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- Turmel, Joseph. "La Lettre De Clément Romain Aux Corinthiens." *Revue de l'histoire Des Religions* 97 (1928): 53–89.

# THE LETTER OF ROMAN CLEMENT TO THE CORINTHIANS

Roman Clement's letter to the Corinthians was written in the wake of serious trouble in the church at Corinth. The Christians in that city had dismissed their ministers and installed in their place men who had seduced them. Clement's letter shows them the fault of which they had been guilty and urges them to return to the right path from which they had strayed. It also exhorts the intruding ministers to give way to the deposed ministers and to withdraw.

Until 1875 the letter of Roman Clement was known only from the Greek manuscript Alexandrinus, in which six chapters at the end of the letter (from LVII, 6 to LXIII inclusive) were missing. Since 1875 a second Greek manuscript, a Latin version, a Syriac version and a Coptic version have been published successively, which (except for this last version) give the complete text.

I. - It is written in the name of the Roman Church.

The title of the letter is as follows:

The church that dwells in Rome to the church that dwells in Corinth. To the elect sanctified according to the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is the beginning:

The sudden and repeated calamities which have struck us are the cause, brothers, that our attention is turned a little late to your regrettable situation, well-nigh, to this sedition among the elect of God, odious and impious which some men and insolents have raised...

And this is the end:

We have sent to you faithful and wise men who, from youth to old age, have lived without reproach among us. They will be witnesses between you and us. We have done this to show you that our whole concern has been and is to see peace return to you promptly. May God, who sees all things, who is the "master of spirits and lord of all flesh, who has chosen the Lord "Jesus Christ, who has chosen us through him to be his special people, give to every soul who calls upon his glorious and holy name faith, fear, peace, patience...

In the preceding lines, the Roman Church, that is to say the community of Christians in Rome, has the sole right to speak, the sole right to intervene. The letter gives us, from one end to the other, the same spectacle. Dionysius of Corinth, who mentions it around 170, tells us that it was written by Clement. His information must be exact. But we note that not once does the writer show himself or even allow himself to be guessed. The letter of Roman Clement to the Corinthians was written in the name of the Roman church. It is a collective letter.

## II. - The primacy of the Roman church.

How did the church in Rome intervene in the affairs of Corinth? Did the victims of the rebellion call upon her for help? Did the insurgents ask for her support? The answer to these questions is found in the following text (XLVII, 7):

The news of this revolt has not only reached us. It has reached the ears of the pagans themselves, so that your madness causes blasphemy against the name of the Lord.

From this it follows that the Roman church was not informed of the events in Corinth by the authors of the revolt or by its victims, but by public rumor. It was therefore on its own initiative that it went to the defense of the outraged right.

Did she take this initiative by virtue of a higher mandate and in obedience to the prescriptions of Christ who had charged her with the maintenance of order? In this hypothesis she had to show her titles, mention the divine powers with which she was invested and above all speak with authority. Let us see her at work and note her language. After having noted the ravages caused by jealousy among the Corinthians, she adds (VII, i):

We write this to you, dear friends, not only to call you to order, but to instruct ourselves, for we are in the same arena as you: the same battle awaits us.

And, after having proved the apostolic origin of the clergy, she adds (XLIV, 3):

We do not consider it right to reject from the ministry those who have been established by the apostles or, later, by other eminents with the approval of the whole church... It is not a light fault to remove from the episcopate men who have offered the gifts holily and correctly.

At the end of the letter (LVI, i) we read:

Let us intercede for the guilty, so that they submit not to us certainly, but to the will of God... LVIII, 2: Accept our advice and you will not repent... If there are any who refuse to listen to the words that God has spoken through us, they must know that they are in grave danger... LXIII, 3: You will bring us joy and gladness if, taking into account what we have written to you through the Holy Spirit, you cut short the culpable anger of rivalry, in accordance with the advice of peace and concord which we have given you in this letter.

We learn that the letter was written "by the Holy Spirit". But, in the fourth century, the emperor Constantine will say, in his letter to the church of Alexandria, that he convened the council of Nicaea under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; the Roman council of 378 will attribute to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the measures taken with regard to the Church; and the pope Damasus will award the bishop of Thessalonica a patent for inspiration by the Spirit (i). In those ancient times the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was a banal favor which does not need to be taken into account. There is no need to attach importance to the text that speaks of "words that God has spoken through us". These words of God are the numerous scriptural oracles mentioned in the letter, oracles that came to the Corinthians from the Roman church, but which emanate from God. When the "words spoken by God" and the "inspiration of the Holy Spirit" are set aside, it remains that the Roman church gives orders but not once does it impose them. And, it happens to claim submission, it specifies that this submission is not to itself, but to the will of God. The letter of Clement Romain is presented as an act of charity; it is not in any degree an act of authority.

What is true is that, in order to help the unfortunate, one must be superior to him in strength and wealth. The Roman church, which is trying to save its sister in Corinth, possesses the spiritual health of which the latter is deprived. She feels strong, powerful; and she uses her strength and power to do good around her. This is the primacy to which the letter of Clement Romain bears witness. It is a primacy of fact, which has no connection with the oracle Thou art Peter, whose pontifical traps will not cease beating their ears later.

### III. - The apostolic origin of the clergy.

The Christians of Corinth had changed the personnel of their clergy. This revolutionary procedure was linked to causes which will soon be unraveled. It brought with it consequences. The letter condemns the motives of the revolt. It also deals with the consequences. But it is only in the dissertation which goes from XL to XLIV that it deals with the revolt itself and that it judges it. The following texts make this judgment known to us (XLII):

The apostles... preached the coming of the kingdom of God... Their first converts they made bishops and leaders of those who would later come to faith. In doing so, they did not innovate. For it has been written about bishops and deacons for a long time. For the Scripture speaks thus: "I will establish their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith(i)"... Our apostles knew from Our Lord Jesus Christ that the episcopate would be the object of competition. That is why, having the foreknowledge of the future, they instituted those of whom we have just spoken, and they laid down the rule that, once they had died, other tried and tested men would receive their ministry by succession. We do not think, therefore, that it is right to remove from the ministry those who, having been instituted by them or by other eminent men with the approval of the whole church, have discharged their office in the service of Christ's flock in a blameless manner... and to whom all have long given good testimony. It would be no small sin if we were to remove from the episcopate men who have presented the offerings in a blameless and holy manner. Blessed are the priests whose journey is over and who have had a fruitful and peaceful death! They need not fear that anyone will come to take them from their post. For we see that you have taken away from some of you the duties which were regularly entrusted to them and which they had performed well.

According to this account, the apostles themselves chose the first members of the clergy, and they prescribed that they should choose their own successors with the consent of the Christian assembly. One is introduced into the clergy with the consent of the assembly by men who were themselves introduced into it mediately by the apostles. Or, which amounts to the same thing, it is the apostles who, through various intermediaries, introduce people into the clergy. And, once you are in the clergy, you are there forever, except in the case of unworthiness. The clergy is therefore a separate caste. In two words, Clement teaches the apostolic origin of the clergy, and he conceives of the clergy as a class which, deducting the entrance, escapes the control of the faithful.

It goes without saying that Paul, who announced the coming restoration of the kingdom of David, never thought of founding a clergy. With the exception of what relates to the preaching of the coming of the kingdom of God, the account we have just read is therefore artificial, when compared with history. But it reflects exactly the situation of the Roman church at the time of Clement. The clergy was then a corporation from which one did not leave when one had entered it. Artificial from the point of view of history, Clement's picture is the faithful translation of

a state of affairs. It is a question of knowing how this state of affairs was formed, that is to say, how the clergy came into being and how its members acquired security of tenure.

Like all organizations, the clergy was created by the function it had to perform. What was that function? The preaching of Christian hope, which comes to mind first, must be dismissed. This hope, the object of which was the coming restoration of the kingdom of David by Christ, would not have been sufficient to attract Christians to the periodic meetings without which a clergy is not understood. The function that gave rise to the clergy was the weekly banquet. As soon as there was a Christian banquet, there was a man to preside over it, to collect the offerings, to consecrate these offerings to God in accordance with Jewish custom, to make known the prayers and thanksgivings of which the banquet was the object, to distribute to the poor the surplus gifts brought in which were not consumed on the spot, and to give the attendees a moral lecture. As many banquets as there were, so many men were needed to carry out these indispensable functions. These men constituted the clergy. It is the weekly banquet which gave birth to the clergy. Now the attendance at the banquet was not an obligation which one fulfilled to conform to the law; it was a privilege which one enjoyed with eagerness. It is true that in order to participate in the banquet, it was necessary to belong to the Christian corporation and, consequently, to adhere to the Christian hope that the propagandists preached in the synagogues. But for those who met the requirements, the weekly banquet was a reward, the deprivation of which would have been considered a blight. In short, the clergy did not derive from an institution which entrusted it with the deposit of Christian hope; it was created by the weekly banquet, in which Christian hope was undoubtedly discussed, but which was established spontaneously, because it was demanded by morals.

The clergy, who owed their existence to the banquet, owed to their mode of election the irremovability which made them a caste apart. At the beginning, the seniority in the faith was the principal recommendation for the presidency; they were thus the "elders" (presbuteroï, priests) who were charged with the care to preside over the banquets. Then, little by little, especially in the important centers, capacity seemed a preferable title to seniority, and the presidency of the banquets was entrusted to those who could carry it out with the most brilliance. Nothing was changed in the vocabulary; the presidents continued to be called "elders" as in the past; but this word lost its primitive meaning: henceforth we will call them priests. One was therefore a priest, first because he was the oldest in the assembly in the profession of faith, and later because he was the most capable. But when you were the oldest, you were the oldest forever. And it was also forever that one was the most capable. Under both modes of election, therefore, security of tenure was guaranteed to the presidents, and the clergy constituted a social class from which one did not leave once one had entered it, such is the factual situation to which Clement attributed by fiction an apostolic origin.

## IV. - There is no monarchical episcopate.

What are the members of the clergy called? Clement calls them priests. He says:

XLIV, 5: Blessed are the priests who have completed their journey... for we see that you have taken away from some among you the duties which had been irregularly entrusted to them...

XLVII, 6: It is a shame... to hear that the church of Corinth... revolted\* against its priests because of one or two persons.

LIV, 2: Let the flock of Christ live in peace with the constituted priests.

LVIII, i: Submit yourselves to the priests.

So the clergy of Corinth included, before the revolt, several priests. So far, nothing surprising. The astonishment begins when one learns that all these priests had the episcopate, were bishops. The fact cannot be disputed, since Clement declares (XLIV, 4) that it is no small sin to remove from the episcopate men who have presented the offerings in an irreproachable manner, and that he proves this sin by putting the conduct of the Corinthians in opposition with the apostolic law which constituted the bishops XLII, 4 and fixed the rules relative to the transmission of the episcopate (XLIV, i-3).

To account for this situation, two hypotheses can be imagined: one according to which all the Christians of Corinth met in a single assembly whose presidency was exercised successively and in turn by the multiple members of the clergy; the other according to which there were several places of meeting and, consequently, several assemblies each of which had its own president. But the first hypothesis, with its crumbled and dispersed authority, does not provide the unity essential to the most rudimentary government; it must be abandoned. Let us say, then, that the faithful of Corinth, before the revolt, met for the banquet and the distribution of gifts to the poor in several autonomous assemblies, that each of these assemblies was headed by a priest who was a depositaire of the bishopric, and that the number of priest-bishops of Corinth was equal to the number of meetings for the corporate banquet.

Clement, who tells us that the church of Corinth is under the federal regime, does not tell us what the regime of the church of Rome is. But he allows us to guess. If the plurality of bishops in Corinth were contrary to what he calls the apostolic institution, he would point out this redhibitory defect, and the revolt of the Corinthians against my irregular situation would be welcome. But he has only words of sympathy for the deposed bishops, and all his severity is directed at the revolutionaries. He therefore believes that the Church of Corinth, with its many bishops, is a faithful copy of the plan drawn up by the apostles. We conclude that the constitution in force at Corinth was also in force at Rome, that the Christians of Rome met at the

banquet in various assemblies, that each assembly was autonomous, and that each had a bishop at its head.

This conclusion throws light on a text of Epiphanius (Panarion XL11, i) borrowed, one agrees, from an ancient document, and where we read that Marcion arrived at Rome

went to the priests instructed by the apostles... and asked them in vain to admit him into their communion.

Why address the “priests” and not their leader the bishop of Rome? Marcion's approach is bizarre, as long as one believes in the existence of a monarchical episcopate in the Roman church around 138. On the contrary, it is explained when one knows that the Christians in Rome at that time formed independent groups, each headed by a bishop-priest. The federative system of the Roman church in the middle of the second century gives the key to the text of Epiphanius, which in turn confirms the federative system.

This regime sheds light on another obscure point and receives a new confirmation. It is the very context of Clement's letter that I want to discuss. The piece is supposedly written by the Roman church. Why this fiction? Why is the real author hiding? Popes and bishops have often left to subordinates the task of composing bulls and mandates for which they then took responsibility. But never since Clement has a bishop or a pope hidden himself behind the church of which he was the head. The letter from the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth is a unique case. Unique and inexplicable for anyone who insists on seeing Clement as the head of all the Christians in Rome. Everything becomes clearer when we know that, in the great cities and especially in Rome, the assemblies of Christians were multiple and autonomous. Leader of a group. Clement was not the head of the Roman church; he could not cover it with his name. The letter from the church in Rome to the church in Corinth bears the only signature that suited him, that of anonymity.

## V. - The Trinity.

The mystery of the Trinity has gone through two phases. In its present form, which goes back to St. Augustine, the Trinity consists in the fact that the three divine persons have the same numerical substance. Before St. Augustine their unity of substance was only specific, that is, of the same order as the unity of the members of a single family. It goes without saying that Clement did not know the second stage of the mystery. Did he experience the first? The following texts give, it is said, a clearly affirmative answer to this question:

XLVI, 5-6: Why among you quarrels, anger, divisions, schisms? Do we not have one God, one Christ, one Spirit of grace poured out upon us, one vocation in Christ? Why do we tear and split the members of Christ... to the point of forgetting that we are members of one another?

LVII1, 2: Follow our advice, you will not regret it. For as God lives, as the Lord Jesus lives, and as the Holy Spirit lives, the faith and hope of the elect, he who humbly, in a spirit of constant and irreproachable equity, observes the commands and precepts given by God, will deserve to be counted among the saved...

In these passages God, Christ and the Spirit are, on two different occasions, associated; and this association is, except for one term, identical with the Trinitarian formula in which the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are united. Based on this approximate identity, theologians conclude that Clement knows the mystery of the Trinity. What is the value of this conclusion? It is legitimate if Clement's formula is not separated by a nuance from the Trinitarian formula. If, between the two formulas, there is an abyss, it is without value. It is a question of measuring the distance that separates Clement from the doctors who came after him. They put the Father at the head of the association. He puts God. Let us see if these two terms are inspired by the same concerns.

When the doctors, from Irenaeus onwards, speak of the Trinity, they have at heart to explain that the Son and the Spirit participate in the divinity of the first person, that this one is not alone in possessing the divine substance, that it communicates it to the two others; and it is to express this state of things that they always designate the first member of the divine college under the name of Father, and never under the name of God. If they had called him God, they would have seemed to reserve for him alone the monopoly of divinity, and this is what they wanted to avoid. Called Father, he appears without doubt as the source of the divine substance; but, at least, he admits the other two persons to participate in his riches. This is the thought that guided the doctors in the exclusive use they made of the term "Father" to designate the first person of the Trinity.

And this is also the thought to which Clement remained strange. He has precisely the opposite concern. In his texts as we have them, he wants to show us that God does not communicate his divinity either to Christ or to the Spirit. And, if he agrees to associate these last two characters with God, it is only after having warned us that God keeps the monopoly of the divine substance. Clement does not know the mystery of the Trinity, and the formulas which he uses, according to our current texts, have only an external relationship with the Trinitarian formula.

However, it must be admitted, this resemblance, however external it may be, is no less surprising. One has the very clear impression that it cannot be fortuitous. Between the formulas of Clement and the Trinitarian formula a secret link must exist. And the first thought that comes to mind is to look for this link in the relationship of cause and effect. Would the formulas of Clement be then the germ which, while blooming, produced the mystery of the Trinity and the formula of this mystery?

Before pronouncing ourselves, let us examine the great prayer of chapters Lix-Lxi. It is agreed that it is a piece of the liturgy of the Roman Church. It teaches us how the Christian community



of Rome, at the time of Clement, presented its homage, its thanksgiving and its requests to God. Let us listen to it (LIX.- 3; LXI, 2):

You who multiply the peoples on earth, and who, among them all, have chosen those who love you through Jesus Christ your beloved servant, through whom you have instructed us, sanctified us, honored us, we pray you. Master, to be our defender, our protector. Save those of us who are in distress, have mercy on the humble, lift up those who have fallen... Let all peoples know that you are the only God, that Jesus Christ is your servant, that we are your people and the sheep of your pasture...

It is you, Master, heavenly king of the worlds, who has given to the son of man glory, honor and power over the things of the earth. You, Lord, direct their counsel according to what is good and pleasing in your sight, so that, exercising in peace, gentleness, piety, the power you have given them, they may find favor with you. You alone have the power to give us these and other greater gifts. We celebrate you through the high priest and protector of our souls, Jesus-Christ, through whom be glory and greatness, now and from generation to generation and forever. Amen.

In this prayer addressed exclusively to God, Christ intervenes as the instrument God has used for the execution of his plans for mankind. This role is especially emphasized in the introduction to the prayer (LIX, 2), where it speaks of "the beloved servant Jesus Christ, through whom he [the creator of the universe] has called us out of darkness into light. But the Spirit is totally absent. From the day when faith in the mystery of the Trinity appeared, when this faith was concretized in the Trinitarian formula, the Spirit became the inseparable companion of the Father and the Son. In the liturgical prayer which has just passed under our eyes and of which Clement is indeed the author (one finds there his style, one should thus not consider it as a piece previous to Clement who would have limited himself to transcribe it), it is not so. Here God and Jesus Christ, who are associated, do not bring in their wake the Spirit. They are both alone.

This fact is irreconcilable not only with the knowledge of the Trinity, but also with any Trinitarian concern. Now, without doubt, we knew that Clement was unaware of the mystery of the Trinity; but we thought that we had noted in him the concern to associate the Spirit with God and with Christ; we thought that from this concern came two formulas related externally to the Trinitarian formula. This was an illusion. Clement who, in the great liturgical prayer, did not have the idea of associating the Spirit to God and to Jesus Christ, could not make him enter elsewhere in this august company. And, consequently, he could not write the two formulas of XLVI, 5 and LVIII, 2 in which the Spirit intervenes after God and Christ. Not that one should reject these two sentences altogether. They belong to the interpolator for all that relates to the Spirit; the rest belongs to Clement whose authentic text is the following:

XLVI, 5-6: Why do you have quarrels, anger, divisions and schisms among yourselves?  
Do we not have one God, one Christ, one vocation in Christ?

LVIII, 2: As God lives, as the Lord Jesus lives, the faith and hope of the elect, he who... observes the orders and precepts given by God will deserve to be counted among the saved...

Clement, in XLVI and LVIII, mentioned God and Christ; he mentioned only them. Then, later, around 170, when faith in the mystery of the Trinity had made its appearance in the Christian conscience, these two texts were brought into line with the new belief by inserting the Spirit. We wondered if the formulas of Trinitarian appearance, of which XLVI and LVIII give us the spectacle today, were not the germ from which the Christian Trinity came later. We see now that it is nothing. They did not serve to elaborate the mystery; it is, on the contrary, to the mystery that they owe their existence. Instead of being a cause they are a product.

Before going any further, let us stop for a moment on the Spirit. Clement obviously knows the divine Spirit of which the Old Testament speaks so often and which inspires the prophets. One thus has no reason to suspect the texts VIII, 1, XIII, 1, XVI, 2, XXII. i, XLV, 2 which attribute the oracles of the Old Testament to the Holy Spirit. But he does not know the Spirit as a character distinct from the Father and the Son and nevertheless participating with them in the divine substance. One cannot therefore attribute to him the texts II, 2, XLII, 3 (nor probably also XLII, 4), in which the Trinitarian conception is, or seems to be, assumed. These texts moreover are easily detached from the context which frames them, as everyone can see in the following extracts:

II, 2: Thus a deep and sweet peace was given to all; an insatiable desire for benevolence and a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit for all took place.

XLII, 3: The apostles... before receiving the instructions of the Lord Jesus Christ, fully convinced by his resurrection and strengthened by the word of God, with a conviction produced by the Holy Spirit, went forth to proclaim that the kingdom of God should soon come. Preaching in the countryside and in the cities, they established their first converts, having tested them by the Spirit, as bishops and deacons of the future believers.

## VI. - The Christ.

Let us now study Christ. Let us see what he is in himself and what he came to do in the world.

Clement's Christ is first of all the "servant" of God of whom the liturgical prayer LIX, 2, 3, 4 speaks (see p. 64). This "servant" was "chosen" by God; he was the object of a decree of election on God's part, similar to that with which we ourselves have been blessed. This is what we learn from the following text of LXIV:

May the God who sees all things, who is the lord of spirits and the lord of all flesh, who has chosen *ho eklexamenos* the Lord Jesus Christ and us through him to be his peculiar people, give to every soul who calls upon his magnificent and holy name faith, fear...

Servant chosen by God: this is one of the aspects under which the Christ of Clement appears to us. He presents another aspect: the servant of God is not a mere mortal like us. This is what follows from the following passage, XVI, 1-2:

Christ (is to those who humble themselves, not to those who exalt themselves above his flock. The mirror of God's majesty, the Lord Jesus Christ did not come with a display of pomp and pride, although he could have, but was humbled according to what the Holy Spirit had foretold of him...

The Christ who "could have" come in splendor, therefore, existed before he came to earth. The same conclusion is drawn from XXXII, 2 where we read that Christ descended from Jacob "according to the flesh". Clement's Christ existed before he took on a body. He is superior to humanity. How far does this superiority go? This question leads us to the study of the texts where Christ is presented to us as the son of God. In VII, 4 we read that the blood of Christ is "precious to God his father". But it is especially in XXXVI, 2-4 that the divine filiation of Christ is highlighted with the help of reasoning that the epistle to the Hebrews also uses:

Reflecting the majesty of God, he is as much (Superior to the angels, as the name he has inherited outweighs their name. It is written, in fact, that God makes the winds his messengers and the flame of fire his servant. But to his son the master says: You are my son, I have begotten you today.

Son of God and reflection of the divine majesty, these are pompous prerogatives. But we read in XXXIII, 4 that man is "the imprint of the image" of God. This reduces the scope of the "reflection of the majesty" of God. Similarly, in XXIX,<sup>i</sup> Christians are invited to love "this forgiving and merciful father who has made us his chosen portion". In XXIII,<sup>i</sup> there is mention of the "compassionate and merciful father" whose tenderness is poured out "on all those who fear him". And in XIX, 2 God is even called "the father and creator of the universe". This reduces the scope of Christ's divine filiation. Let us note, moreover, that this son of God never bears the title of God.

Let us conclude that the Christ of Clement, who is above humanity, is below the divinity. Considered in relation to us, he is "the Lord", a term we frequently encounter in the letter; but in relation to God, he is a servant or envoy, according to what we read in XLII, 1: 1 "Jesus Christ was sent by God".

With what mission was the Christ of Clement charged? What did he come to do on earth? He came to take us out of the darkness in which we were immersed, to give us the knowledge which is the source of immortality; and this knowledge is that of God. This is what we learn from the following two texts:

XXXVI, 2: It is through Jesus that we contemplate the "heights of the two. It is through him that we contemplate, as in a mirror, the immaculate and august face of God. It is through him that the eyes of our heart are opened, that our once ignorant and darkened intelligence is opened to the light. It is through him that the Master wanted us to taste the science principle of immortality.

LIX, 2: The Creator... through Jesus Christ has called us out of darkness into light, out of ignorance into full knowledge of the glory of his name... You have opened the eyes of our hearts to know you.

**To bring light to us, to reveal God to us, this is the work that the Christ of Clement came to do.**

In the exercise of this ministry of teaching and revelation, Christ encountered enemies who wanted to hinder his mission. He did not let the fear of death stop him. He continued to teach until the end, until his life was taken. In the past, we have seen pagans die for their country and (LV, i) "save their fellow citizens with their blood". Christ did the same. He too (XXI, 6; XLIX, 6) "gave his blood for us". It is indeed "for our salvation that he shed it" (VII, 1) since, if he had wanted to keep his life, he would not have accomplished the work of revelation, of illumination, which was the true cause of our salvation. In short, to be saved, to be delivered, we must believe in God, hope in God and, therefore, above all, know him. **Now Jesus has given us the knowledge of God and he has given it only because he has sacrificed his blood. Hence it follows that we are delivered by the blood of Jesus.** This was prefigured in the past by the symbolic act which the spies of Jericho prescribed to the courtesan Rahab, ordering her to hang a purple cord from her window (XII, 7): "This was to declare that the blood of the Lord should save all those who believe and hope in God".

It goes without saying that such a dearly purchased deliverance presupposes a great love of God and of Christ. If God had not loved us, he would not have sent Jesus to earth with a mission that ended in death. And if Jesus had not loved us, he would not, in accordance with God's will, have given his blood for us, his flesh for our flesh, his soul for our souls (XLIX, 6). Moreover, the world did not remain indifferent to such a testimony of love. Out of gratitude, it became attached to a teaching for which the preacher had given his blood. This is the meaning of the text VII 4 where we read that "the blood of Christ is precious to God his father because, poured out for our salvation, it has given the world the grace of penance". Nevertheless, the rebellious Corinthians have forgotten the love that Christ had for them. Clement reminds them of this and of the duty of gratitude which is imposed on them. He tells them (XXI, 2):

Let us revere the Lord Jesus Christ whose blood was given for us.

## VII. - Reasons for the revolt of the Corinthians.

In chapter XXIII Clement, after having given the proofs of the goodness of the creator (XX), speaks out against those who doubt of God's gifts and who despise them (XXIII, 2):

Let us not doubt, and let not our soul despise (1) his glory.

This reproach is addressed to the rebels of Corinth. It is they who doubt the divine gifts, who have for them contempt and unbelief; and it is to them that Clement gives the lesson.

What are these gifts that are opposed by a disdainful unbelief? They belong to the domain of the future, as is proved by this statement of the rebels (XXIII, 3):

We have been told this before in the days of our fathers; now we have grown old, and none of this has happened.

These gifts are, in fact, promises made long ago, promises that were always announced but never fulfilled and that the Corinthians, tired of waiting for them, ended up making a mockery of. We are not told here what these promises are, but let us listen to Clement's answer:

The will of God will be accomplished shortly, and unexpectedly, as the Scripture testifies: He will come shortly and without delay; the Lord will come unexpectedly .to his temple, the Holy One you are waiting for.

The imminent coming referred to here is the return of Christ to the earth with the purpose of restoring the kingdom of David in Palestine. Clement explains that that Christ will return at any moment, that his return will take place unexpectedly, that delay does not allow for discouragement. And he places these reassuring assertions under the patronage of a prophetic oracle: he has a strong faith in Christ's return to earth and in the kingdom that is to follow. But in Corinth, this faith is shaken. Christ was expected; Christ did not return. Christ has not returned. They have stopped waiting for him and the magnificent gifts he was to provide, I mean him and the kingdom which he was to found. The revolt of the Corinthian Christians had the crisis of faith in the kingdom which Christ was to establish on earth.

It had a second cause, which is described in chapters of the epistle. There Clement expands on the resurrection of the bodies. He proves it by the alternation of days and nights, by the fruiting of plants, by the marvelous story of the phoenix which, every five hundred years, dies and is reborn to life. Then, when his demonstration is completed, he concludes:

When the Creator shows us in a bird the magnificence of his promise, do we find it strange and astonishing that he should resurrect all those who have served him holily with the confidence of faith? For he says somewhere: "You will raise up yourselves and I will praise you"... Let our souls, then, by this hope, cling to him who is faithful in his

promises and just in his judgments. He who has forbidden to lie cannot, all the more so, lie.

This conclusion is obviously addressed to unbelievers whom she wants to convert. The rebels in Corinth, at the same time as they had lost their faith in the earthly kingdom of Christ, had also ceased to believe in the resurrection of the dead.

Let us now consult Justin (Dialogue LXXX, 5). He declares that, to be an orthodox Christian, one must believe in the resurrection of the flesh and in a thousand-year stay in Jerusalem, rebuilt, decorated and enlarged in accordance with the oracles of the prophets. But, not content with this statement, he also says this (4):

If therefore you should meet people who call themselves Christians and do not profess this, but dare to blaspheme the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, who also say that there is no rectiion of the dead, but that their souls are taken up to heaven the moment they die, do not hold them to be Christians.

72

Both Justin and Clement are convinced that Christian orthodoxy includes belief in the resurrection and the earthly reign of Christ in the city of Jerusalem. They have the same doctrine; they also have the same enemies. The rebels of Corinth whom Clement tries to bring to resignation belong to the same party as the heretics whose theories Justin denounces with indignation and to whom he refuses the title of Christian. Like them, they reject the resurrection of the body and the earthly kingdom of Christ, but like them they admit that the soul of the Christian enters heaven as soon as it leaves the body.

However, one point remains to be clarified. The false Christians denounced by Justin blaspheme the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that is, the Creator God. What is the attitude of the rebels of Corinth towards this God?

Let us read Clement again:

XIV, 3: Let us be kind to one another, in accordance with the mercy and gentleness of our Creator... XIX, 2: Let us contemplate the Father and Creator of the whole world, and let us hold fast to his benefits... Let us consider with the eyes of our soul his patient will; let us understand that he is without grudge (aorgètos) towards his creatures... XX, ir : The sovereign Creator and. Master of all things... is kind to all his creatures; but he is especially kind to us who have recourse to his mercies... XXI, 1 : Take care that his many benefits are not a cause of condemnation for us... XXIII, 1 : The compassionate and good Father has tenderness for those who fear him... XXIX, 1 : Let us love this indulgent and merciful Father who has made us his chosen portion... XXXIII, 2 : The

Creator and Master of the universe delights in his works... he has adorned the heavens with his incomprehensible wisdom... he has formed man with his pure hands to be the imprint of his image... When God had finished creating the beings, he praised and blessed them... XXXVIII, 3: Let us consider, brothers, of what matter we were formed, what we were when we entered the world, from what grave, from what darkness our Creator brought us into his world, after having prepared his benefits for us before we were born. Since we have everything from him, we have the duty to give thanks to him for all things... LVI, 16 : See, beloved, how much those whom the Master chastises are protected. As a good father, he corrects us only to pour out his mercy on us by his holy chastisement.

This prolonged panegyric of the Creator; these repeated appeals to his goodness, to his solicitude for the creatures he blesses after having created them, to his distance from all grudges, to his special love for man; this picture of the benefit the Creator has given us by introducing us into his world ; this proof of mercy that the Creator gives us even when he chastises us, all of this makes sense if the rebels of Corinth have allowed themselves to be led into dualism, and have rejected the Creator on the pretext that he is evil. Otherwise, what does all this literature have to do with it? This observation applies especially to XXVIII, 2 where Clement, who has just spoken of the glory of the Creator as told by the heavens, says to those who would be tempted to commit criminal acts:

Where could we flee to escape his powerful hand? What world could receive God's defectors? How from him who contains all things?

It is not usual to reproach sinners for being defectors from God and of wanting to escape from his empire. For Clement says that the rebels of Corinth left the side of God, but that their efforts to escape from him will be in vain. This is because he is dealing with a special kind of sinner, sinners who have turned from God, who have given themselves to the good God revealed by Marcion, and who expect to be protected by this God by this God against the Creator whose yoke they have shaken off. The revolt of the Corinthians was caused by their adherence to the Marcionite doctrine. The priests who were deposed were victims of their fidelity to the Christian hope of the early days.

This origin of the troubles in Corinth gives the key to various passages in our epistle which have hitherto seemed enigmatic.

i° Here and there we find the mention of the blood of Christ in a context where it is unexpected. We read, for example, in VII, 4:

Let us contemplate the blood of Christ and understand that it is precious to God his father, because, poured out for our salvation, it has brought the whole world the grace of penitence.

In XII, 7, Joshua's spies who tell Rahab to hang a purple cord from her window

clearly teach (that it is through the blood of Christ that the redemption of those who believe and hope in God will take place.

We read in XXI, 6:

Let us venerate the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed for

And in XLIX, 6:

By his love for us, Jesus Christ our Lord gave, by the will of God, his blood for us, his flesh for our flesh, his soul for our souls.

We have seen above how Clement understands the work of Christ and how he links it to the blood that Christ shed. Here what attracts our attention is not the role of blood in redemption, but its presence in a context where it was not called for. It denotes an inexplicable obsession, as long as one ignores the situation of Clement, who has before him supporters of the spiritual Christ, and one of whose objectives is to teach that Christ had blood. The "sufferings" of Christ mentioned in II, i are likewise explained with the reservation that the Marcionite doctrine taught a suffering Christ, but that his opponents, taking into account only his principles, accused him of teaching an impassive Christ.

2° The letter expands on the indulgence of the Creator towards repentant sinners with a strange insistence. This is what we read:

VII, 5: Let us go through all the ages and learn that in all generations, the Master has put all those who want to turn to him in a position to do penance. Noah preached penance, and those who listened to him were saved. Jonas announced ruin to the Ninevites; but they who did penance were saved... VIII, 1 : The Master of the universe said himself about penance : " By my life, says the Lord, I do not want the death of the sinner but I want his penance (Ezech. 33, n ; follows a long text of Isaiah)... So wanting that all those who love him have to do penance, he has so decided by his omnipotent will.

Clement, who, further on, begs the rebels to return to order, does not concern himself here with their repentance. Besides, in order to bring them to resipiscence, he should have appealed above all to the authority of Christ. This essay makes sense when one sees in it an apology for the God of the Old Testament, that is to say the Creator, against the accusations of the Marcionite school, when it is interpreted as the proof of the goodness of the Creator who, far from trying to make men sin, invites on the contrary, the sinners to practice penitence in order to save them. Otherwise it is inexplicable.



This observation applies to IX-XI where the rewards given by God to his servants Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Lot are mentioned. This list, too, is an apology to the God of the Old Testament addressed to enemies of that God. Otherwise its presence here is not understandable.

3° The letter ends with a long prayer LIX, 3-LXI, 3 of which here are some extracts (LX, i).

It is you who, by your works, have made the eternal harmony of the world. It is you, Lord, who created the earth. You are faithful in all generations. You are just in your judgments. You are admirable in your power and magnificence. Your wisdom shines forth in creation; your providence appears in the government of beings. Your goodness is manifested in visible things. You do not deceive those who trust in you. You are merciful and compassionate. Forgive us our transgressions, our injustices, our failures, our erring ways... Yes, Master, make your face shine upon us. Give us good things and peace. Protect us with your powerful hand... You alone have the power to do these things and to bring us even greater good. We celebrate you through the high priest and protector of our souls Jesus Christ, through whom be glory and greatness, now and from generation to generation, forever and ever, amen.

This hymn to the Creator seems like a pure hors d'oeuvre in a piece intended to prove the apostolic origin of the clergy. But the aspect changes when we know that the rebels of Corinth dismissed their priests in hatred of the God of creation. So this long prayer that celebrates the wisdom and goodness of the Creator is an amends. It makes amends for the blasphemies to which the God of creation has been subjected; it has its reason for being.

4° Among the advice given in the letter is the following XXXVIII, 2:

Let him who is chaste in his flesh not make a show of his chastity, knowing that it is another who provides him with continence.

Here Clement calls to humility the conceited ones for whom the practice of continence is a pretext for ostentation. And one wonders what connection this rebuke can have with the dismissal of the clergy of Corinth. Everything becomes clearer when one attributes to the revolt of the Corinthians a Marcionite origin, since Marcion advocated continence and turned his disciples away from marriage.

**Let us conclude. It can be assumed that the dismissal of the Corinthian priests was carried out under the influence of Marcionite propaganda, and then the order of Clement's letter is explained. One can also look for another cause of this revolution; and then Roman Clement appears as a rambling rambler. It is up to the reader to choose between these two hypotheses.**

## VIII. - The coming of Saint Peter to Rome.

Clement, who attributes to envy the revolt of which the clergy of Corinth was victim (III), endeavors to inspire in the Corinthians a horror of envy. And, to achieve his goal, he describes the evil that this evil passion has done since the beginning of the world. First he brings the testimony of antiquity (IV). Then he passes to the examples provided by his time. He says (V)

Let us look at the worthy apostles. Peter, who was the victim of unjust jealousy, endured not one or two, but many sufferings... It was as a victim of jealousy and discord that Paul won the prize of patience... To these men whose lives were holy was associated a considerable crowd of chosen ones who... martyred, have left us an admirable example of constancy.

He says "among us". He has in mind the victims of Nero's persecution in 64, for it was only then that Christians were put to death en masse in Rome. He says that these Roman martyrs were associated with Peter and Paul. This clearly implies - without saying it in full - that these two apostles were martyred in Rome in the year 64, since otherwise the victims of the horrible slaughter carried out by Nero would not have been immolated in their company. Clement attests that the apostles Peter and Paul came to Rome and died there. And, as the journey of St. Paul, about which the Acts of the Apostles give us sufficient information, is here out of the question, Clement is the witness of the coming and the death of St. Peter in Rome.

His testimony, of enigmatic laconism, piques our curiosity without satisfying it.

To shed light on this, let us turn to Dionysius of Corinth. Here is what we read in his letter we read in his letter addressed around 170 to the Romans (Eusebius, II, 25, 8):

In your warning you also associated Rome and Corinth, that double plantation which we owe to Peter and Paul. Both of them, in fact, planted in our Corinth and taught us; in the same way, after having taught together in Italy, they suffered martyrdom at the same time.

Here the journey of St. Peter to Rome is brought to light and is explained in a way that leaves nothing to be desired. The great apostle could not fail to transport himself to the imperial city, since St. Paul, whose coming to Rome is not in doubt, was his inseparable companion. In the company of Peter, Paul founded and evangelized Corinth; in the same company he founded Rome and shed his blood. The one does not go without the other, so in order to know the apostolate of Peter, it is enough to know what the apostolate of Paul was. And this is the explanation for the coming of Saint Peter to Rome.

It goes without saying that this explanation is false, that it does not contain a shred of truth, and that the only two questions that arise about it are these: How and where did this fable originate?

It was obviously inspired by dogmatic concerns. But which ones? If it were only a question of the coming of Saint Peter, one could conjecture that it was imagined to magnify the Roman church, to establish it as the heir to the prerogatives conferred on the prince of the apostles by the evangelical oracles You are Peter; Feed your sheep. But, in its primitive form, the fiction unites Peter and Paul, presenting them as two inseparable companions. This is what we must account for.

Why then, in spite of history, has the apostolate of Peter been associated with the apostolate of Paul? This artificial arrangement will remain an indecipherable enigma as long as one does not bring in the Marcionite controversy with the necessities it imposed.

Marcion substituted Paul for Peter and the Twelve who, according to him had grossly misrepresented the doctrine of the divine Master. He made Paul the authentic depository of celestial revelations; He entrusted him with the government of the Church. To repel this violent aggression, to protect the Twelve and to remove from them, they began by inscribing in the gospels the oracles You are Peter; Feed my sheep; Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound. you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. It was proven that the in general and Peter in particular had been invested by Christ with supreme authority over the Church. And, no doubt, these defensive measures were good. But they came up against the epistle to the Romans' which shows the Christians of Rome under the epistle to the Philippians (I, 12-18), which shows us the fruits of the fruits of Paul's apostolate in Rome, the epistles to the Corinthians, which show us Paul's apostolic work in Corinth. The two churches of Rome and Corinth owed everything to Paul. Corinth owed everything to Paul, they owed nothing to Peter. What then was a primacy from which the main portion of the flock of Christ?

It is to this objection that Denys' account answers. He means this: Yes, Paul exercised the apostolate in Corinth and Rome. But the work he did in these two churches was not detrimental to the supremacy of Peter. Paul was, in fact, Peter's aide-de-camp, or, if you like, his second in command. All his conquests were made in concert with Peter, and the two churches of Corinth and Rome founded by Paul were also founded by Peter.

As we can see, in its primitive form, the coming of St. Peter to Rome, accomplished in the company of Paul and preceded by a trip to Corinth under the same conditions, has the objective of defending the primacy of St. Peter. It does not create it; it assumes it to be founded by the evangelical oracles; it defends it against the objections of history: that is the mission it has to fulfill. Let us add that it has no other. One would be mistaken, if one were to look for another destination, if one were to attribute to it the ulterior motive of magnifying the Roman church and of conferring supremacy on it. That will be true later, but only later. In its primitive form, the coming of St. Peter to Corinth and Rome was only intended to prove that Paul did nothing without Peter, and that the primacy of Peter is not in any way undermined by the work of Paul (1).

Intended solely to defend the Catholic thesis of the supremacy of St. Peter, could not the fiction of Peter's journey to Corinth and Rome have been born in any place, and were not all Christian communities equally conducive to its development? This conjecture, which first comes to mind, must be rejected. Without the aim of the fable is to support and defend Peter's rights. But this operation is done in response to the objections of the adversary. Now it is only in Corinth or in Rome that the apostolic works accomplished by Paul in these two cities could be alleged. It is therefore only in the church of Corinth or in that of Rome that the necessity arose to make Paul the inseparable companion of Peter.

Or rather, the church of Corinth must be left out. It is only in Rome that the society of Peter and Paul could have come into being. Here is why. Denys reports that our two apostles were martyred at the same time. This union in death completes the union in the apostolate; it is also inspired by the same motive, that is, it resolves the same objection. Marcion awarded Paul the halo of martyrdom and pointed emphatically to the tomb of the glorious soldier of Christ. He was told that in death as in life, Paul had been Peter's companion, that Peter too had shed his blood for Christ. And just as Marcion showed the tomb of Paul, so they show the tomb of Peter. In half a century the priest Caius will say (Eusebius II, 25, 7):

I can show the trophies of the apostles. Go to the Vatican or to the road to Ostia and you will find the trophies of those who founded this church.

It is already known that Peter's tomb is at the foot of the Vatican Hill. This tomb is venerated as is the tomb of Paul located on the road to Ostia. But it goes without saying that all these concerns arose in Rome and could not have arisen elsewhere. It was in Rome that the union of Peter and Paul in life was invented, crowned by their union in death. Denys, who tells us this story around 170, is only an echo. It is Rome which, in the letter to which he answers, documented it. He repeats the lesson that he was taught (i).

Here is the fable of which Clement Romain is the first witness. We now have the key to the enigmatic turn of his testimony. If he had seen in the death of Saint Peter in Rome a title to the supremacy of the Roman church, he would have known how to exercise his rights and give reasons for them. He would have spoken to the Corinthians with the imperious and haughty tone of which later, the popes would not the popes would never give up. He would have given orders and, to justify them he would have explained with pride that where the tomb of Peter is that where Peter's tomb is, there too are the sublime powers with which the prince from the apostles. His letter shows us the opposite witness. We find there advice, dissertations and not orders. The coming and the death of Saint Peter in Rome are only the object of a laconic and obscure allusion. At time when Clement writes, the fable has just been born, it has still its primitive character and it does not serve to heighten the glory of the of the Roman church.

## IX. - Date of the letter.

The internal study of Roman Clement's letter has led us to conclude that it was provoked by Corinth's adherence to the Marcionite propaganda. It follows from this that its writing cannot be placed before about 150. It is now a question of **submitting this result to the control of history.**

The **letter of Polycarp makes extensive use of Roman Clement.** If it were of about 112 as is claimed, the letter of Clement would have to be placed at the latest in the first years of the second century. But Polycarp's letter, which openly denounces Marcion, cannot be earlier than 150, and can even be dated later than 160, since the old chronology, to which we must return, places Polycarp's death in 166 (1). In these conditions the letter of Polycarp only proves that the letter of Clement of Rome is prior to 165.

The letter written, around 170, by Dionysius of Corinth to the Romans ends with these words (Eusebius, IV, 23, 11):

On this holy Sunday which we have celebrated today, we have read your letter which we shall always continue to read for our instruction, as we read the first one written to us by Clement.

So in Corinth, around 170, there were two letters from Rome: one very recent, to which Denys is answering here, and another older one. It was also known that the older letter had been written by Clement. This last piece of information could only have been given to the Corinthians by the bearers of the letter, since the letter itself is silent on this point. He was one of those who are quickly forgotten, because they become indifferent. Yet Denys did not forget him. He knows that the "first" letter was written by Clément. This persistence of the memory would be strange, if it were a letter written three quarters of a century earlier. It is understandable, on the contrary, if we suppose that Denys himself saw the bearers of the letter and was informed by them about its writing. In short, Denys of Corinth invites us to place the letter of Roman Clement in his lifetime, for example fifteen or twenty years before the letter which he himself wrote to the Romans.

Let us move on to Hermas. It is admitted today that he was the brother of Pius, and that his book is placed around 140 or even later (i). Now Hermas tells us (vision II, 4. 3) that he was charged to give a booklet to Clement whose function is to correspond with the cities of the exterior. This information has thrown the critics into confusion, for they all firmly believe that Clement's letter is from around 96. They had to explain how a man who, around 96, wrote a letter in the name of the church in Rome, could be contemporary with another man whose book appeared in 140 or perhaps later. According to some critics, the book of Hermas is the work of

two Christian authors, one of whom lived in the last years of the first century, while the other belongs to the middle of the following century. According to a second opinion, Hermas presented himself as the contemporary of Clement, who lived around 96, for the sole purpose of backdating his book and artificially setting it back half a century before the time of its appearance. Others say that Hermas, who completed his book around 140, had begun it as early as 110, and that Clement was still living at that date. Finally, according to others, the Clement of whom Hermas speaks and who is in charge of corresponding with the cities of the exterior, would differ from the Clement who wrote the letter to the Corinthians around 96. All these alleged solutions, each more improbable than the other, prove that the problem is insoluble for the critics. It vanishes when we are certain that Clement's letter to the Corinthians was written around the middle of the second century.

**The witnesses we have questioned** so far leave us free to place Clement in the middle of the second century, if we wish. Some of them even invite us strongly to do so. Irenaeus sounds a different note. He tells us (III, 3, that the church of Rome, founded and constituted by the apostles Peter and Paul, was governed after them by Linus, of whom Paul speaks in his epistles, then by Anacletus, then by Clement; that this Clement had seen the apostles, had lived with them, and that he used an imposing letter to calm the troubles which had arisen in the church of Corinth. A contemporary of the apostles Peter and Paul obviously could not prolong his life beyond the reign of Trajan. To place the letter of Clement in the middle of the second century, it is necessary first of all to discard the testimony of Irenaeus. Can we?

Irenaeus, to whom we owe information of capital importance, is like all his contemporaries, of a credulity of fantasy. He is a witness who is worth what his sources are worth. After having spoken of Clement, he makes parade before us successors Evaristus, Alexander, Xystus, Telesphorus, Hyginus, Anicetus, Soter and finally Eleutherus. In short, he serves us what is called the Episcopal List of Rome. Let us see what this list is worth.

## X. - Origin of the monarchic episcopate in Rome.

The Episcopal List of Rome, of which we have just read the summary, comprises two parts devoted, one to the origin of the church of Rome, the other to the history of its government. The first part tells us that the church of Rome was founded by the apostles Peter and Paul. Here the list is only an echo of Clement (p. 77), but an echo which expresses clearly and distinctly what in Clement is a simple allusion it acts as a speaker.

The second part names the trustees who obtained and passed on the government of the church of Rome, beginning with Lin who received the deposit directly from the apostles Peter and Paul. Here the list teaches that the government of the Roman church has an apostolic origin; and in this it follows Clement who (p. 56) derives the clergy from the apostles. But the list adds that the

ecclesiastical authority was entrusted by the apostles to a single man who transmitted it to an individual successor: it thus attributes, from the beginning, to the government of the Roman church a monarchic character. In this she separates herself from Clement, who ignores the centralization of ecclesiastical authority and knows only the federal system.

In short, in Clement's system, which grants the Roman church an apostolic origin and extends the same privilege to its clergy, there are two fictions. The list adopts these two fictions, and adds to them a third which has to do with the monarchical character of the government established by the apostles. The author of the list could not have had the idea of this third fiction if, at the time he was writing, the Roman church had not possessed at least the beginnings of a unitary regime. So that the episcopal list of Rome, in spite of the enormous part that the imagination occupies in it, is a witness. It attests that the condition of the Church of Rome has evolved since the day Clement wrote his anonymous letter to the Corinthians, and that unity has progressed at the expense of federation. It is this evolution that we must now explain.

As happens everywhere, the presidents of the various ecclesiastical groups in Rome were of unequal value. Most of them carried out their duties conscientiously but without glamour, and after their death they fell into oblivion. Others, in small numbers, sometimes for one reason and sometimes for another, deserved the admiration or the recognition of their constituents; and when they were gone, their names were preserved in the memory of the faithful. Thus the memory of the martyr Telesphorus, of Alexander, of Xystus, of Linus, of Anacletus and of the author of the letter to the Corinthians was kept.

The groups also had different fortunes, most of them vegetated and did not develop. One of them, however, either because it was better situated or because it had more astute presidents, probably for both reasons combined, acquired growing importance. Towards the year 140, it is leader of this group, Hygin, that the heretic Valentin ran up against, whose influence was later disproportionately increased. What were the progress of the parish under the successor of Hygin, Pius, we do not know it. But under the successor of Pius, Anicet, we see the results. When, around 160, Polycarp comes Smyrna to Rome, it is to Anicet that he addresses, it is with Anicet that he settles various litigious points, it is with him in particular that he discusses the question of the passover. And, when Hegesippus tells in his Memoirs his trip to Rome, it is Anicet who serves him as a chronological reference point. The other groups, many of which have undoubtedly merged into the wealthy parish, are as if annihilated: they no longer count. Anicet embodies the Roman church which, with him, seems to have lost its former federative regime and to have formed a monarchic society.

Around the year 170, Denys of Corinth wrote a letter to Rome, which I have mentioned above (p. 77) and which, as its content proves, was a reply. In accordance with the law which the epistolary order, the answer of Denys has for the author of the letter which was given to him. The letter is addressed to the faithful of Rome themselves and not to their leader Soter, successor of Anicet, who is mentioned only indirectly. The letter from Rome was therefore written in the name of the faithful. Around the year 160 Anicet represented, in the eyes of the

Christian world, the Roman church. Ten years later, Anicet's successor, Soter, did not dare to take the place that opinion had given to his predecessor. he avoids setting himself up as a representative of the Roman church; he remains in the tradition of Clement who effaces himself behind his constituents. The transition from the federative regime of the Roman church to the unitary regime is taken for granted by the Christian public. Only the beneficiary of the change refuses to admit it; only he keeps the old customs and behaves as if no new fact had occurred.

This reservation could only be temporary. Towards 178 the martyrs of Lyon wrote to the one they called "Father Eleuthere" to recommend their priest Irenaeus to him. Eleuthère is the successor of Soter. It is to him that Irenaeus' compatriots turn. They know him and they see him as the responsible leader of the church in Rome. We know vaguely that Eleutherus intervened in favor of Montanism, to which the people of Lyon adhered. The letter of the martyrs allows us to conjecture that his intervention was personal and that, in his letter of adhesion to the Montanist movement, he did not hide behind his community.

With Eleuthero's successor, Victor, we no longer need to resort to conjecture: the facts are there. We know that Victor, as bishop of Rome, presided over the Roman Council which was to settle the question of the Passover (Eusebius, 5, 23, 3). We know that, by personal measures, he cut off from the Roman communion the churches of Asia obstinately attached to the Quartodeciman practice (Ibid., 5, 24, 9), and that several bishops censured him (5, 24, 10). We have a fragment of the letter written by Irenaeus on this subject (5, 24, 17). It is addressed to Victor, as this passage proves:

The priests who, before Soter, governed the church that you govern today.

If it were a question of the problem of the papacy, it would be shown that the violent measure of Victor was not the act of a pope. But, what concerns us here is only the constitution of the Roman church. On this point, the information of Eusebius and especially the testimony of Irenaeus are decisive. At the time of Victor, the Roman church had completed its internal evolution; the old federal regime had given way to the monarchical regime. The transition was accomplished in accordance with the Darwinian law of natural selection. One of the many primitive groups developed at the expense of the others, which it gradually absorbed.

## XI. - The Episcopal List of Rome.

Now that we know the origin of the monarchical government of the Roman church, let us return to the Episcopal List which links this government to the apostles. Let us see the tendency of this fiction, and the means that they employ for its purpose.

The goal is of dogmatic order. It is a question of defending against the assaults of the heresy the doctrine that teaches in Rome Anicet (one will soon say that the list was made at that time). And, in order to defend it, it is a question of providing proof - a simple and brief proof and brief -



of its apostolic origin. This proof will be, think be obtained, if a material link can be shown which connects the teaching of Anicet's teaching to the teaching of the apostles.

This link is shown, it is displayed with pride: it is the monarchical government instituted by Peter and Paul themselves. Linus, to whom the apostles handed over authority, also received from them the treasure of the treasure of revealed truths. Two mandates were entrusted to him the mandate of government and the mandate of teaching. The former guarantees the latter. The doctrine preached by Linus echoes the doctrine of the apostles, because it is from the apostles that Linus's authority derives. This applies to all times. In order to know the apostolic doctrine, it is therefore sufficient to know where Linus's successor is. And, since this successor is part of a chain of which Linus is the first ring, one is sure to receive the true doctrine as long as one holds the apostolic chain.

Around 165 Linus's successor is Anicet, because it is to Anicet that the chain whose first ring is Linus ends. This leads us to say how the author of the Episcopal List went about constructing his apostolic chain. He knew Anicet and his immediate predecessors. Beyond that, over a space of more than three quarters of a century, it was a fog.

Such a gap would have plunged a historian into despair; but an apologist could not be embarrassed for so little. A few names of former group presidents had escaped being forgotten. Our author used them and made them part of his chain. The only essential thing was to join, by means of judiciously spaced entries, the two legendary companions Peter and Paul; the rest was of no importance and the names could be aligned any way. The author had therefore free rein. However, two of these names, those of Linus and Clement, are found in the Pauline epistles (II Tim. h, 2i; Phil. 3), and he thought he had to put them at the top of his list, to make it appear that the first two leaders of the Roman church had been companions of Paul. Thus Clement, who lived about 150, is placed third after Anacletus.

This is the Episcopal List that St. Irenaeus used. He used it but did not create it. It existed before him. By whom was it composed? In Eusebius IV, 22, 3 we read an extract from of Hegesippus who says this:

When I was in Rome I made a succession to Anicet of whom Eleutherus was deacon. Soter was the successor of Anicet and Eleuthere came after him.

Without doubt this translation is disputed. According to an opinion supported in the seventeenth century by Savile and taken up again in our days, one should read:

Having gone to Rome I stayed there until Anicet.

But this interpretation clashes with the testimony of Eusephius who declares (IV, 11, 7) that Hegesippus came to Rome under Anicet and that he remained there until Eleutherus. One must keep the first translation which, moreover, is admitted by the greatest number of the critics. The "succession" of which the text speaks, enlightened by Eusebius, V, 5, g, designates the list

indicating the succession of bishops. It is thus Hegesippus who, around 165, composed the Episcopal List of Rome. And it is from him that Saint Irenaeus borrowed it.

To return to the letter of Roman Clement, it is a precious testimony on the doctrines and institutions of the Roman Church in the middle of the second century.

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