institutions did not come suddenly, of course,

⁵At the death of Lepidus in 12 B.C., Augustus also became Pontifex Maximus, the head of Roman religion. This office undoubtedly enhanced his already great prestige, but can hardly be reckoned as one of the key bases for his supreme political authority (contra Homo, 226).

⁶This term, signifying government under a *princeps*, when spelled with an initial capital letter “P” is used to designate the Roman form of government as established by Augustus and carried on by his successors for some three centuries. When a lower-case “p” is used as the initial letter, the term signifies the office (or tenure in that office) of a specific *princeps*.

⁷“Autocracy” is the more commonly used term, but some authorities (e.g. Homo) designate the late Roman Empire as the “Dominate.” In Diocletian's time, the consulate, the last real vestige of Republican authority, was basically an honorary office, with one consul in Rome and one in Constantinople. The main function of these consuls was to give the designation for each year and to provide popular entertainment on certain occasions. Two and a half centuries later, in 540, the consulship was totally eliminated under Justinian.

but involved a gradual process that occurred step by step during the era of the Principate.

From 27 B.C. till the end of the first century A.D., however, the concept of “first-citizen” rule based on Roman-Republic governance modalities (adjusted though they were) remained basically intact in the thinking of the Roman citizenry in Rome and the Roman West. Augustus himself had been careful to reject the office and title of “Censorship of Morals” offered him on three occasions (19, 18, and 11 B.C.); and he had earlier twice rejected, as well, the “Dictatorship” and a perpetual consulship (all three in 22 B.C.).⁸ Thus he manifested his desire and intent to avoid institutions that would provide extraordinary power. The dictatorship in particular was offensive. Originally, it had been an emergency office intended to supersede the authority of the consuls only on rare occasions and with a time-limit of six months, but in the late Republic it had been granted to Julius Caesar for a ten-year term in 46 B.C. and then for life the very next year—the tenure, however, being of short duration because of Julius’ assassination in 44 B.C.

Throughout his principate⁹ Augustus himself maintained this stance of adherence to Republican institutions, as did a number of his successors as well. “Republican-minded” emperors of the first century A.D., such as Claudius, were at death “deified” or “divinized” by the Senate. The three would-be autocrats during this century—Caligula (d. 41), Nero (d. 68), and Domitian (d. 96)—were, by way of contrast, execrated after death by the Senate. This fact is an indication that at least this far into the history of the Roman Principate, Republican ideals were still quite highly esteemed in Rome.

Another pertinent evidence that the Republican collegiate-governance modality was still viable and in vogue in the Roman West during the first century A.D. is the fact that western municipalities had collegiate top magistrates—either *duoviri* (“two men”) or *quattuorviri* (“four men”).¹⁰ The duovirs commonly had two junior colleagues called “aediles.”

Could this concept of collegiality in political governance have provided both the psychological basis and a practical example for

⁸*Res gestae divi Augusti*, pars. 5 and 6. See Lewis & Reinhold, 11.

⁹See n. 6, above.

¹⁰Cf., e.g., the formal charters granted by Domitian to the Spanish towns of Salpensa and Malaca in the years 81 and 84 (see Lewis & Reinhold, 321-326).

incorporating a similar ecclesiastical collegiality into the governance of the Roman church during the first century? This is the possibility at which I hinted in my earlier essay and that I wish to explore further here and in the follow-up essay. It is a reconstruction which, I feel, makes the best sense out of the confusing source materials that pertain to the polity of the Roman church during the latter half of the first century.

2. *The Christian Source Materials: An Overview*

Ancient Christian source materials of relevance to the present inquiry are (1) contemporary documents of the first century and early second century that pertain to the church in Rome; (2) episcopal succession lists of Roman bishops, the earliest extant one dating to ca. 185; and (3) other non-contemporary sources of information regarding governance of the Roman church during the first century.

Contemporary Information

Documents in the first category include Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which slightly antedates the basic time frame in which we are interested here: namely, the period from Peter's and Paul's ministry in Rome up to the time of Xystus ("Sixtus"), whose episcopacy is commonly dated as A.D. 115-125.¹¹ The main importance of this document for the topic we are investigating is its lack of information directed toward this topic. Paul's Roman letter, written shortly prior to the Apostle's own arrival in Rome, was obviously addressed to concerns other than that of church organizational style.¹²

More to the point with respect to our topic are the letter of Clement of Rome to the church in Corinth ca. A.D. 95, the seven epistles of Ignatius of Antioch ca. A.D. 115, Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians written very shortly after Ignatius' epistles, and the

¹¹Xystus died sometime between 124 and 126; therefore 125 is frequently chosen because of its being the "median" date. Since Xystus ruled ten years (according to the main succession chronologies), his accession is placed at 115. These termini vary from Eusebius, as will be seen below. Approximations though they are, with a range of plus or minus one year, they are the first dates for a Roman bishop that can be fixed with fair certainty.

¹²It deals with theological matters and with concerns related to practical matters of Christian life.

early section of the Shepherd of Hermas.¹³ These sources, along with others, were reviewed in my article on the rise and spread of monepiscopacy and cannot again be treated in detail here.¹⁴ The main point is that these sources leave us with the information that at their time of origin, monepiscopacy had not yet moved west of the Aegean Sea to Greece, Macedonia, and Rome. This is so even though by ca. A.D. 115 it was already firmly entrenched in the Roman province of Asia, just east of that sea, as well as being the governance modality farther east in the church of Antioch in Syria.¹⁵

Especially telling are Ignatius' remarks. In spite of his strong and repeated emphasis on monepiscopacy in his letter to Polycarp of Smyrna, in the one he wrote to the Smyrnaean church, and in his letters to four other churches in the Roman province of Asia,¹⁶ there is no indication whatsoever that the Roman church similarly had monepiscopal governance. Although care must always be taken when arguing from silence, in this particular case the silence seems especially significant because of its striking contrast to the heavy emphasis on monepiscopacy in Ignatius' other six letters, supplemented also by Ignatius' reference in his Roman letter to himself as "bishop of Antioch."¹⁷

Succession Lists and Other Non-Contemporary Sources

Succession lists of Roman bishops give a different picture, of course: namely, that of a single line of Roman bishops in succession from Peter or from Peter and Paul. These lists pertaining to Rome (and also similar lists for Christian congregations in other cities)

¹³The so-called "Apostolic Fathers," among whom these writers are included, are available in numerous editions, including the English translations of LCL and ANF, vol. 1 (LCL includes, as well, an edited version of the Greek text). For pertinent information on these fathers and on relevant references in their works, see Strand, 72-73, nn. 20, 23, and 26.

¹⁴For a considerable number of pertinent references in Ignatius, see Strand, 72-73, n. 23; also cf. the discussion of Ignatius on pp. 75-79.

¹⁵See *ibid.*, 72-75.

¹⁶These are the epistles to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, and Philadelphians. These four, together with those to Polycarp, the Smyrnaeans, and the Romans, are the authentic letters of Ignatius. A recension spuriously ascribed to Ignatius, expanding the genuine letters and adding others, appeared during the Middle Ages. Both recensions of the seven letters are included in parallel columns in ANF 1:49-96, followed by an abbreviated three-letter Syriac recension on pp. 99-104 and the medieval spurious letters on pp. 107-126.

¹⁷See Ignatius, Rom 2:2.

were at first prepared and used as a demonstration that the Christian church, as contrasted with Gnostic heretics, had a guarantee of truth and orthodoxy by virtue of its having had an unbroken succession of leaders reaching back to the apostles—something the heretics could not claim.¹⁸

It must be remembered, first of all (and as a matter of utmost importance), that even the earliest of the succession lists were documents constructed considerably after the time of the apostles Peter and Paul and the early post-apostolic leaders of the church in Rome. In addition, the several basic lists that exist for the Roman church contain variations that bespeak somewhat different background materials and/or developmental histories. Moreover, the variations in the lists involve such basic considerations as the precise order in which the bishops are given, the inclusion or absence of chronological data, and the striking differences that occur in the chronological information appearing in some of the lists.

3. *The Succession Lists of Roman Bishops*

It is unfortunate that whereas we have at least some significant contemporary source materials for the developments that I treated in my article on the rise and spread of moniscopacy, the main sources for the topic now under consideration cannot boast such luxury. Rather, the succession lists of Roman bishops (and also the other notations concerning the earliest episcopal succession in the Roman church) were, as already indicated, later materials in relationship to the particular succession in which we are here interested. They were, in fact, prepared from approximately a century to several centuries after the time of the first successors of the apostles.

As we now look at the basic Roman episcopal succession lists we find that they fall into three main categories: (1) the earliest compilation, known to us from information set forth by Irenaeus, Eusebius, and Epiphanius; (2) the list represented in Optatus and Augustine;¹⁹ and (3) the so-called "Roman List" preserved in the

¹⁸So specifically indicated, e.g., in Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.3.1-4 and 3.4.1 (ANF 1:415-417), and in Tertullian, *On Prescription against Heretics*, chap. 32 (ANF 3:258).

¹⁹Identically the same list is in evidence in writings of both church fathers, with Augustine (A.D. 400) undoubtedly borrowing from Optatus (ca. 370). For notation of the specific references, see n. 31, below. These church fathers lived in the same general region of North Africa (within what is modern Algeria), and both of them referred to the Roman episcopal succession in contexts contra Donatism.

Liberian Catalogue, which in turn was incorporated in the *liber pontificalis* ("Book of the Popes").

For the period of interest to us, the main distinguishing feature (aside from the specific dates indicated for the bishops in some of the lists) is the sequential placement of Clement in the succession as given in these three categories of lists: respectively, third from Peter and Paul, second after Peter, and first after Peter.²⁰ This phenomenon will be reviewed further as we proceed to analyze the various succession lists.

The Earliest Extant Succession List of Roman Bishops

The earliest extant list of the succession of Roman bishops is the one penned by Irenaeus circa A.D. 185 in his famous work *Against Heresies*.²¹ It carries the line of succession from the apostles Peter and Paul (both are mentioned) up through Eleutherus, whose term of episcopal office in Rome began about 174 or 175. The list was repeated by Eusebius of Caesarea in both his *Chronicle* and *Ecclesiastical History* early in the fourth century and by Epiphanius of Salamis late in that same century.²²

Eusebius, in his historical account, repeatedly refers to a Syro-Palestinian Christian named Hegesippus,²³ who took a trip to Rome during the episcopate of Anicetus (ca. 155-166) and who there found records from which he "arranged" or "drew up" a succession of the Roman bishops down to his time.²⁴ There is scarcely any doubt but that Eusebius used Hegesippus as his main source for the early

²⁰For the so-called "Roman list," the indicated sequence places Clement in second place, but the dates supplied for him would put him as the first successor after Peter, with Linus actually having had contemporary tenure with that apostle. Further elucidation appears below.

²¹Irenaeus, 3.3.3 (ANF, 1:416, col. 1).

²²The data from Eusebius' *Chronicle* (both Armenian and Jeromian recensions) and from the *Ecclesiastical History* are conveniently compiled in a table by J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part 1, S. Clement of Rome*, vol. 1, 2d ed. (London, 1890), 208-209. The relevant text material from Epiphanius, *Panarion* 27:6, is given in the original Greek in Lightfoot, 169-170.

²³Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 2.23.19; 3.11.2; 3.19; 3.20.8; 3.32.2; 4.8.1; 4.11.7; 4.22.1; and others.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 4.22.3. The Greek text appears in Lightfoot, 153-154. In his notation on p. 154 Lightfoot states that the "context requires διαδοχὴν ἐποιησάμην 'I drew up a list of (the episcopal) succession.'"

succession up to Hegesippus' own time,²⁵ and it seems fairly certain that both Irenaeus and Epiphanius did so as well.²⁶

The list as given by Irenaeus has no chronological information, but Eusebius has added both length of terms of office and dates for the bishops. The dates are stated as synchronizations with years in the reigns of the various Roman emperors.²⁷ Eusebius' chronological data in their extant forms are certainly flawed, for at times the information is conflicting as to the number of years that a certain bishop served. Such conflicts occur not only between the chronology of the *Chronicle* and that of the *Ecclesiastical History* but also between the two basic extant recensions or versions of the *Chronicle* itself, the Armenian and that of Jerome.²⁸ The data in the *Ecclesiastical History* are generally assumed to represent Eusebius' corrected form of the chronological information.²⁹

²⁵It is not clear whether Hegesippus' list reached only to Anicetus, during whose episcopacy he was in Rome, or whether he continued it to Eleutherus. Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.3. (Did Hegesippus even possibly remain in Rome until the time of Eleutherus, as Eusebius, 4.11.7, states? The NPNF editor disputes this, in NPNF, 2d series, 1:184, n. 19; his line of argument is worth considering, but is not entirely convincing.)

²⁶References in Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, passim (cf. n. 23, above) reveals that church historian's pervasive use of Hegesippus. The information concerning the succession of bishops in Rome (and other churches, as well) accompanied by dates for their tenure are scattered throughout this work, but a listing without dates quoted directly from Irenaeus also occurs, in 5.6.1-4. Concerning Irenaeus' and Epiphanius' probable use of Hegesippus, the comparison of materials and the analysis given by Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Primitive Church Studied with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry: The Hewett Lectures, 1928* (London, 1929), 288-295, are so convincing as to place almost beyond any doubt the thesis of Hegesippus' providing the major common source for these two church fathers in their portrayal of the early episcopal succession in Rome. (Irenaeus did, of course, personally visit Rome some one or two decades after Hegesippus' stay there, and might have done some independent work in producing his succession list in *Against Heresies* 3.3.3, but any evidence for such a thesis is not in hand.)

²⁷Convenient lists appear in Lightfoot, 208-209.

²⁸The lists in Lightfoot (see n. 27) highlight the divergences.

²⁹Lightfoot, 231, holds a contrary opinion. He feels that the *Chronicle* and *Ecclesiastical History* were prepared at virtually the same time and with use of the same documents. He does, however, allow that there were "two separate issues [of the *Chronicle*] at different dates." This likelihood alone, I would suggest, undercuts his thesis that Eusebius did not use further documents in preparing the data in the *History*, for his second version of the *Chronicle* was probably merely an extension, not a revision.

Before we move ahead to consider other succession lists and notations regarding ordinations by Peter and/or by Peter and Paul, it will be useful to give a listing of the Irenaeus/Eusebius/Epiphanius succession up through Anicetus (where the Epiphanian succession list stops, though the Irenaeian includes also Soter and Eleutherus, and the Eusebian extends still further). This listing is provided in **figure 1**, with the chronology indicated as follows: (1) from the *Chronicle*, both recensions; (2) from the *Ecclesiastical History*; and (3) as given in a typical modern reconstruction.³⁰ In all cases, the dates should be considered as tentative and highly uncertain for the period up to Xystus, ca. A.D. 115, especially so in view of the fact that the contemporary sources of information for this period give no evidence of a monepiscopal succession in Rome.

Other Succession Lists

From this point onward, as we look at further succession lists, our focus will be on only the first five or six Roman bishops who are said to have succeeded Peter (Paul is not placed with Peter at the head of those lists)—i.e., the line of bishops up through Evaristus.

The Optatus/Augustine Succession List. The list as given by Optatus (ca. 370) and Augustine (in 400)³¹ is basically the same as that of Irenaeus, Eusebius, and Epiphanius, except that with respect to our time period Clement precedes “Anenclētus”³² instead of following him. Modern scholarship tends to look upon this anomaly as simply a reversal of the positions of Anenclētus and Clement in the sequence. This thesis is plausible; and additional weight accrues

³⁰Our modern reconstruction is based on the accession dates as given by Streeter, 184. In n. 1 on that page, Streeter states that the dates he uses are “as restored from the ‘term numbers’ in the *Chronica* of Hippolytus by H. J. Lawlor in his *Eusebius*, ii, p. 44.” This particular set of episcopal datings has been adopted by other scholars, and seems to be the preferable one among several that I have seen.

³¹The Latin text for the pertinent portion of these two sources—Optatus, *De schism. Donat.*, 2.3, and Augustine’s epistle *ad Generosum* (no. 53), par. 2, is provided by Lightfoot, 171-174.

³²“Anenclētus” and “Anacletus” are variant spellings of the same name in occurrences of this name in the ancient sources, and there are other spellings in the ancient manuscripts, as well (cf. n. 51, below). Herein I have standardized the spelling as “Anenclētus.” It should be noted that the Greek *Anenklētos* (Ἀνέγκλητος), “the blameless,” is undoubtedly the correct form, with the *Anacletus*, “called back,” of the Latin lists undoubtedly being a corruption. See the illuminating discussion given by Lightfoot, 80, n. 3, who points out (among other things) that the Greek ἀνάκλητος “is never, so far as I can discover, used as a proper name, nor would it be appropriate. In Dion. Cass. xlv.12 it is given as a translation of the military term ‘evocatus.’”

FIGURE 1

**EUSEBIAN AND MODERN CHRONOLOGIES FOR THE FIRST
TEN SUCCESSORS OF PETER AND PAUL IN ROME**

| Name of Bishop | Dates as Indicated in Eusebian Materials | | | A Modern Reconstruction |
|----------------|--|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| | The Chronicle | | The Ecclesiastical History* | |
| | Armenian Recension | Jerome's Recension | | |
| 1. Linus | 66-79 | 68-80 | — | 64-76 |
| 2. Anencletus | 79-87 | 80-92 | 80-92 | 76-88 |
| 3. Clement | 87-94 | 92-99 | 92-100 | 88-97 |
| 4. Evaristus | 94-103 | 99-109 | 100-109 | 97-105 |
| 5. Alexander | 103-114 | 109-119 | 109-119 | 105-115 |
| 6. Xystus | 114-124 | 119-128 | 119-128 | 115-125 |
| 7. Telesphorus | 124-134 | 128-138 | 128-138 | 125-136 |
| 8. Hyginus | 134-138 | 138-142 | 138-? | 136-140 |
| 9. Pius | 138-152 | 142-157 | — | 140-155 |
| 10. Anicetus | 152-164 | 157-169 | — | 155-166 |

*The blanks in this column occur because Eusebius failed to give synchronizations with the reigns of Roman emperors.

to it from the fact that Augustine and Optatus later in their listings have also reversed the sequence of Pius and Anicetus, placing the latter before the former.

The Liberian Catalogue and Liber Pontificalis. The earliest portion of the list of Roman bishops set forth in the so-called "Liberian Catalogue" is believed to represent the work of Hippolytus of Rome and/or Portus,³³ at least in the origin of its chronology. This individual prepared an episcopal catalog and general chronology reaching to the time of Bishop Pontianus (230-235).

Somewhat over a century later, at the time of the pontificate of Liberius (352-366), this list was extended so as to reach up to and include the accession of Liberius. In this extended form the list has come to be known as the "Liberian Catalogue." This catalogue was incorporated, in turn, into the *liber pontificalis*, a production whose earliest recension can be dated to the late sixth or early seventh century and which carries the papal succession down to Gregory I (590-604). The *liber pontificalis* was periodically updated thereafter.³⁴

Although the Roman list of the Liberian Catalogue appears in various alternative forms, the text as given by J. B. Lightfoot serves well for our purposes and is utilized here.³⁵ For references to the *liber pontificalis* version(s) and additions, the English translation of Louise Ropes Loomis will be cited.³⁶

³³There is diversity of opinion regarding Hippolytus' exact status as "bishop" and as to the location where he was a bishop. The most common view now current is that he was indeed a bishop (he refers, of course, to himself as such) and that his see was in Portus, near Rome. The earliest mention of him in the literature as Bishop of Portus is found in the *Chronicon Paschale* (completed about 678), though the ancient statue of "St. Hippolytus, Bishop of Portus," discovered in 1551 in a cemetery near Rome, may well be an even earlier attestation. W. Ernest Beet, *The Early Roman Episcopate to A.D. 384* (London, [1913]), 320-323, sets forth a rather extraordinary view that Hippolytus was an assistant bishop in the Roman church—and thus, a bishop *in* Rome, but not "Bishop of Rome." Other views are current too (e.g., Hippolytus as a schismatic bishop or counter-bishop in Rome), but the exact details of his episcopacy are not crucial for our purposes in this essay. What is important here are the facts (1) that he was a careful research scholar of considerable ability, and (2) that he was recognized by later generations as sufficiently orthodox and authoritative to allow his writings a prominent and *bona fide* ongoing place in the literature of the early church.

³⁴For further information, see Lightfoot, 246-252. The text of the Liberian Catalogue is given in Latin in *ibid.*, 253-258.

³⁵See n. 34, above.

³⁶Louise Ropes Loomis, trans., *The Book of the Popes (Liber Pontificalis) to the Pontificate of Gregory I*, reprint ed. (New York, 1965 [copyright, 1916 and 1944]).

Liberian Catalogue Data

As the Catalogue list begins, it first notes Peter's term of office in Rome as 25 years, 1 month, and 9 days. ("Petrus, ann. xxv, mens. uno, a. viiii").³⁷ Then it goes on to indicate that Peter was in Rome in the time of Tiberius, Gaius (Caligula), Claudius, and Nero, from the consulship of Minuci (Vinicii) and Longine until the consulship of Nerine (Nerone) and Vero (Vetere)—that is, from A.D. 30 to 55.³⁸ The chronology that is given is surprising, to say the least, inasmuch as both Paul and Peter were martyred in Rome near the end, not the beginning, of Nero's reign, which extended from 54 to 68.

Liber Pontificalis Information

With respect to the information given regarding Peter in the *liber pontificalis*, the chronology is also most intriguing. One statement regarding Peter declares that he both came to Rome during the reign of Nero and was bishop there for 25 years, 1 month, and 8 days (or in an alternate listing: 25 years, 2 months, and 3 days).³⁹ If he first came to Rome during the reign of Nero, he could not have had a 25-year episcopate and still have been martyred during that emperor's reign, for his episcopal term would have been about a decade in excess of the full term of Nero as emperor.

The next statement in the entry concerning Peter indicates that he "was bishop in the time of Tiberius Caesar and of Gaius [Caligula] and of Tiberius Claudius and of Nero."⁴⁰ This statement and the term length mentioned (25 years, 1 month, 8 days) are, of course, what we find in the Liberian Catalogue (the difference in the entries for the days—viiii and viii days, respectively—represents an easily made scribal error).⁴¹

What is most curious in the *liber* entry, however, is the anomaly already noted between the term length for Peter and the statement that Peter came to Rome during the reign of Nero, plus still another

³⁷See the entry for Peter in Lightfoot, 253.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Loomis, 4.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹In copying texts, the ancient scribes would at times miscopy a number by inadvertently adding or subtracting a "i," by reading "v" as "x" or vice versa, by confusing "l" with "i," etc. We must remember also that the handwriting of the still-earlier scribes whose texts they copied was not at times sufficiently clear.

incongruity: Since the *liber* fixes the martyrdom of both Paul and Peter to the year A.D. 67,⁴² Peter's 25 years in Rome must have begun, not with Tiberius, who died in A.D. 37 (i.e., 30 years before the martyrdom of the two apostles), but with Claudius.

Jerome in his *On Illustrious Men* (written in Bethlehem in 392) follows the same 25-year tradition, but places Peter's arrival in Rome in "the second year of Claudius" and he indicates the termination of Peter's term of "sacerdotal" service there as being in "the last, that is the fourteenth, year of Nero"—i.e., from 42 to 68 (or 67, as the end of the "25 years").⁴³ (That both Paul and Peter first went to Rome during Nero's reign is the most likely reconstruction and is the view generally held today.)

Another interesting remark made about Peter in the *liber pontificalis* is that he "ordained two bishops, Linus and Cletus, who in person fulfilled all the service of the priest in the city of Rome for the inhabitants and for strangers; then the blessed Peter gave himself to prayer and preaching, instructing the people."⁴⁴ If this was indeed the case, Linus and Cletus would seem to have been sort of coadjutors or junior colleagues of Peter (Paul is not here mentioned). Or perhaps Peter was still considered (along with Paul) as an itinerant leader, with Linus and Cletus appointed as the resident leaders in the local church. Those who held the title of "apostle" (such as Paul and Peter) moved from locale to locale with a broad ministry that might at times include a considerable length of stay in one place. In the apostolic era it also entailed (in some instances at least) the appointment by apostles of local church leadership of the fixed, non-itinerant kind.⁴⁵

In the summary of ordinations given in the entry for Peter in the *liber*, that apostle is declared to have ordained "3 bishops, 10

⁴²Loomis, 5; cf. also n. 3 on that page.

⁴³Jerome, *De vir. illus.*, chap. 1 (NPNF, 2d series, 3:361).

⁴⁴Loomis, 5.

⁴⁵Cf., e.g., the ordination of elders in local churches by Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:23). Various other examples are given in patristic literature, such as Tertullian's statement (ca. 300) that the church of Smyrna "records that Polycarp was placed therein by John" (*On Prescription against Heretics*, chap. 32 [ANF 3:258]). Irenaeus, who during his youth had seen Polycarp, speaks of the latter as having been "by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna" (*Against Heresies*, 3.3.4 [ANF 1:416]).

FIGURE 2
THE EARLY ROMAN SUCCESSION
IN THE "LIBERIAN CATALOGUE" AND
LIBER PONTIFICALIS

LIBERIAN CATALOGUE
(Lightfoot, 253)

1. Peter (30-55)
2. Linus (56-67)
3. Clement (68-76)
4. Cletus (77-83)
5. Anencletus (84-95)*
6. Evaristus (96-108)**

LIBER PONTIFICALIS
(Loomis, 4-10)

1. Peter
2. Linus (56-67)
3. Cletus (77-83)
4. Clement (68-79)
5. Anencletus (84-95)
6. Evaristus (96-108)

*Variant spellings: "Anacletus," "Anaclitus."

**Actually given as "Aristus" (shortened from "Evaristus").

priests, 7 deacons."⁴⁶ The bishop whom Peter ordained, in addition to Linus and Cletus, was undoubtedly Clement, for it is stated elsewhere in the entry that Peter "consecrated blessed Clement as bishop and committed to him the government of the see and all the church. . . ."⁴⁷ Some of the added information in the *liber* beyond that which appears in the Liberian Catalogue has derived from Pseudo-Clementine literature that we shall discuss in the follow-up article.

The Episcopal Successions in the Catalogue and Liber

The successions as set forth in the Liberian Catalogue and in the *liber pontificalis* version given by Loomis may at first sight seem different. The situation is indicated in **figure 2**.

⁴⁶Loomis, 6. The listings in two variants have the order reversed, but the enumeration is the same. Also one of the variants indicates that Peter "held three ordinations."

⁴⁷Ibid., 5.

It is apparent that there is a reversal of “Cletus” and “Clement” in the *liber*. However, when the two lists are analyzed on the basis of the chronology given, the successions of the bishops would actually be in identically the same order.

In both forms of this particular succession list, moreover, there appears to have been a doubling of Anencletus into “Cletus” and “Anencletus.” Possibly two persons are actually in view, but the data from all the other major independent sources would make it seem more likely that “Cletus” is simply a shortened form of “Anencletus.”⁴⁸

It is further noteworthy that Linus, who is placed in all the lists as the immediate successor of Peter (or in some lists as the successor of Peter and Paul) is indeed so enumerated in the Liberian Catalogue and in the *liber pontificalis* but is assigned the period from 56-67 as the time of his episcopacy.⁴⁹ These dates would make the *end* of Linus’ episcopal term occur the same year as the traditional one for the martyrdom of Peter and Paul! Thus, the beginning date given for Clement—i.e., 68—makes him, in actuality, the *first* successor of Peter.

Some other ancient writings that we will analyze in our next article also place Clement as the *immediate* successor of Peter. The most notable—and credible—of these is Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 200).⁵⁰ And Jerome makes an interesting reference to Clement as “the fourth bishop of Rome after Peter [obviously counting Peter as the first bishop], if indeed the second was Linus and the third Anacletus,⁵¹ although most of the Latins think that Clement was second after the apostle.”⁵² Obviously, at least two traditions as to

⁴⁸In the three related listings of Irenaeus, Eusebius, and Epiphanius, the name “Cletus” (in Gk., Κλήτος, “Klētōs”) appears in Epiphanius in place of the “Anencletus” of the other two writers.

⁴⁹Cf. figure 2.

⁵⁰Tertullian, *On Prescription against Heretics*, chap. 32 (ANF 3:258). Direct quotation from this source will be given in our follow-up article.

⁵¹In the manuscripts and editions giving this source, a variety of spellings occur of “Anencletus”/“Anacletus,” such as “Anenclitus,” “Anincletus,” “Anecletus,” “Aneclitus,” and “Anicletus”; also “Elitus” for “Cletus.” See NFNF, 2d series, 3:366, col. 2, n. 2.

⁵²Jerome, *De vir. illus.*, chap. 15 (NPNF, 2d series, 3:366). We have noticed also, of course, the further variation represented in the Optatus/Augustine listing of this same time period; but in that list, the placement of Clement before Anencletus is an obvious erroneous reversal of the two names.

the earliest post-apostolic episcopal succession in Rome were circulating ca. A.D. 400: (1) the one indicated in Eusebius (and in Irenaeus and Epiphanius); and (2) the one expressed by Tertullian and which later surfaced also in the chronology of the Liberian Catalogue and *liber pontificalis*.

4. *Preliminary Assessment of the Data*

The basic question emerging from the foregoing data is whether any semblance of order can be elicited therefrom. It has become customary in scholarly circles to reconstruct the history of this early Roman succession by rejecting at least the chronological information of the Latin (or Roman) list—even though that information may well have derived from such a careful researcher as Hippolytus in the earlier part of the third century.

But are the variant succession lists and seemingly aberrant chronologies *really* as mutually exclusive as one might think at first glance? Is it possible that a different reconstruction—one paralleling the patterns recognizable in the Roman government's administrative modalities—could reveal that the conflicts we *think* we see in the data are not quite so irreconcilable after all?

We must certainly admit, of course, the presence of scribal errors in these materials and also the incorporation of information from unreliable sources (especially into the *liber pontificalis*). These matters do not necessarily, however, do away with the more essential data represented—data which have derived from early and credible sources. My previous study on monepiscopacy discovered a basic harmony among source materials which various researchers had considered as more or less irreconcilable. What was needed was simply a broad understanding and correlation of the sources in their contexts both geographically and chronologically.⁵³ Historians constantly make discoveries of this sort.

There is still further evidence that we must explore before we draw our ultimate conclusions, and to such evidence we will turn in our next essay. At this stage of our inquiry, however, we can at least ask ourselves some pertinent questions with regard to the direction our study has thus far taken us.

⁵³Strand, 74. Some examples of rectification of earlier misconceptions regarding the letters of Ignatius are given in n. 31 on p. 75, and in n. 33 on pp. 75-76. Other examples exist as well, of course.

First of all, if indeed first-century civil polity in Rome itself and the *duovir/quattuorvir* governance of western municipalities provided a pattern for Roman church administration to copy, could not there be a fairly high degree of possibility (or even probability) that there were *colleagues* in leadership of the Roman church in the earliest period of that church's existence? Just as Peter and Paul worked in concert and collegiality there, is it not possible that Linus and Anencletus were indeed coadjutants, as certain traditions indicate? And could not Clement possibly also have fitted into some sort of collegiate role immediately after the death of Peter? Moreover, if Clement was a co-bishop from ca. 68 to 76 (as per the Liberian Catalogue) and then again held the episcopacy some two decades later from ca. 88 to 97, this would be a near-parallel to Augustus' holding consulships till 23 B.C. and then being a consul again in 5 and 2 B.C.

And there are other facts to consider, as well: (1) that the contemporary evidence gives no indication of monepiscopacy in the Roman church during the first half century or so of its existence after the death of Paul and Peter; (2) that the single-line succession lists were originally created contra the Gnostics in order to trace a step-by-step succession of leaders in local Christian churches, this as guaranteeing the faithful transmission of apostolic truth within the *bona fide* Christian congregations; and (3) the earliest such list—that of Hegesippus—was drawn up (i.e., “assembled” and/or “arranged”) by him personally. This last-mentioned fact takes on added significance in view of Hegesippus' own background experience with monepiscopacy as the only church-governance style (monepiscopacy had been operative in Syro-Palestine, Hegesippus' homeland, for a considerable length of time) and in view of the further fact that monepiscopacy was already well entrenched in Rome, in Corinth, and in other places that Hegesippus may have visited. In piecing together the bits of information he found in Rome concerning the Roman church's leaders, he undoubtedly *assumed* that there had been from the beginning only a single line of bishops also in that church.⁵⁴

As mentioned earlier, in our next essay we will explore several further ancient sources of information concerning the earliest leader-

⁵⁴See *ibid.*, 74-75, 79-80. For a thoroughgoing discussion which elucidates backgrounds and rationale pertaining to church governance, including the early rise of monepiscopacy in the Jerusalem church, see Arnold Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession in the First Two Centuries of the Church* (London, 1953).

ship succession in the post-apostolic Roman church, analyze a bit further the succession lists (particularly their chronological data), and set forth some conclusions and implications deriving from this study.

EXCURSUS

OVERVIEW OF ROMAN REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS OF PRIMARY SIGNIFICANCE IN THE "AUGUSTAN PRINCIPATE"⁵⁵

In the main text above, I pointed out that three Republican institutions or authorities of major significance were the chief means by which, along with prestige, Augustus ruled as *princeps*—the consulate, the proconsulate, and the "tribunician authority." Inasmuch as many *AUSS* readers may have little knowledge of Roman history, this excursus is presented for the purpose of furnishing such readers with at least a quick overview of the development of these republican forms up to 27 B.C., the year when Augustus' "political overhaul" was complete and put into operation.

Political Institutions of the Roman Republic

After the collapse of the Roman monarchy about 509 B.C., an assembly of the people known as the Curiate Assembly took on added authority in passing legislation presented to it and also became the elective body for the new Roman magistracies. Other assemblies of the people—the Centuriate and Tribal—were later instituted and took over the major functions of the Curiate Assembly. Only the latter of these needs further mention, which will be given below under the heading "Civil Tribunate and 'Tribunician Authority.'"

In addition to the assemblies of all the people, which were called only at intervals, there was a prestigious body called the "Senate" that could and did enact decrees or laws within limits given to its jurisdiction. A sort of "carry-over" of the old royal council of the Monarchy period, this group of statesmen kept the day-to-day operation of Rome functional, primarily with respect to legislative enactments needed. This Senate was originally composed only of members from leading Roman families in wealth, political heritage, and general influence. The senators were called *patres* ("fathers") and their entire families came to be known as "the patrician" class, in contrast to the common citizenry known as "plebeians" or "plebs." (As Rome expanded its boundaries, it incorporated, as well, peoples who were non-citizens but who were granted varying degrees of political rights.)

⁵⁵See the sources mentioned in n. 3.

With respect to the election of Roman magistrates, only the full citizenry (both patricians and plebeians) could vote, but the plebeians were originally barred from holding office, from becoming a part of the senatorial elite, and from participating in high-level legislative activities.

The Consulship

The consulship originated at the very outset of the Republic period, though at first the holders of this highest elected office were called "praetors." When "consul" became the standard term for holders of this top magistracy, it continued to be the designation used during the era of the Roman Republic, except for some 75 years from the latter part of the fifth century to nearly the middle of the fourth century. For this period of time the consulship was suspended in favor of boards of "military tribunes with consular power," a political shift that took place because of a military reorganization. However, after the system of regular consuls was reinstated in 362 B.C., it continued as such throughout the rest of the history of the Roman Republic and into the early Roman Empire.

The consulship was characterized by *collegiality* (two equal consuls), by *annuality* (one-year terms of office held concurrently), and by receipt of the office through *popular election*. One particularly interesting feature of the reorganization of 362 B.C. was the stipulation that no magistrate could run for reelection to the same office without a lapse of ten years. By curbing the opportunity for any one individual to gain an excessive amount of power, this regulation further safeguarded the principle of a genuinely democratic form of government. Also in 362, an assistant to the two consuls was added, bearing the title of "Praetor."

Although originally reserved only for patricians, the consulship was partly opened to plebeians by the "Licinian-Sextian Laws" of about the mid-fourth century (usually attributed to the year 363 B.C.). At this time, it appears that one consul could be chosen from among the tribunes, representatives of the plebeians (see below under "The Civil Tribunate and 'Tribunician Authority'"). A societal outcome was the breaking down of the old demarcation between patricians and plebeians and the creating of a new kind of dichotomy between an emerging "patrician-plebeian" nobility and the poorer plebs.

Imperium

Imperium was the supreme authority that had been vested in the earlier kings with respect to civil, military, and judicial administration. Thus, as had been the case with the kings, now under the Republic only the magistrates with *imperium* had the full power of "life and limb" in both military and civil contexts. Furthermore, only such magistrates could introduce into the Senate and the assemblies of the people legislative proposals to be enacted.

The consuls and their assistants, the praetors, were the only regular magistrates having unlimited *imperium*. There was a provision that in cases of extreme emergency a dictator could be appointed by the consuls (with the advice and consent of the Senate) for a tenure of not more than six months. The dictatorship, like the consulship, carried unlimited *imperium*.

The Proconsulship

The proconsulship emerged as an extension of the consulship. As Rome expanded and was engaged in far-flung military campaigns, the question arose as to what would happen if the consuls were leading the Roman armies at the time when their terms of office expired. Leading the armies was one of their major functions, along with their general civil administration.

This need for consuls to continue in battle at the end of their annual tenure led to a constitutional readjustment that permitted, with the approval of the Senate, that consuls could continue to lead the armies temporarily even after their elected successors had taken office. In this capacity, these "ex-consuls" were called "proconsuls" ("for consuls"). Moreover, they continued to have *imperium*, but this *imperium* was limited to the particular military leadership in which they were engaged, and it was subordinate to that of the consuls. In no case could it be exercised within the limits proper of the city of Rome. Eventually, with geographical growth and the establishment of Roman provinces, ex-consuls and ex-praetors were appointed as "proconsuls" for the governorship of the provinces (as, for instance, in the Roman province of Asia in Western Asia Minor).

The Civil Tribunate and "Tribunician Authority"

The civil tribunate emerged by way of concessions by the patricians to the plebeians. Tribunes were elected representatives of the plebeians, who during the period of the Roman Republic gained powers of intercession and veto. That is, they could intercede in such a way as to terminate proceedings against a member of their group who was being unjustly punished by the magistrates, and they could place an injunction against legislation which they deemed detrimental to the common good.

The Hortensian Law of 287 B.C. greatly enhanced the status of tribunes (and of the plebs in general), even considerably more so than did the Licinian-Sextian legislation mentioned above. The tribunes' veto power was now strengthened by allowing tribunes to be present in the Senate and there to speak to, and even to veto, proposals before that body. Thus they could effectively keep proposals from ever acquiring the status of law. Moreover, the assembly of the plebeians, called the "Tribal Assembly" in contrast to the broader assemblies of all Roman citizenry (which were commonly dominated by the patricians), was made the main legislative body for the Roman State. Finally, the Hortensian Law also stipulated that

enactments of the Tribal Assembly would become law without either prior or subsequent approval by the Senate.

The political clout that was gained by the tribunes at this time was thus very great indeed; and, furthermore, from a sociological standpoint, the Hortensian Law was a catalyst that hastened greatly the breaking down of the caste distinction between patricians and plebeians. Later the concept of a "tribunician authority" emerged as a reflection of the powers gained by the tribunes.

Modification in Roman Republic Institutions during the Late Republic

During the turmoil of the late Republic, especially in the first century B.C., the Republican institutions underwent considerable modification. For instance, the ten-year time lapse between terms of service in the same magistracy fell increasingly into disuse. Thus, consuls could continue in office year after year, through annual reelection, and by this means they could gain considerable prestige and power. The concept of *two* equal consuls serving concurrently, however, was not similarly modified. Collegiality was a principle of major importance in the late Republic, and continued to be so in the early Principate.

Perhaps the most flagrant late-Republic violation of the older Republican practices was the extension of the time limits on the dictatorship. The case of Julius Caesar (mentioned above, in the main text) provides a prime example of this adjustment.

Augustus' Sources of Power

Octavian, Julius Caesar's adopted son, achieved extraordinary prominence as a "savior of Rome" at the time of late-Republic political and military turmoil. When he came into a rulership role he shunned the autocratic aspects of Julius' career. Under the title of Augustus Caesar, he was, as mentioned in our main text, the first so-called Roman "emperor," who inaugurated the Principate and ruled through the use of Republican offices and powers.

Inasmuch as Augustus' use of Republican models as his source of authority has already been adequately noted, we need not pursue this topic further here. The purpose of this excursus has simply been to provide a quick overview of the backgrounds for the Republican forms and institutions that played such an important role in Augustus' creation of the Principate. Those Republican forms and institutions, including the concept of collegiality, continued to carry considerable prestige and influence for the Roman populace and in western municipalities throughout the first century A.D.