

PAUL IN ROME: A CASE STUDY ON THE FORMATION AND TRANSMISSION OF
TRADITIONS

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Classics in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Chapel Hill
2016

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ABSTRACT

Pablo Molina: Paul in Rome: A Case Study On the Formation and Transmission of Traditions
(Under the direction of James Rives)

Paul is arguably the second most important figure in the history of Christianity. Although much has been written about his stay and martyrdom in Rome, the actual circumstances of these events — unless new evidence is uncovered — must remain obscure. In this dissertation I analyze the matter from a fresh perspective by focusing on the formation and transmission of traditions about Paul’s final days. I begin by studying the Neronian persecution of the year 64 CE, i.e. the immediate historical context in which the earliest traditions were formed. In our records, a documentary gap of over thirty years follows the persecution. Yet we may deduce from chance remarks in texts written ca. 95-120 CE that oral traditions of Paul’s death were in circulation during that period. In chapter 2, I develop a quantitative framework for their contextualization. Research has shown that oral traditions, if not committed to writing, fade away after about eighty years. Only two documents written within that crucial time frame have survived: the book of Acts and the *Martyrdom of Paul (MPI)*. These texts present discrepant versions of Paul’s death that I term respectively the “anti-Judaic” and “anti-Neronian” traditions. Despite Acts’ canonical status, it is Nero’s portrayal as Paul’s arch-enemy in *MPI* that would capture the imagination of Christians for centuries to come. The apostle’s martyr cult, which is still in existence, constitutes another important tradition. The evidence for its earliest phase is extremely scarce; hence, I attempt to reconstruct its development by analogy with the cult of the Argentinean folk saint

Difunta Correa. The last chapter examines the enduring traditions of late antiquity, a period in which new stories emerged about places in Rome where Paul had been active and about people converted by him. These fictional stories were transmitted through the Middle Ages as if they were true and some of them have endured to our day. All in all, the dissertation explores two overarching themes about the social role of traditions: (1) some traditions, once set in motion, acquire a life of their own, and (2) the group that controls them acquires invaluable political influence.

*Para Lala y Tana,
in memoriam*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my advisor Dr. James Rives. James' mentorship has been instrumental to the success of this project. Time and again, he has provided me with invaluable assistance, pointing out paragraphs that needed rearrangement, suggesting words that fit better what I wanted to express and showing potential pitfalls to avoid. On a human level, I am deeply grateful for his kindness, enthusiastic interest in my dissertation and continuous encouragement. I hope that some of his keen sense of good scholarship has rubbed off on me. I would also like to thank Dr. Bart Ehrman; two term papers that I wrote for his classes in forgery and textual criticism form the basis of portions of Chapters 3 and 5. Bart was generous with his time and read earlier drafts of the first three chapters. His perceptive criticisms have helped me to sharpen my writing. Dr. Babcock inspired my interest in late antiquity, hagiography and textual transmission. Several of the authors that I studied in his engaging classes are featured in Chapter 5. In the initial stages of my research, Dr. Plese and Dr. Ochoa gave me useful tips for parts of Chapter 4 in which I ventured into the *Acts of Paul* and South American folk-saints.

Thanks to a Berthe Marti Travel Award, in May 2015 I spent a week in Rome, visiting sites relevant to my research and examining manuscripts in the Vatican Library. In September of that year, I delivered a paper about the ending of the book of Acts at the KCL- UNC Colloquium in London. I want to thank Steven Cosnett, who was in the audience, for bringing the *Acts of the Alexandrian Martyrs* to my attention. My 2015-2016 Royster Fellowship gave me the financial resources and time needed to write the dissertation. In early March 2016, I delivered a paper on

the forged correspondence between Paul and Seneca at the University of Neuchâtel; the insightful comments of Dr. Aubert, my generous and gentle host, helped me to improve parts of ch. 5.2. I also appreciate the assistance of Dr. Camerlenghi at Dartmouth College and Dr. Hughes at Loyola University who shared some of their newest research findings with me. Likewise, Dr. David Eastman kindly gave me permission to use his recent translation of the *Martyrdom of Paul*.

I would not have reached this stage in life without the loving care of my grandmother and aunt, to whom I dedicate this work; they raised me and always encouraged me to do my best in my different pursuits. Last, my gratitude goes towards my wife and children for their daily affection.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA SS	Acta Sanctorum
<i>API</i>	Acts of Paul
BHL	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
ESV	English Standard Version
ICUR	Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
KJB	King James Bible
<i>MPI</i>	Martyrdom of Paul
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
NA ²⁷	Nestle Aland (27 th edition)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
PL	Patrologia Latina
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLGNT	Society of Biblical Literature Greek New Testament
UBS ⁴	United Bible Societies (4 th edition)

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Presbyterian clergyman W.W. Moore travelled to Europe and after coming back to America wrote a book about his experiences. In a chapter entitled “Roman Catholic Relics at Rome”, he related his stay in the Eternal City. Among other places, Moore visited the church of St Paul at the Three Fountains, built at the alleged site of Paul’s martyrdom. Just like tourists today, he was shown the pillar to which the apostle had been bound and the block of marble purportedly used for his decapitation. He also saw three springs whose miraculous origin was explained to him. When Paul’s head was severed from his body, it bounced from the ground three times, and a fountain burst from the ground at each of the three spots where the head struck. Moore and his party were skeptical about the veracity of the story, and so they asked the local priest-guide who accompanied them whether the story was still believed. The priest replied “Certainly! There is no reason whatsoever to doubt it. The facts have been handed down in an unbroken succession from eyewitnesses.”¹ The priest’s answer encapsulates one plausible definition of the word *tradition* as, broadly speaking, a story handed down (*tradere*) from one generation to another. The particular story that he was relating, namely one about the final days of the apostle Paul in Rome, belongs to one of the oldest collection of traditional material in Western history and constitutes the focus of study in this dissertation.

Although traditions embody messages from the past, before they reach us their “presentness” is strongly felt at every point in their transmission, since their interpretation is

¹ Moore 1905:284-285.

influenced by the historical circumstances of those who are retelling the story.² Not only that, new stories can be invented long after the events that originated the tradition; in turn, these new stories become incorporated into the corpus of traditional material and are transmitted to later generations with the same authority that the earlier stories possess. We observe these two phenomena when we study traditions about Paul's final days in Rome. Although his death historically took place in the 60s CE during the reign of Nero, the stories about his martyrdom composed in the 2nd century were colored by events that were happening at that time. After Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire around 350 CE, new stories emerged about places in Rome where Paul was active and about people converted by him.³ Although these legends have no historical basis, they were transmitted through the Middle Ages as if they were true, sometimes having a great impact on artistic and literary productions as well as theological discussions. Some of them even made it to our day, surviving in the popular novel *Quo Vadis* (whose author H. Sienkiewicz won the Nobel Prize in 1905) and the four movies and one TV miniseries based on it that have been produced so far.

The chronological scope of this dissertation is broad. It will take us from the humble and obscure beginnings of the Christian movement to the late patristic period when a more or less established corpus of traditions about Paul's final days in Rome crystallized. As we move through the centuries, we shall give a voice to some traditions that are neglected in modern times and uncover the origin of others. We shall also examine how changing historical contexts affected the retelling of traditions about Paul's final days and explore the crucial role that some Church Fathers played in the promotion of traditions that gained popularity during the Middle

² Traditions "are the representations of the past in the present" (Vansina 1985: xii). In the first section of chapter 2, I will give an *ad hoc* definition of "tradition" for the purposes of this dissertation.

³ As far as we can tell, the story of Paul's decapitation at The Three Fountains belongs to this later period.

Ages. As one would expect, our evidence for these traditions comes primarily from written documents, and our knowledge of the earliest traditions is hindered because, for a long time, Christians were few in numbers and left only faint traces in our historical record. Before continuing, two important general observations are in order. (1) In most cases the date of composition of the ancient writings that I shall examine is not known with certainty, moreover there are problems establishing the original texts.⁴ (2) In many instances, I have found that some understanding of Christian demographics was necessary to reconstruct how early traditions of Paul's final days in Rome were formed and transmitted. For that reason, I have developed a model for the demographic growth of Christianity, empire-wide and in the city of Rome in the period 64-300 CE.⁵ This model — in practice a modified version of the one proposed in Stark's 1996 *The Rise of Christianity* — is presented in Appendix 1.a. The reader might find advantageous it to read this appendix first before proceeding with the rest of the dissertation.

Having described the overall focus of my investigation, I shall now sketch out the content of each of the five chapters. In Chapter 1, I try to reconstruct the immediate historical context of Paul's martyrdom.⁶ This task is of crucial importance for us because the situation of Christians

⁴ Unless otherwise stated: (1) biblical quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV), (2) New Testament Greek quotes are taken from the SBLGNT critical edition (Society of Biblical Literature Greek New Testament). (3) Brief quotations from other ancient sources are mine. Note that there is a list of abbreviations (on page x) The sign § is used for cross-references within the dissertation.

⁵ Henceforth, all dates in the dissertation are CE (common era) unless otherwise indicated.

⁶ It bears repeating that this dissertation concerns itself with traditions rather than history. Still, in parts of Chapter 1 and 2 it will be necessary to talk about biographical aspects of Paul's life. As is widely agreed, the authentic letters of Paul constitute our primary source for this subject matter whereas the use of the book of Acts is problematic. On the one hand, Acts evidently contains fictional elements. As discussed in § 3.1 of this dissertation, the author seems to have redacted his sources for Paul's life; moreover, at places he has recast historical events in the apostle's career to fit Acts' literary motifs (see App. 3.b) or has placed Paul in invented scenes to advance his own apologetic agenda (see App.1.b). On the other hand, Acts does contain some reliable historical data about Paul and for that reason modern historians continue to use it to make conjectures on the broad outline of the apostle's career. After all, as can be gathered from the preface of Luke's gospel, "Luke meant to write a history of early Christianity, not a novel" (Ehrman 2012:156). Probably it is better to view Acts as a theologically driven historical narrative. The author's

in the 60s CE, in the city of Rome and under Nero's reign, constitutes the zero mark in our timeline, the starting point of all traditions about Paul's final days, the earliest of which were formed during the years 64-96. As we shall see, those three decades are unfortunately wrapped in obscurity forming a long silence gap in our record of early Christianity.

In Chapter 2, I discuss how I will use the words "memory" and "tradition" in the context of this dissertation. I next build a quantitative model, using concepts of social network analysis, in order to study demographic changes in a hypothetical pool of "first-generation tradents" of Paul's death and examine how their stories could have given rise to oral traditions.⁷ I also analyze the lifespan of oral traditions and consider how literary Christians, familiar with the techniques of Greco-Roman historiography, could have recorded them. Lastly, I examine the eight earliest references to the apostle's death, written within the period 96-200.

Chapter 3 examines the anti-Judaic tradition of Paul's death, which depicts Jews as Paul's mortal enemies and can be dated to the first part of the 2nd century. This early tradition appears in the book of Acts. Although Acts ends suddenly after Paul arrives in Rome, Luke left subtle clues for his most perceptive readers, suggesting that, at some unspecified later time, the apostle

primary concern is "salvation history." Writing within living memory of Paul's death, although Luke certainly possesses factual information of his hero's life, he rearranges, omits or alters it when it does not fit his goals. Thus, as proposed by Harrill (2012:7-8), "historical claims about Paul...should be drawn from Acts only with great caution." Fortunately, for our research purposes, we shall only occasionally find it necessary to consult solely Acts. And on those occasions, rather than the details, what will matter to us are the basic data of the recorded information (which was presumably accepted as historical by many of Acts' readers who knew things about Paul from other sources). Having said that, in the absence of any conflicting evidence, I shall accept the historical likelihood of these pieces of biographical information regarding Paul that are found in Acts but not in his authentic letters. (a) Paul was originally from Tarsus (Acts 9:11), the capital of Cilicia (cf. Gal. 1:21); (b) he had a sister and a nephew (Acts 23:16); (c) he visited places in Asia Minor or Greece (Acts 14-22) not recorded in his surviving letters; (d) he met the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8-9); (e) he traveled to Italy where he visited both Puteoli (Acts 28:13-14) and Rome (Acts 28:16-31).

⁷ My *ad hoc* definition of a "first-generation tradent" is a Christian, contemporary with Paul, who heard an account of his death soon after the events and later either handed down traditions about it or was available for consultation by those interested in a contemporary version of the events; see further discussion in § 2.3.

fell victim to Jewish judicial intrigue. This portrayal of unbelieving Jews as ultimately responsible for his demise is heightened in the so-called Western Text of Acts, an edited and expanded version likely produced by a reviser who considered himself a faithful continuator of Luke. The crucial role of verse 28:29 (the last verse of the storyline in the Western text) is investigated. The chapter ends by examining the larger historical context of the anti-Judaic tradition of Paul's death, formed during a period in which we find both Christian and pagan texts that depict Jews as conniving slanderers who exploit the Roman judicial system to their advantage.

Chapter 4 deals with the martyr cult of Paul and the anti-Neronian traditions of his death. By analogy with material evidence found in the Vatican Necropolis at the place where early Christians believed that Peter's burial site was located, we can surmise that the beginning of Paul's martyr cult was initially small-scale, and that for a long time it involved mostly the lower classes. The Christian elite in Rome began to pay more attention to it in the late 2nd century, but it was not before ca. 250 that the leaders of the local church played a more active role in the cultic remembrance of Paul as a martyr. The earliest devotees of Paul were likely steeped in the Greco-Roman tradition of hero worship. To understand their mindset, I trace an analogy with the cult of the Argentinean folk saint Difunta Correa. I finish the chapter by analyzing the underlying traditions of the *Martyrdom of Paul*, our earliest narrative of Paul's death and the basis for many of the later accounts of the apostle's demise. This story portrays the emperor as Paul's archenemy and is the first literary incarnation of by far the most successful tradition about Paul's martyrdom.

Chapter 5 examines the enduring traditions of late antiquity, formed after Christianity became the foremost religion of the Roman Empire. We see then the emergence of new stories

that place Paul's death into a larger historical context. Following Tacitus, Sulpicius Severus (ca. 400) is the first Christian to link the fire in Rome with the Neronian persecution and to make Paul and Peter its two most prominent victims. Around this period, traditions about Paul's final days in Rome are enriched by new stories that associate the apostle with entirely fictitious characters such as Paul's Milanese disciples Gervasius and Protasius whose bodies were miraculously discovered by Ambrose in 386. Also worthy of notice are two legendary pious women who appear in martyrdom accounts of the patristic period: Plautilla, who gave him her veil as Paul walked towards his execution and Lucina, who buried his corpse. These invented saints enjoyed considerable renown in the Middle Ages. Likewise, a forged correspondence between Paul and Seneca, written ca. 370-393 became a popular medieval *leggenda erudita* among men of letters. Moreover, for over one thousand years Seneca was viewed as a proto-Christian friend of Paul thanks to Jerome's inclusion of the stoic moralist in his *De Viris Illustribus* on account of the forged correspondence. The chapter ends with an account of the dominant "catholic tradition" that closely linked the figures of Paul and Peter to the city of Rome.

CHAPTER 1: THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Towards the end of his life, according to the book of Acts, Paul spent two years in Rome under house arrest while waiting to face trial before Nero. There is no contemporary account of the apostle's death. Yet, based on the earliest references that have survived (written within the period 96-200 CE), it seems as if Christians in various parts of the Empire believed that he had been executed in Rome during Nero's reign. In this chapter we analyze the very scant information found in Acts and Phil. 1:15-17 regarding Paul's stay in Rome. Next, we bring together some of the latest studies on the Neronian persecution after the Great Fire of 64 (the presumed context of Paul's death). Our goal is to recreate, as much as we can, the historical circumstances under which traditions of Paul's martyrdom were formed and passed down. We have no information about traditions of Paul's death in the initial decades after it took place, since — as other scholars have previously noted — our record for historical events in 1st century Christianity goes silent for about thirty years after Nero's persecution of 64 CE. Thus, we finish the chapter by making conjectures about the aftermath of the Neronian persecution and its effects on the Christian community at Rome, the remembrance of Paul's death, and the depiction of Nero as the Apocalyptic Beast in Christian literature of the late 1st and early 2nd century.

1. Paul's Stay in Rome, ca. 57-64

We have no details about the circumstances of Paul's death and no information about its date. At the end of the book of Acts, Paul arrives in Rome to face trial before Nero; he is said to have spent two years in *custodia militaris* (Acts 28:16-31). The narrative stops there at an

unknown date which, based on chronological reconstructions, is thought to be ca. 60-62. Thanks to Paul's letter to the Romans and the aid of modern social and prosopographical studies we can recreate the demographic composition of the Christian community in Rome while Paul resided there. When the apostle sends his letter ca. 57 we may estimate the size of the community at about 250-300 members.¹ As part of a planned mission to Spain, Paul declares his intention to visit the city soon (Rom. 1:10-13 and 15:22-24). At the end of the letter, he greets twenty-eight people, all but two by name (Rom. 16:3-23). Of these, twelve are personal associates or acquaintances and the others he knows indirectly.² About two-thirds of the names indicate slave origin, yet within the group of those named by Paul there are also individuals who are moderately prosperous. As in other urban centers, the most prominent Roman Christians must have been individuals whose positive status markers - some wealth, technical ability or literacy - did not appreciably increase their social standing.³

We do not know when Christianity first appeared in Rome, yet when Paul wrote to the Romans ca. 57 he could claim that it had already been in existence "for many years" (Rom. 15:23). Lampe (2003:11) has argued that "Christianity got its first foothold in one or several synagogues of Rome." At any rate, we have good reason to suppose that ca. 49 there had been friction between Jews and Christians at Rome which forced Claudius to intervene, probably causing the separation of Jewish Christianity from the local federation of synagogues.⁴ By the

¹ For population estimates of Christians in Rome and in the Empire see Appendix 1.A in this dissertation.

² For a demographic analysis of the Roman Christian community see Lampe 2003:153-183.

³ See discussion in Meeks 1983:72-73, Hopkins 1998:204-207 and Lampe 2003:153-183.

⁴ See discussion in Lampe 2003:11-16. Our primary source for Claudius' edict is Suet. *Cl.* 25.4: "Claudius Iudaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit." Scholars connect this with the notice in Acts 18:2 that Paul encounters Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth after they had been expelled from Rome. Cook 2010:14-22 provides a detailed philological analysis of the key words in Suetonius' passage and shows quite convincingly that the sentence must imply turmoil caused by Jewish discontent at Rome with Christian missionary activity, a phenomenon also

time of Paul's letter, Gentile Christians probably outnumbered those of Jewish origin but the situation must have been in a state of flux as Jewish Christians — such as Priscilla and Aquila — were probably still returning to Rome after Claudius' death in 54. Among Roman Christians before Paul's arrival there were obviously internal tensions regarding observance of the Jewish law.⁵

Paul may have arrived in Italy ca. 60-62 (Tajra 1994:31). Our information about Paul's time in the city is limited almost entirely to the account in Acts, supplemented by a few brief and vague remarks in other early Christian texts. According to Acts 28:13-14, at his arrival in Italy, Paul first spent a week at Puteoli invited by the local Christians.⁶ As the apostle advanced from Puteoli towards Rome walking along the Via Appia, the Christian community at Rome sent two welcoming committees to greet him at the Forum of Appius and at Three Taverns (Acts 28:15), which were located between thirty and forty-five miles south of the city; in the Acts' account, this significant distance serves to highlight the prestige of the apostle among Roman Christians. Once in the city, "Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him" (Acts 28:16). The Western Text of Acts relates additionally that Paul was permitted to live "outside

observed in Paul's letters (Gal. 1:23, 1 Thess. 2:14-2 and 2 Cor. 11:24-26). Exclusion from the local synagogues does not necessarily mean that all Roman Christians saw themselves as separated from Judaism. While Paul was alive, he seems to have always considered himself as part of God's Israel (cf. Gal. 6:16). According to Acts, Christians were viewed both by outsiders (Acts 18:15) and by Jews (Acts 28:22) as one of several Jewish sects. At any rate, the actual timing of the 'parting of the ways', currently much debated is beyond the scope of my study.

⁵ It has long been noticed by scholars that internal divisions amongst Christians arose as a result of differing Jewish practices. See Brown and Meier 1983:105-128 and Green 2010:28-39. Yet the exact nature of this conflict in Rome and the number of parties involved are very difficult to gauge. Similar conflicts existed in communities that Paul had founded or visited. Cf. Gal. 2:6-9, 1 Cor. 1:12 (in which Paul talks of four different parties) and 2 Cor. 2:15 (in which Paul defends his rank relative to the "super-apostles").

⁶ During the reign of Nero, the harbor of Puteoli was still the main gateway for merchants bringing eastern goods into Rome. It was through its sea-port that eastern religions typically reached the world's capital city. See discussion in Lampe 2003:10. Cf. our discussion of Patrobulus in § 4.4.

the barracks.”⁷ The officer in charge of prisoners awaiting trial was the *princeps castrorum*; Paul was likely considered a harmless prisoner and for that reason he was singled out for special treatment and placed under the rather benign regime of *custodia militaris* (house arrest).⁸ Although he was always under guard, the apostle’s type of custody allowed him to attend to his business and receive visitors.

The last two verses of Acts are rich with legal meaning. “For two whole years (διετίαν ὅλην) Paul stayed there in his own rented house (ἐν ἰδίῳ μισθώματι) and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness (μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας) and without hindrance (ἀκωλύτως)” (Acts 28:30-31). This is how H. Tajra teases out the judicial echoes of this last sentence.⁹ (a) “Two whole years”: the mention of a *biennium* is more than a simple chronological indication of the length of Paul’s imprisonment. At the end of this term, accusers would have had to appear at the imperial court if they did not want their charges to expire. (b) “In his own rented house”: the intended message here is that this permission was granted to Paul because his missionary work was not considered seditious by those handling his case. (c) “With all boldness”: apart from its religious meaning, *παρρησία* emphasizes Paul’s political rights *vis-à-vis* Roman magistrates. (4) “Without

⁷ The text of Acts was transmitted in two versions, the Alexandrian and the Western Texts, the latter being about 8.5% longer. I will return to this matter in detail in § 3.3. The Western version often adds or corrects historical details found in the Alexandrian Text. The Western version of Acts 28:16 (with words added in bold) reads as follows: “And when we came to Rome, **the centurion delivered the prisoners to the Stratopedarch** but Paul was allowed to stay by himself **outside the barracks**, with the soldiers that guarded him.” See discussion in Tajra 1994:41-46. Based on circumstantial evidence, Tajra locates Paul’s dwellings where the Church of San Paolo alla Regola stands today. Supposedly, that area, close to the Tiber River, was where tanners plied their trade. The 2nd century *Martyrdom of Paul* (see § 4.4 of this dissertation) situates Paul’s rented grange (termed ὄρριον in Greek and *horreum* in Latin) also outside the city, meaning that the place where the modern church stands was located outside the old Servian walls. Excavations next to the church have uncovered ruins believed to be *horrea*.

⁸ See Tajra 1994:41-42 and his source Sherwin-White 1963:110. The other type of incarceration regime, *carcer*, was much more restrictive than the *custodia militaris*.

⁹ See Tajra 1994:46-51.

hindrance”: the last word of Acts, ἀκωλύτως, albeit a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, has been found in a few legal documents.¹⁰ Interestingly, we encounter it in documents supporting Jews’ rights to live their lives according to their religious principles. Tajra sees an analogy with the plea of Nicolaus of Damascus to Agrippa (in Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*) that the Jews of Ionia be allowed to preserve and practice their ancestral religion without hindrance.¹¹ To this we may add Claudius’ decree to the Jews “in all the Roman Empire” guaranteeing their rights to live according to their ways ἀνεπικωλύτως.¹² From the above discussion it follows that the apostle’s final days are not meant to be the focus of the ending in the conventional (Alexandrian) version of Acts; instead, Paul’s situation while awaiting trial is used to flesh out the author’s legal defense of Christianity, his *Apologia pro Ecclesia*.¹³

To supplement the meager information found in Acts, we can employ data found in Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians as a socio-historical source for the status of Roman Christianity ca. 60-62. According to the so-called Marcionite prologue, Paul wrote this letter during his Roman captivity; and under close analysis, the internal evidence lies in favor of this traditional

¹⁰ ἀκωλύτως is the last word in the Alexandrian version. The ending differs in the Western version, as I discuss at length in Chapter 3.

¹¹ “Now the privileges we desire, even when we are in the best circumstances, are not such as deserve to be envied, for we are indeed in a prosperous state by your means, but this is only in common with others; and it is no more than this which we desire, to preserve our religion without any prohibition (ἀκωλύτως τὴν πατριον εὐσέβειαν διαφυλάττειν)”. See Jos. *AJ* 16.41. Although Nicolaus’ speech dates to ca. 14 BCE, Josephus wrote *AJ* ca. 94 CE.

¹² See Jos. *AJ* 19.182-192. These rights, first bestowed upon the Jews by Julius Caesar “were preserved under Augustus,” as Claudius himself states. In *AJ* 14.185, Josephus remarks that nobody can deny the various honors given to the Jews by the Romans since their decrees were laid up in the public places of the cities. Indeed, the decrees of Caesar and Claudius cited by Josephus explicitly order that their words must be engraved in tables and preserved in the public places of cities for all to see. We cannot preclude that the author of Luke-Acts was familiar with the language of Claudius’ decree considering that neither ἀκωλύτως nor ἀνεπικωλύτως are commonly found adverbs. Also, as Rowe points out, we may be seeing an application of this imperial policy in Acts 18:12-17, when Gallio, the Roman Governor of Achaia, dismisses the case against Paul, who has been taken by the local Jews to his tribunal. See Rowe 2009:60 and Yoder 2014:349. In general, Roman authorities viewed Jewish communities as subdivisions of one single people (see Rives 2009:108).

¹³ These ideas are further discussed in § 3.1.

view.¹⁴ Lamentably, the letter does not contribute much new information about the status of Roman Christians excepting two pieces of data that are not entirely unexpected. First, as elsewhere, Paul in Rome had personal conflicts with other groups of Christians (cf. Gal. 2:11-14 and 2 Cor. 2.15). His rivals in Rome were probably Judaizing Christians who preached independently (Phil. 1:15-16) and whom the apostle accused of wanting to “stir up trouble for me while I am in chains” (Phil. 1:17).¹⁵ Second, Paul finishes his letter (Phil. 4:22) with the salutations of all the local brothers and sisters, “especially those who belong to Caesar’s household” (μάλιστα δὲ οἱ ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας). Caesar’s household comprised a very large number of people employed in various capacities (from palace servants to secretaries); a few of them – from the perspective of Roman Christians – would have appeared “well-connected”. Since the 19th century, scholars have suggested that some of the Christians in “Caesar’s household” must have been people also mentioned in Rom. 16:3-23. While this is quite plausible, it cannot be proved conclusively because the names in question are so common. At any rate, the extant evidence suggests that in the late 1st century, there were elders in the Roman church who were imperial freedmen and that this occupation bestowed upon them a certain

¹⁴ Apart from Rome, Ephesus and Caesarea have been proposed as places of composition. The argument in favor of Ephesus rests on the premise that, on account of the distance between Rome and Philippi, it would have been impossible to complete in two years the three or more trips described in the letter (see Koester 2000:2.135). Ephesus was indeed closer to Philippi, but the distance argument does not hold against available evidence. According to ORBIS, a recently created simulation utility at Stanford University, under ideal conditions, twenty non-stop round trips between Rome and Philippi could have been completed within that period. Other arguments for the letter’s provenance also favor Rome; see O’Brien 1991:19-26. Moreover, the Ephesian theory is speculative in nature; there is no positive evidence for an imprisonment of Paul in that city. Note also that the reference to a *praetorium* (Phil. 1:13) does not fit Ephesus; troops were not normally stationed in senatorial provinces since they were ruled by civil authorities. As to Caesarea, it was a political backwater that does not match the description of a city with diverse and competing groups of Christians (Phil. 1:12-18). Even the distance problem is not applicable in this case since Caesarea was no closer to Philippi than Rome. Moreover, it would be difficult to interpret Paul’s enthusiasm in the spread of the gospel and his choice of the greetings “of those in Caesar’s household” (Phil. 4:22) to close the letter had he not written the letter from Rome. There are over 600 inscriptions of Καίσαρος οἰκίας, the vast majority are from Rome, but only one from 1st century Ephesus (see Witherington 2003:286-287).

¹⁵ See Brown and Meier 1983:186 and Eastman 2013:34-53. These authors think that Clement’s mention of “envy” in *1 Clem.* 5.2-5 is a reference to divisions within the Roman Christian community and that the zeal of pro-circumcision Christian Jews in Rome contributed to Paul’s martyrdom under Nero.

degree of prestige.¹⁶ In the 2nd century *Martyrdom of Paul*, we are told that many people came to see Paul “from the household of Caesar” (ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας) and that they believed; among them Patroclus, Nero’s cupbearer and a central character in that narrative.¹⁷

In the extant information about Paul’s time in Rome, the evidence for the outcome of his trial and his martyrdom is practically non-existent, at least in sources written within sixty years of the probable date of his death. In *Philippians*, the apostle reflects on the possible outcome of his legal troubles. At one point he seems to imply that his death could be imminent (Phil. 1:20-23), but he elsewhere hopes for a favorable verdict (1:25; 2:24). Unfortunately, what happened to him next is wrapped in obscurity.¹⁸ After a period of over thirty years of silence in the historical record, a Roman Christian writing to the Corinthian church ca. 96 nebulously declared that Paul “stood before the rulers” and “was taken up to the holy place” (1 *Clem.* 5.5-7). Likely his readers knew what he was talking about. Further evidence that Christians of the post-apostolic generation possessed some information about Paul’s demise can be found in the New Testament. *Acts* foretells the apostle’s death in Paul’s speech to the Ephesian elders (20:29 and 20:38) and 2 *Timothy* describes Paul as having been abandoned by friends at his first defense

¹⁶ Lightfoot in 1868 noticed that various names found in Rom. 16:3-23 also appear in inscriptions of Caesar’s household (see Witherington 2003:287). Harnack (1908:45) linked the household of Narcissus (Rom. 16:11) to the famous freedman of Claudius. Lampe (2003:184-186) points out that Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Biton (1 *Clem.* 63.1 and 65.1), the elders chosen by the Roman Christians ca. 96 to carry their letter to the Corinthians, had been imperial freedmen of Claudius’ household. Ca. 110, Ignatius in his letter to the Romans clearly believes that within the Roman Church there are well-connected Christians. Lampe (2003:88-89) identifies these people with imperial freedmen and points out that Pope Victor (189-199) had a presbyter named Hyacinth who was an imperial slave or freedman and acted as a sort of “mole” in the court, with access to Marcia, Commodus’ concubine. During Hadrian’s reign (117-138) his freedman Phlegon of Tralles, although not a Christian himself, was familiar with the miracles of Jesus and Peter (c. *Cels.* 2.14). Last, one of our earliest pieces of Christian material evidence is the sarcophagus of the Christian imperial freedman Prosenes, who died in 217 (see discussion in Snyder 2003:214-215).

¹⁷ More than a hundred years ago, Harnack already made this observation (see Harnack 1908:45). The function of Patroclus in the novelistic account of *Martyrdom of Paul* is further examined in § 4.4 of this dissertation.

¹⁸ Both Tajra 1994:200 and Lane-Fox 1986:432 place Paul’s death before Nero’s persecution. Beginning in the 4th century, Christian writers start to claim that Paul and Peter had been martyred (on the same day) towards the end of Nero’s reign (see Eastman 2011:22-23). See further discussion on their probable motives in § 5.1

(4:16) and, more vaguely, as being aware that his time of departure has come (4:6-8). Ca. 110, Ignatius of Antioch knows that Paul and Peter preached in Rome but gives no further details. The cumulative weight of these disparate pieces of evidence suggests that fifty years after Paul's death, there were Christians in various parts of the Empire who believed that Paul had been martyred in Rome sometime during Nero's reign in circumstances resulting from his legal troubles. No counterclaim by a different Christian author or community has survived.¹⁹

2. The Neronian Persecution of Christians after the Fire of 64 CE

Given the scarce, fragmentary and occasional nature of the references cited above, it is to our advantage to examine also the earliest sources of the Neronian persecution in order to shed light on the historical circumstances under which traditions about Paul's martyrdom were formed and passed down. Our sources for the persecution are the aforementioned *I Clement* and the Roman writers Suetonius (ca. 120) and Tacitus (ca. 115). From the perspective of the Roman elite, Nero's persecution must have been a very minor episode. Suetonius devotes only one sentence to it; in a section in which he lists the "good deeds" of Nero (*Nero* 16.2), he briefly informs the reader that Nero punished Christians.²⁰ Tacitus' account, albeit short, is more substantial, probably because Tacitus had gained familiarity with the Christians as proconsul of

¹⁹ Postapostolic references about Paul's death are analyzed in detail in § 2.4. After *I Clement*, not counting the *Martyrdom of Paul*, the next Christian author who places the deaths of Peter and Paul in Rome during the reign of Nero is Tertullian. In *Scorp.* 15.1-3 he mentions Paul's decapitation and Peter's upside-down crucifixion at the time of Nero, "the first who stained the rising faith in Rome". In *Adv. Marc.* 4.5.1 and in *De Praesc.* 36.3 he again mentions the apostles' joint martyrdom in the Eternal City. As a rule, Paul's martyrdom in Rome is viewed as "historical" by academics, yet recently two reputable scholars have postulated alternative theories that should not be left unmentioned. According to Koester 2007:77-79, Paul was buried in Philippi, whereas Barnes 2010:40 has advanced that he was executed in Spain. So far, neither Koester's nor Barnes' theory appears to have gained much traction.

²⁰ Suetonius brief reference to the persecution reads: *afflicti suppliciiis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novae ac maleficae* (Suet. *Nero* 16.2). Juvenal 1.155-157 is sometimes taken as a reference to Nero's killing of Christians by burning them at the stake, although the connection is not conclusive. However, the reference to Christians is much more apparent in a 4th century scholia on Juvenal's passage that describes in detail how some *maleficos homines* (cf. Suetonius' words above) were burned by Nero. See discussion in Cook 2010:77-78.

Asia in 112/113 (see discussion in Appendix 1.b). He may well have thought that the episode merited some degree of analysis since it could be of interest to his readership, namely Roman aristocrats whose political careers could take them to places where Christian activity was more prevalent than in Rome.²¹ Tacitus linked the Neronian persecution to the famous Great Fire of Rome of 64. The Latin text of the pertinent passage (*Ann.* 15:44) and its translation are shown below (both taken from Cook 2010:40-41); in subsequent pages I discuss the parts most relevant to us.²²

(15.44.2) *sed non ope humana, non largitionibus principis aut deum placamentis decedebat infamia, quin iussum incendium crederetur. ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit, quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Chrestianos appellabat. Auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat; repressaque in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Iudaeam, originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocita aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque. (4) igitur primum correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens haud proinde in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis convicti sunt. et pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis contecti laniatu canum interirent aut crucibus adfixi [aut flammandi atque], ubi defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur. (5) hortos suos ei spectaculo Nero obtulerat, et circense ludicrum edebat, habitu aurigae permixtus plebi vel curriculo insistens. unde quamquam adversus sontis et novissima exempla meritis miseratio oriebatur, tamquam non utilitate publica, sed in saevitiam unius absumerentur.*²³

(15.44.2) But neither by human help, nor by the spending of the Princeps, nor by any acts of placating the gods did the scandalous opinion dispel, that the fire had been ordered. Therefore to

²¹ As to Tacitus' sources, we know from his own writings that for Nero's reign (*Ann.* 13-16) he used Cluvius Rufus, Pliny the Elder and Fabius Rusticus, but other unknown written sources cannot be ruled out. See Cook 2010:41-42 and Champlin 2003:40-44.

²² Needless to say, scholars have spilt much ink on the correct interpretation of *Ann.* 15.44. I base my analysis mostly on the recent work of J.G. Cook, who also discusses thoroughly all prior scholarship (see Cook 2010:39-83).

²³ This section of the *Annals* is not without textual difficulties. Our only source for this passage is the 11th century MS Mediceus Secundus. Two of the textual problems can be briefly discussed here. The original reading in 15.44.2 was *Chrestiani*, a term used derogatively against Christians in the second century (see Cook 2010:40); the same scribe who wrote the word erased the "e" and changed it to *Christiani*. Scholars have long debated about the original reading of *aut flammandi atque* in 15.44.4. For a discussion see *ibid.* 69-70; Cook is pessimistic about attempts at finding a solution to the problem.

abolish the rumor Nero fraudulently substituted culprits and afflicted with the most elaborate punishments those whom, hated for their crimes, the crowd called “Chrestians”. (3) The source of this name was Christ who during the imperium of Tiberius was executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate. And having been repressed for the moment, the deadly superstition erupted again not only in Judea, the origin of this evil [disease], but even throughout the city where from all parts all shocking and shameful things flow and are celebrated. (4) Therefore, those who confessed were brought to trial first; next, on their information, a vast multitude was added, not so much for the crime of arson as for hatred of the human race. Outrages were perpetrated on the dying, covered with the skins of animals they died mutilated by dogs, or they were fixed to crosses, or [burning], and when daylight faded they were burned for nocturnal illumination. (5) Nero had offered his gardens for that spectacle, and exhibited the show in the circus – mixing with the crowd in the get up of a charioteer or standing on a racing chariot. Hence compassion began to arise (although toward people who were guilty and deserving of the most unusual exemplary punishments), as they were being eliminated not for the public utility but for the savagery of one man.

According to Tacitus, the disastrous fire had begun “in that part of the circus which adjoins the Palatine and Caelian hills”; it lasted from July 19th till July 27th, damaging ten of Rome’s fourteen districts.²⁴ Nero at the time of the fire was at Antium. Tacitus does not blame him for the fire but states that the Emperor went after the “hated” Christians so as to deflect responsibility for the calamity (15.44.2). Trastevere, a poor district on the west bank of the Tiber, was surprisingly unscathed by the fire. Many Jews and most Christians are believed to have been residents of Trastevere in 64; their good luck must have aroused suspicions among local denizens who had lost property.²⁵ Jews could have been used as scapegoats, but they were rather numerous in Rome and some of them influential; the unpopular Christians were an easy

²⁴ See *Ann.* 15.38-43. The property of Tigellinus, Nero’s vicious prefect, was among those destroyed (cf. *Juv.* 1.155-157, discussed above). For the duration of the fire, see Beaujeu 1960:19-20; it is confirmed by *CIL* VI.826. A different source, one of the letters in the fourth-century forged correspondence between Paul and Seneca, also links the fire and the persecutions but with some differences (see discussion in § 5.3 of this dissertation); the forger likely got his information from a source independent of Tacitus (Beaujeu, *ibid.*, suggests Pliny the Elder).

²⁵ See Lampe 2003:19-47 for evidence of Christian concentration in Trastevere. As in modern times, immigrant groups in large cities lived with their co-ethnics in segregated areas. Egyptians inhabited the Campus Martius area and Africans preferred the slopes of the Caelian hill. Jews, who numbered 40,000-50,000 in 1st-century, Rome lived mostly in Trastevere but also in the Subura area and near the Porta Capena (see Jeffers 1991:8-10).

target and their arrest would have been equally effective at appeasing the angry populace.²⁶ Several scholars have tried to reconstruct the legal investigation and the identity of the informers; some have hypothesized that Roman Jews, out of religious rivalry or a sense of self-preservation, were involved in some way or another in the initial stages of the judicial inquiry against the Christians. Others have noticed that the internal dissensions of the Roman Christians made them particularly vulnerable; indeed thirty years after the events, the author of *I Clement* would attribute the persecution to “jealousy” (ζήλος), although what he meant by that is not entirely clear. All in all, these theories bring up scenarios that are insightful, plausible and not mutually exclusive. However, they remain unprovable.²⁷ Unless new evidence is uncovered, the historical details of how Christians were rounded up and judged by the authorities will always lie in darkness.

Sometime after the Christians were arrested, Nero arranged for them to be killed in a public spectacle that he offered in his gardens (*hortos suos*, *Ann.* 15.44.5) located on the Vatican

²⁶ Rordorf 1981:365-374 argued that apocalyptic Christians of Trastevere, while Rome kept burning for several days, may have interpreted the evolving situation as the harbinger of the expected *parousia* and that some local residents overheard them and the report reached Roman authorities; he further suggested that, unlike Roman Jews, the vast majority of Christians were non-Roman citizens which made their punishment easier. See discussion in Lampe 2003:47, 82-84 and Beaujeu 1960:40-41. We know of a similar accusation of arson against the Antiochian Jews in 67 (*Jos. AJ* 12.120); a Jewish apostate brought false charges against the local Jews and convinced the Antiochians that they wanted to burn the city; a pogrom against Jews ensued. For a learned discussion of the Great Fire of 64 see Fernández Uriel 1990:61-84. Even in the 2nd century there were some Christians who expected that, at the end of the world, the ungodly would be punished by fire (see Justin Martyr *Apol.* 1.20 and 1.54).

²⁷ For a reconstruction of the legal procedure and participant magistrates, see Beaujeu 1960:25-38 and Cook 2010:50-68. It is possible that Tacitus used partly as a narrative model Livy’s description of the Bacchanalian affair in 186 BCE (*Livy* 39.8-19). For the theory of Jewish involvement, see Brown and Meier 1983:99, Lampe 2003:47 and Frend 1967:126. The Jews had two allies within the Neronian inner circle in 64: the Jew Alityros, Nero’s favorite actor, and more importantly, Poppaea, the Emperor’s philo-Judaic consort. Beaujeu (1960:39-41) proposed that someone might have suggested the idea of accusing the Christians to Poppaea. Josephus depicts the Empress as a sympathetic θεοσεβής (*AJ* 20.189-196). In *Vita* 3, he talks about his meeting with Alytiros and how imprisoned Jewish priests were freed through Poppaea’s intervention. Ca. 64, Josephus departed from Rome and returned home carrying gifts that he received from Nero’s wife. Recent epigraphical evidence (Grüll and Benke 2011:32-55) appears to support Josephus’ depiction of Poppaea. For our purposes, it is interesting to observe that there are extant written traditions (see Chapter 3 and § 5.2, 4-5) that accuse the Jews of inciting Nero against the Christians or blame Paul’s death on Jewish judicial intrigues. For a discussion on how internal divisions within the Roman Christian community exposed them to the persecution see Eastman 2013:34–53.

hill.²⁸ At this point we must point out that, from a historical point of view, the “Neronian persecution”, although a convenient label, is somewhat of a misnomer, since it does not describe a situation of protracted legal harassment but rather a single public spectacle in which Christians were punished after the Great Fire of 64.²⁹ The date of Nero’s spectacle can be established with a level of precision rarely possible in our study of early Christianity. Notice first that Tacitus’ brief description of the “persecution” starts immediately after his report of the fire; since he finishes his account of the year 64 in *Ann.* 15.47.1, the spectacle must have taken place before the end of that year. This date is also buttressed by other literary and numismatic evidence.³⁰ Notice also that the non-negligible lapse of time between the Great Fire and Nero’s public

²⁸ From the early decades of the 2nd century, Christians believed that Peter’s grave was located in the Vatican Necropolis next to Nero’s circus (built within his gardens) and in 324 CE, they chose precisely this place to build Peter’s Basilica. Peter’s martyr cult site serves as an independent corroboration of Tacitus’ account. Epigraphical evidence for the circus location is also preserved in the tomb of C. P. Heracla in the Vatican Necropolis. The funerary inscription, which I personally saw while visiting the Necropolis, indicates that he asked his heirs to bury him “in Vaticano ad circum.” See image and discussion of this inscription in Guarducci 1960:49.

²⁹ At this point we also have to notice that the persecution is almost universally considered a historical event by classicists, New Testament scholars and historians; yet, as is often the case in the study of Greco-Roman antiquity, challenges have been raised. Recently, Shaw (2015:73-100) has written an article that boldly questions the historicity of the Neronian persecution. Shaw’s lively article is worth reading as it engages with previous scholarship. Still his arguments are unconvincing. In his view, although some people were killed by Nero after the fire, these were not Christians. Shaw thinks that Tacitus “firmly believed” that the Christians were punished by the Emperor but was in fact confused by his sources. Sometime in the early 2nd century, “Christian writings came to latch on to Nero in connection with the known execution of Paul at Rome in Nero’s reign and the claimed execution of Peter” and that strands “coalesced in writings that were producing a high-profile figure of Nero as the First Persecutor of the Christians.” Presumably, Tacitus mistakenly believed these contemporary sources. I think that Shaw is partly correct in suggesting that Tacitus’ account was influenced by the contemporary political climate against Christians (cf. Appendix 1.b). Yet, this does not invalidate its historicity. Albeit intriguing, Shaw’s conjecture lacks supporting evidence. Moreover, in my opinion, he places too much confidence in “the historian of Luke-Acts” (regarding Paul’s final days) and conversely too little confidence in the historical value of *1 Clement* (our other major source for the persecution) which he dismissively calls Pseudo-Clement.

³⁰ For a general discussion see Cook 2010:100-101. Beaujeu 1960:20 placed the punishment in October or November. Champlin 2003:73-74 also placed the persecution in late 64. The reference in Tac. *Ann.* 15.44 to Nero’s mingling with the spectators as a charioteer coincides with a sentence in Dio 62.15.1, according to whom the Emperor first drove chariots publicly in 64. There is also numismatic evidence. “From 64 onwards, the emperor appears on both provincial and imperial coins wearing a diadem with sharp rays rising from it; inscriptions call him things like “the new Helios, lighting the Greeks”; actual depictions of the Sun take on a chubby physiognomy, suspiciously like the face of Nero” (Champlin 1998:105).

spectacle helps to explain why in later Christian accounts the events became disassociated.³¹ If we accept the evidence of Christian writings of the early 2nd century, then we can pin down the date of the spectacle even more precisely to mid October 64, during the *decennalia* celebrations of the tenth anniversary of Nero's imperial assumption. Given Nero's theatrical penchant, the idea that he reserved the punishment of the local Christians for this special occasion so as to entertain the urban crowd is very much in character.³² Moreover, this was not an uncommon imperial practice. For example, Flaccus, the governor of Egypt who persecuted Jews after the riots of Alexandria in 38 CE, had also ordered gory entertainments on the emperor's birthday in which the local Jews were the victims (Philo, *in Flacc.* 81-85). Perpetua, one of our earliest recorded martyrs (ca. 204), was executed in a public spectacle scheduled on the birthday of Emperor Geta (*Acta Perpet.* 7.9).

³¹ Both Beaujeu 1960:20 and Cook: 2010:95 subscribe to this explanation, which I find satisfactory. Among pagan writers, Suetonius does not link the fire to the persecution of Christians. He narrates the persecution in *Nero* 16.2 but the fire in *Nero* 38.2. Yet this is likely the result of Suetonius' topical arrangement; for instance he describes Nero's new building regulations after the fire also in 16 (as a "good deed") rather than in 38. As to Cassius Dio, he mentions the fire but not the Christians (Dio 62:16-18.). Writing in the early 3rd century, Dio must have been familiar with Christians but for whatever reason he never mentions them in his historical work (see Lampe 2003:201). For Christian references to the fire and the persecution, see § 5.1 in this dissertation.

³² See Guarducci 1968:81-117. If one combines the information provided by *The Apocalypse of Peter* (*Apoc. Pt*) and the *Ascension of Isaiah* (*Asc. Isa.*), the precise date can be inferred. In *Apoc. Pt.* 14.4-5, Jesus instructs Peter "to go into the capital of corruption [Rome] and drink the chalice I have announced to you [cf. Matt. 20:22], from the hands of the son of him who is in Hades [Nero] that his ruin may begin and that you may receive fulfillment of the promises." In *Asc. Isa.* 4.2-3 we are told that Beliar (the devil) "will descend from his firmament in the form of a matricidal man [Nero] and destroy the seeds [Christians] planted by the twelve apostles for the "Beloved" [Christ], one of whom [Peter] will fall into his hands". Soon after (*Asc. Isa.* 4.14), the text states that after 1,332 days "the Lord ... will drag Beliar into the Gehenna." Nero committed suicide around June 9, 68; since Peter's death (*Asc. Isa.* 4.2-3) marked the beginning of the ruin of Nero (*Apoc. Pt.* 14.4-5), working backwards and subtracting the days given in *Asc. Isa.* 4.14, we reach October 13, 64. We cannot rule out that "1,332" (666×2) was conceived as a symbolic number. However, in the 3rd century, the Christian poet Commodian hints at a similar timespan between the persecution and Nero's fall in *Apol.* 875-878: "Nero will do these things for three and a half years and then fulfill his appointed time. On account of his crime, he will suffer a lethal revenge" (*Haec Nero tunc faciet, triennii tempore toto et anno dimidio statuta tempora complet. Pro cuius facinore ueniet uindicta letalis*). I have not found in the scholarly literature anyone who noticed previously the coincidence between Commodian's prophecy and the timespan mentioned in *Asc. Isa.* 4.14.

Tacitus describes the punishments suffered by Christians, which comprised the three common forms of execution (15.44.2): being thrown to the beasts, crucifixion, and being burnt alive (the penalty which the ancients regarded as appropriate for arson).³³ Tacitus also speaks of *ludibria*, by which he must mean mockery designed to humiliate the victims (cf. Q. Curtius Rufus 10.1.3). Throughout Roman history, punishment of criminals was always a very public act, but during the early Empire in particular it was turned into a public spectacle. Often a theatrical element was added, such as “fatal charades” based on reenacted myths.³⁴ The author of *1 Clement* is often considered an independent source for the persecution.³⁵ Indeed, *1 Clem.* 6.1-2 appears to separate the fate of the victims of Nero’s spectacle by gender. In this passage we are told that a vast multitude of the elect (men?) perished “through many indignities and tortures” (πολλαῖς αἰκίαις καὶ βασάνοις), setting a brave example “among ourselves” (ἐν ἡμῖν).³⁶ Regarding the female victims, the author declares that they suffered cruel and unholy torments (αἰκίσματα δεινὰ καὶ ἀνόσια) dressed “as Danaids and Dircae”, before reaching “the goal in the race of faith” (πίστεως δρόμον).³⁷

³³ Barnes 2010:331-337 analyzes *Ann.* 15.44.4 differently. He distinguishes only two forms of punishment: being thrown to the dogs dressed as animals and being burned on a cross rather than at a stake. The passage implies that Christians were dressed with the *tunica molesta*, the customary punishment for arsonists. The *tunica* is described by Juvenal (*Sat.* 8. 235) and Seneca (*Ep.* 14.5).

³⁴ See Coleman 1990:44-73, the seminal article on this subject.

³⁵ See for instance Champlin 2003:121-126 which I discuss below.

³⁶ The elect (ἐκλεκτοί, “the chosen ones”) also appear in Mark 13:27 (within the passage known as “the little apocalypse”). The term αἰκία implies insulting mistreatment and corresponds well with the *ludibria* referred by Tacitus. By using ἐν ἡμῖν, the author further identifies the victims as recent (ἐγγιστα, *1 Clem.* 5.1) members of the Christian community at Rome.

³⁷ Cf. 2. Tim. 4.6 for an equally flowery description. “I have run the race (τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα), I have kept the faith (πίστιν).” Presumably the author describes the punishment of female victims as “unholy” because of the pagan charades in which they were forced to participate.

Champlin has formulated a convincing hypothesis that interweaves Tacitus' description of the punishments, the mythological themes alluded to by the author of *I Clement* and archeological data.³⁸ Champlin explains *in usum nocturni luminis urerentur* (*Ann.* 15.44.5) as follows: since the flame in the temple of Luna Nocticula ("the Night Shiner") destroyed in the Palatine had been extinguished, some Christians were burned at night to provide nocturnal illumination. In the same vein, the deaths by beasts were conceived as a recreation of the myths of the hunter Actaeon, punished for gazing at Diana; the Christians, like Actaeon, were turned into stags and attacked by hunting dogs (*ferarum tergis contacti laniatu canum interirent*). As to the baffling reference to Christian women dressed as "Danaids and Dircae" in *I Clem.* 6.1-2, Champlin argues that the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, likely damaged in the Great Fire, had a portico lined with statues of the Danaids. Hence, Christian women in Nero's spectacle were disguised as the murdering Danaids, who in mythology had been punished to perpetually carry leaking jars.³⁹ As to the role of the Dircae in the charade, their presence is explained in light of yet another damaged building, the Amphitheater of Taurus in the Campus Martius, named after its donor, Statilius Taurus, "the bull". Christian women were presented for punishment in the guise of the mythical Dirce, a wicked stepmother whose hair was tied to a bull's horns which gored her to death.

The Emperor's cruel spectacles must have necessitated a sizeable number of victims to ensure that the show adequately impress the spectators. According to Tacitus, an "immense multitude" of Christians died in Nero's spectacle (*multitudo ingens*, *Ann.* 15.44.2). This Latin

³⁸ See Champlin 1998:104-105; also discussed in Champlin 2003:121-126. His hypotheses were very favorably received by Cook 2010 and Barnes 2010.

³⁹ How these women were killed in the spectacle is difficult to say. Should we imagine forty-nine Christian women who, before being executed, were forced to carry leaking jars (like the Danaids in Hades) while their loved ones were being burned to death?

expression matches the Greek words of *1 Clem.* 6.1 which describes the number of victims as *πολὸν πλῆθος*. Some scholars have interpreted these statements literally as implying a real multitude.⁴⁰ Yet philological evidence shows that both the Latin and Greek expressions are figures of speech used loosely to signify “a great number of individuals”.⁴¹ Thus, just as Beaujeu (1960:23) did before us, it seems safer to estimate the number of victims at about 200.⁴² This figure pales in comparison to the carnage of the Roman civil war in 68-69,⁴³ Nonetheless, for a Christian community of around 465 people a toll death of about 200 must have been devastating; with the majority of the adults dead, we can surmise that Roman Christians needed time to absorb the blow, reorganize themselves and recover demographically.⁴⁴

3. The Historical Record during the First Decades after the Neronian Persecution

Thanks to Romans 16:3-23 we know the names of twenty-six Roman Christians ca. 57; although it is possible that a few of these survived the persecution and preserved the local memory of Paul’s martyrdom, none of them left a trace in our historical record. In fact, after the

⁴⁰ See Lampe 2003:82 and Jeffers 1991:17, who numbers the Christian victims in the thousands.

⁴¹ Tacitus uses the expression *multitudo ingens* four other times in the extant books of the *Annals* (2.22.1, 2.40.1, 4.49.3 and 14.8.1). Despite its inherent indefiniteness, the context of 2.40.1 and 14.8.1 leads one to believe that – at least in those two instances – Tacitus is thinking of no more than a hundred people. Green points out that Tacitus’ use of *immensa strages* in *Ann.* 6.19.2 corresponds to “twenty in one day” if matched to the same account in Suet. *Tib.* 61. Likewise, the expression *πολὸν πλῆθος* in *1 Clem.* 6.1 is found in Mark 3:7, 3:8, Luke 23:27, Acts 14:1 and 17:4; in none of those cases does it appear to mean “thousands”.

⁴² See a detailed analysis of early Christian demographics in Appendix 1.a. Our only Christian source for this matter is the 6th century *Hieronymian Martyrology* (see Cook 2010:99-100). For June 29th, this document mentions the death of Peter and Paul and “979 other martyrs”, a figure lower than one would expect, probably indicative that even 6th century Christians thought that the Christian community in Rome ca. 64 was not very large.

⁴³ For instance, when Galba made his entrance in Rome, he slaughtered seven thousand unarmed guards of Nero who had come to ask him to be retained in the same service (see Dio 64.3 and Tac. *Hist.* 1.6). Tacitus’ brief reference to this most bloody episode of Galba’s short reign is another sign that it was not the number of Christians killed in 64 that made the event seem to him worthy of record.

⁴⁴ See population estimates in Appendix 1.A; there I estimate the Christian population at about 465 (within a 310-713 range). After the persecution, it must have taken Christian Romans several decades to exceed the number that they had reached before the Great Fire of 64.

Neronian persecution of 64, we have no extant information about the Roman Christian church until *1 Clement*, more than thirty years later. Conceivably, the Roman Christians after the persecution remained few in numbers for several decades, kept a low profile to avoid recognition by strangers, and were averse to talk about the painful memory of Nero's spectacle. Pliny the Elder, who finished writing his monumental *Natural History* ca. 77, mentions Christians nowhere; yet his works contained "20,000 facts collected from 2,000 books and 100 different authors" (*Nat. Praef.* 17). Josephus, who resided in Rome from 73 until his death ca. 100, likewise has nothing to say about the Christians in the city. It is also worthy of notice that his famous *Testimonium Flavianum* insists on the fact that, although Jesus' death had taken place about sixty earlier, there were still members of the Christian faith in the Roman Empire. Apparently Josephus, ca. 93, assumed in writing this sentence that his Roman readers had never heard about their existence.⁴⁵ Notice also that both Martial (*fl.* 80-100) and Juvenal (*fl.* late 1st/early 2nd century), always willing to mock easy targets of the city's lower classes, are silent about the Christians. It has been proposed that we can catch glimpses of the secretive behavior of Roman Christians after the persecution in the Gospel of Mark, which, according to the earliest Christian sources that discuss its place of composition, was written at Rome; at a minimum we can imagine that the tragic events of 64 must have been present in the author's mind.⁴⁶ All in all,

⁴⁵ See *AJ* 18.63-64: "And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day (εις ἔτι τε νῦν) not disappeared (οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τὸ φύλον)". On Josephus' mentions of Christians in *Antiquitates Judaicae* and the partial authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum* see Vermes 2011: 34-44.

⁴⁶ Until 1956, there existed a near consensus that Mark had been written at Rome between 64 and 70 (see Donahue 1992:817). Given the gargantuan scholarly output on the Gospel of Mark, it is beyond the scope of this footnote to sift through all the arguments. Opponents of the Roman provenance seem to spend much of their effort in arguing against the positive evidence for Rome. For a defense of the traditional view that places the Neronian persecution in the background of Mark's gospel, see Hengel 1985:1-30 and Incigneri 2003:59-108 (in particular his review of early Church traditions and Mark's Latinisms). Without overstating an unnecessary "community-based" reading of the gospel, it suffices to note Mark's major themes: Jesus is opposed by authorities, misunderstood by all, betrayed by his family, disciples, mocked, made to suffer; at the end he feels abandoned by God. Even the Messianic secret resonates better if we assume an audience who, just like Mark's Jesus, were concerned about revealing their true

we may surmise that the reticent and cautious attitude of Roman Christians after the Neronian persecution did not contribute to the preservation of historical details regarding Paul's martyrdom. As a result, of local traditions about Paul's death that we may assume were held by Roman Christians living in the late 1st century, virtually nothing has survived.⁴⁷

News of the Neronian persecution must have reached other Christian communities rather quickly; the tragedy is discussed in coded language in the apocalyptic literature of the following five decades (*Revelation*, *Ascension of Isaiah* and the *Apocalypse of Peter*). Other Christian writers, however, seem to have purposefully avoided the subject. As previously discussed, the author of Luke-Acts deliberately stops his narrative after Paul's arrival in Rome. Another intriguing feature of Acts is seldom mentioned: although there are eight references to Nero, the author never mentions Nero by name, whereas he does not have a similar apprehension when dealing with other emperors.⁴⁸ It is impossible to tell how provincial authorities treated Christians after the events in Rome; Pliny, our first reference in this matter, wrote ca. 111. As a rule, with the exception of apocalyptic writers, Christians continued to recommend the same meekness and submission to imperial authorities that Paul had already favored in Rom. 13:1-6 (see 1 Peter 2:13-15, Titus 3:1-2 and 1 Tim 2:1-2, *1 Clem.* 61, *Pol.* 12.3 and *Ign. Rom.* 4).

identity. As often pointed out (see Green 2010:30), Mark 15:21 names Rufus as a son of Simon of Cyrene (information that is omitted in Matt. 27:32 and Luke 23:26, probably because they found it irrelevant for their audiences). Although the link is ultimately unprovable, there is a well-founded temptation to identify this Rufus with the Roman Christian called "chosen in the Lord" by Paul in Rom. 16:13.

⁴⁷ Cf. § 4.4. The story of Patroclus in the 2nd century *Martyrdom of Paul* is probably based on an early tradition of Roman origin but it has reached us in a very different form, to the extent that it is impossible to reconstruct the plot of the original story.

⁴⁸ In Acts, Nero is referred simply as "Caesar" but remains unnamed in all of his eight appearances (five times in Acts 25:8-12; also in Acts 26:32, 27:24 and 28:19). Other emperors are named as "Augustus Caesar" (Luke 2:1), "Tiberius Caesar" (Luke 3:1) and "Claudius" (Acts 11:28). In modern psychology, the unwillingness to name people or events related to negative news is called the "mum effect". As a psychological phenomenon, it is commonly observed among groups who have lived through tragedies (for instance, survivors of the Holocaust). See Tajra 1994:167 on silence as the characteristic approach of Christians of the post-apostolic generation regarding the martyrdoms of Paul and Peter.

Unfortunately for them, in the late 1st century, external signs of the emperor's cult were ubiquitous in public places; given the dangerous similarities between the devotional language used by Jesus' followers and the terminology of the imperial cult, Christians must have felt better off avoiding overt public exposure. Indeed, we see evidence of caution among their writers. From the Neronian persecution of 64 down to Ignatius ca. 110, John of Patmos (the combative apocalypticist of *Revelation*) is the only Christian author known by name; the rest of the first postapostolic generation is completely nameless for us.⁴⁹ Probably the relative silence of this generation resulted also from their ongoing anticipation of the *parousia* which, according to Mark 13:24–27, would be heralded by persecution against Christians and the imminent fall of Jerusalem. This expectation seems to have persisted among leading Christians for several decades (cf. Ign. *Eph.* 11.1). Naturally for someone who is awaiting the end of times, recording the details of recent events for future generations must seem rather futile.

Another factor that may have contributed to Christians' unwillingness to elaborate on Paul's martyrdom in the decades after his death might be related to Nero's posthumous status.⁵⁰ We have already discussed Acts' reluctance to name the Emperor. In the aftermath of his death, Nero acquired a quasi-supernatural status among pagans, Christians and Jews. He appears more than once in the Sibylline Oracles (for instance in the fifth book, composed ca. 100 and

⁴⁹ See Koester 2000:2.282: "We do not know the name of a single Christian ... from the period of about 60-90 CE. ...All Christian writings from this period were either anonymous or written under the pseudonym of an apostle from the first generation." As Koester insightfully reminds us, in 1st century public spaces, inscriptions spoke about the emperor as savior (σωτήρ) and announced his appearance (ἐπιφάνεια) as a gospel (εὐαγγέλιον), praising him as the benefactor and bringer of peace to all humankind (see Koester 2000:1.355). The religious content of these terms did not question the legitimacy of other religions, yet in the case of monotheistic Christians, it must have put them in a continuously precarious situation, always at the mercy of non-Christians who disliked them and could accuse them of sedition. If there is any truth about Domitian's persecution of Christians – Koester (2000:2.293) considers it probable – Domitian's desire to be addressed as *dominus* and *deus* may have acted as a trigger.

⁵⁰ Tjara (1994:166) notices that among the early Fathers "silence was more often than not the characteristic approach" regarding the martyrdoms of Paul and Peter.

essentially Jewish in outlook). After his reign ended, among the common people, Nero continued to enjoy a remarkable popularity. As a sort of cultic remembrance, the Roman populace brought flowers to his grave, and when his loyal old nurse Egloge died, she was buried on the spot where Nero had killed himself. Astrologers had prophesied while he was still alive (Suet. *Nero* 40.2) that he would rule the east after his fall. This led to the legend of Nero *redivivus*, a belief that the last of the Julio-Claudians would return after his death. No less than three false Neros, appearing between 69 and 89, profited from this belief; two of these imposters were quite successful and gained support from the Parthians.⁵¹ Decades after his death, Nero was still fondly remembered by many Greeks, whom he had freed from taxes. In the words of Dio Chrysostom, “even now everybody wishes that he were still alive. And the great majority believe that he is.”⁵² Nero’s worship is important for providing context for the book of Revelation, probably the earliest document that depicts Nero as an enemy of Christians, and famously associates him via gematria with the beast whose number is 666 (Rev. 13:18). Although in later centuries several other emperors also carried out persecutions, for many Christians of late antiquity Nero belonged to a different league. As we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5, much more than a run-of-the-mill “bad emperor”, Nero was remembered as the first persecutor, the killer of Peter and Paul, a monstrous being that had transcended earthly life and would return at the end of times.⁵³

⁵¹ See discussion in Champlin 2003:1-32. Champlin collected much interesting evidence that allows us to see a different side of Nero’s reputation in antiquity, one that was on the whole more positive than his modern reputation, which has been mostly shaped by the writings of Suetonius, Tacitus and Dio Cassius.

⁵² Dio *Orat.* 21.9-10. Dio Chrysostom (ca. 40-120) was a contemporary of the generation of Christians who had lived through the Neronian persecution and survived.

⁵³ See a discussion on the worship of Nero in Cook 2010:108-110. Still extant is an inscription that commemorates Nero’s gift of freedom to the Greeks (ca. 67) and describes him as “Nero Zeus liberator” and the “new Helios shining on the Greeks” (see *ibid.* 30-31). The date of composition of Revelation is fiercely debated; one side favors

To sum up, in this chapter we have seen that our sources for the martyrdom of Paul are very limited. We can place him physically in Rome ca. 60-62 but we have no contemporary evidence for what happened to him afterwards. All we can say is that about thirty years later, Christians believed that he had been executed at Rome under Nero. The historical record for the postapostolic generation between 64 and 96 is silent. We might surmise that traditions about Paul's death were first formed and passed down in this period (cf. § 2.4), but many factors conspired against the written preservation of these traditions in their original state. I have conjectured that the Neronian persecution had a devastating demographic and psychological effect on the local Christian community, from which it must have recovered both slowly and silently. Except for apocalyptic writers, literary Christians elsewhere seem to have been reluctant to write about the deaths of the apostles Paul and Peter under Nero, an emperor regarded with favor by the Greek-speaking masses (Christians' usual targets for conversion) even decades after his death. Probably, memories of strong divisions within the Roman community while it was being persecuted made the remembrance of these tragic events even more traumatic. Last, when the expectation for an imminent *parousia* began to subside, forward-thinking authors like Luke realized the necessity of addressing more immediate political realities and helping the church to adapt to life under Roman rule in the long term. To dwell on the death of a prominent Christian leader, prosecuted and executed as a criminal by none other than a Roman emperor, was not conducive to a successful *Apologia pro Ecclesia*.⁵⁴ Despite Luke's silence regarding Paul's death, we can safely assume that some of his contemporaries were

68-69 and another 95-96. Rev. 17:6 and 18:24 are sometimes considered references to the Neronian persecution. See Cook 2010:106-108 and Barnes 2010:38 for a discussion on "the number of the beast". Gematria matches the letters of the alphabet with the corresponding number. The letters of "Nero Caesar", when transcribed from Greek into Aramaic and interpreted as numbers, add up to 666. In some MSS, the number 616 is found instead, which matches the transcription from Latin into Aramaic.

⁵⁴ This is the political message of the book of Acts. See more detailed discussion in § 3.1.

actively passing down stories about the apostles' final days in Rome to the next generation of Christians. In the next chapter, I present a model to study the formation and transmission of those stories.

CHAPTER 2: A MODEL FOR THE FORMATION OF UR-TRADITIONS

Although there is a long gap in our historical record before we encounter detailed written information about Paul's final days, we can safely assume that in the years following his death there were Christians who claimed to possess first-hand information about what Paul did in Rome, whom he met or befriended, how he was executed or even what he said in those fateful moments. In this chapter we shall try to answer the following questions. How many people can we envision to have been among the original first-generation tradents of Paul's death?¹ How did their personal stories develop into more or less established oral traditions? How long could these oral traditions have lasted if not committed to writing? What literary models were available for drawing up an account of Paul's final days? I shall proceed as follows. In this first section I will define key concepts for the rest of the dissertation. I will delimit the intended meaning of the terms "memory" and "tradition" and discuss problems associated with the durability and stability of orally transmitted stories. Section 2 examines the Greco-Roman perception of the reliability of oral stories. In section 3, I propose a model to study the transmission of early oral traditions about Paul's final days in Rome. I finish the chapter analyzing what we can learn from the earliest references to Paul's martyrdom written within the period 95-200 CE.

¹ On "first-generation tradents", see footnote 1 in the introduction of this dissertation and discussion in § 2.3.

1. Definition of Terms: Memories and Traditions

Before we begin, it is imperative to define the meaning of our two key terms, “memory” and “tradition.” Unfortunately, the presumed lifespan and semantic scope of these words, the former in particular, are often imprecise in scholarly works that deal with the way that information was preserved and transmitted in the first two centuries of Christianity. Take for example the “memories of the apostle Peter.” M. Guarducci, talking about the Christians at Rome who venerated Peter’s alleged grave ca. 150 CE, assumes that memories of Peter’s death could have been transmitted from Peter’s contemporaries to their descendants in the mid-2nd century.² For his part, B. Green, dealing with traditions about Peter in Rome, states that by the end of the 2nd century “the historical memory of Peter’s aims in going to Rome had been lost”; moreover, speculating about the most probable motive for this visit, he attributes it to the apostle’s desire to resolve continuing disputes between gentile Christians and Law-observant Jewish Christians, an internal conflict of the church that over one hundred years later “had lapsed from memory.”³ Regardless of the validity of Guarducci’s and Green’s contentions, what strikes the reader is that their assertions appear to be based on intuitive conjectures about the demographics of 2nd century Christianity in Rome and the durability of collective remembrance of past events. Guarducci does not explain how one can estimate the number Christians who knew Peter in person or their average life expectancy; neither does she justify her assumption that their memories would be accurate. As to Green, although we might guess what he means by “historical memory”, the term is not clearly defined and he says nothing about the time frame after which this type of memory lapses.

² “...with rare exceptions, the Apostle’s contemporaries must have been dead, but there would be many alive whose fathers had known Peter in person and followed the events of his death”. See Guarducci 1960:92.

³ Green 2010:49.

In his 2010 study *The Remembered Peter*, M. Bockmuehl offered some needed clarification of these questions and postulated a model to study the transmission of traditions in early Christianity. Conceding that in Imperial Rome only about 20-25% of the population were fortunate enough to reach middle age and that only about 5% of the population at any one time was aged over 60, Bockmuehl stated that up to the late 2nd century there were still senior Christian leaders claiming to possess personal memories of the apostles' disciples.⁴ When using this construct, a recurrent trio of Christians linked by Bockmuehl are John the Elder, Polycarp and Irenaeus; based on the latter writings, he contends that these three formed a "chain of memory" which schematically can be shown as follows:⁵

John the Elder († ca. 100) → Polycarp († ca. 165) → Irenaeus († ca. 200)

As Bockmuehl points out, just like Irenaeus, Gnostic Christians also appealed to their own apostolic pedigree. According to Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 7.17), followers of Basilides († ca. 145) claimed that their teacher's doctrines had been passed down by a certain Glaucias, a disciple of Peter, while the Valentinians claimed that Valentinus († ca. 160) had been instructed by Theudas, a disciple of Paul. Regardless of the veracity of these claims, what matters is that for people living in the middle of the 2nd century, these stories were considered

⁴ See Bockmuehl 2010:23-24 for statistical data, and 17-30 and 114-130 for a discussion of his interpretative model. Second-century Christians used these alleged apostolic memories to claim authority in contemporary debates.

⁵ In his letter to Florinus (apud Eus. *HE* 5.20.4-6), Irenaeus talked about his close intimacy with Polycarp and how accurately he remembered what Polycarp had told him about John. "For I distinctly recall the events of that time better than those of recent years... so I can tell the very place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit as he discoursed... his bodily appearance, the discourses he would address to the multitude, how he would tell of his conversations with John and with the others who had seen the Lord, how he would relate their words from memory; and what the things were which he had heard from them concerning the Lord, his mighty works and his teaching, Polycarp, as having received them from the eyewitnesses (αὐτόπται) of the life of the Logos, would declare in accordance with the scriptures." Translation taken from Bauckham 2008:35. The John mentioned by Polycarp is probably John the Elder rather than John the Apostle (see discussion in Bauckham 2007). For our purposes his identity is immaterial. The extent to which Irenaeus' (and even Polycarp's) claims to have first-hand information about 1st century Christians can be trusted has produced a broad range of opinions among scholars. See discussion in Hartog 2015:11-16.

historically plausible.⁶ Hence, Bockmuehl posited that, although the last eyewitnesses of the apostolic generation would have been either dead or extremely elderly by around the year 140, a good number of Christians (like Irenaeus) would have personally known these eyewitnesses, their stories and traditions; some of these “spiritual grandchildren” of the apostles were still alive by the end of the 2nd century, albeit very advanced in age, and could invoke their memories to confirm or challenge particular interpretations of the apostolic gospel. Bockmuehl concluded that the historical period 70-200 CE encompasses “a rough-and-ready three generational structure of living memory” during which information about events in the early Church was transmitted orally from apostles via their pupils to the pupils’ eyewitnesses. Schematically, Bockmuehl’s model for traditions concerning Paul’s mission and martyrdom in Rome would work like this:

1. Paul and his immediate contemporaries, assumed dead by 70.
2. The immediate followers of this apostolic group, the last of these dying out by 135.
3. Their disciples to ca. 200.

A valuable contribution of Bockmuehl’s proposal is that by putting a human face on studies of Christian oral traditions he brings needed balance to the scholarly tendency to view 2nd

⁶ Notice that in pagan literature one also finds “chains of memory” that connect historical figures active during Nero’s reign to people who gained fame more than a century later. For instance, according to Lucian (*Alex.* 5), the false prophet and oracle-monger Alexander of Abonoteichus († ca. 170) had been taught by an associate of the great Apollonius of Tyana (*fl.* 50-90). Likewise, the Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus (*fl.* 60-70), “the Roman Socrates” who survived the Neronian purges of political enemies, is often connected to Marcus Aurelius († 180) via Epictetus († 135) and a student of his who taught the Emperor. Interestingly, Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 1.27.1-2) proposes a “heretic chain of memory” of dubious historical value as a rhetorical weapon to attack the gnostic Marcion (*fl.* 140-160). Irenaeus makes Marcion a student of Cerdo, taught by no other than the legendary Simon Magus who had fought against the apostle Peter during Nero’s reign.

century stories about the apostles as the product of impersonal “communities.”⁷ What is more, his insights provide us with a good starting point for the reconstruction of the way that early traditions about Paul’s final days in Rome could have been handed down, especially if we consider that our earliest eight references (see § 2.4) appear in documents written within the period 70-200 CE.⁸ On the other hand, Bockmuehl’s construct lends itself to criticisms that need to be discussed if we are to develop a more refined model. Given his insistence on positing John the Elder, Polycarp and Irenaeus as a paragon of the “three generational structure of living memory”, I shall use them as an example to raise three objections to his model.⁹

The first problem in Bockmuehl’s construct is the extent of what he calls “the living memory of the apostles.” Could it really have lasted till the end of the 2nd century?¹⁰ John the Elder must have reached a very advanced age since Papias (*fl.* 90-130) calls him “a disciple of the Lord” (apud Eus. *HE* 3.39). For his part, Polycarp presumably lived to be about 87 (deduced from *Mart. Pol.* 9.3), and Irenaeus must have been in his seventies at the time of his death. All this could well be true, but if so, very unusual.¹¹ What is more, there were incentives to exaggerate the age of “elders”. For instance, the apologist Quadratus, who wrote possibly ca. 125 (see Ehrman 2003:89), affirmed that some of those healed and raised from the dead by Jesus

⁷ The same can be said of Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (2008) to which I shall refer in the next section.

⁸ After these references, the historical record turns silent for about 100 years until Eusebius (*HE* 2.25.1-8) writes again about Paul’s martyrdom more or less extensively. Still, Eusebius himself furnishes no new information but instead systematically lists all the prior references — from the period 95-200 — that he found (see § 2.4).

⁹ My interest in this matter revolves around the stability and durability of transmitted traditions. In that regard, I will state my own viewpoints after I examine Bockmuehl’s construct.

¹⁰ Notice that this would amount to expecting someone in the year 2000 to be the recipient of oral memories of the American Civil war.

¹¹ Notice that using Bockmuehl’s own demographic data, given that in the 1st and 2nd century the possibility of a man reaching the age of 60 was 1 in 20, the chance of three Christian men in a close teacher-pupil relationship successively reaching that age is about 1 in 8,000.

were alive “even to our day” (Eus. *HE* 32.6). Likewise, decades later, Hegesippus stated that Symeon, a relative of Jesus, had been martyred at the age of one hundred and twenty years (Eus. *HE* 3.32.6).¹²

More importantly, even if we accept as a fact that John the Elder and Polycarp reached advanced age and that the latter handed down to Irenaeus bits of genuine information regarding the apostles, it is quite clear that this did not significantly improve Irenaeus’ overall understanding of the apostolic period. Indeed, scholars have found in his writings passages best explained not as deriving from oral traditions but as arising from a misinterpretation of written sources. For instance, Irenaeus seems to believe that Jesus’ ministry continued into his forties (*Adv. Haer.* 2.22.5) and that he was crucified when Claudius was emperor (*Dem.* 74 and 77). Elsewhere, Irenaeus engages in what psychologists call “telescoping of the past”. In *Adv. Haer.* 3.3.4, he reports a chronologically improbable story told by no other than Polycarp, according to whom the apostle John had once rushed out of a bath-house in Ephesus after he found the Gnostic Cerinthus in it. Probably the same mechanism of time compression led Irenaeus to place Domitian's reign (81-96) “almost in our generation” (*Adv. Haer.* 5.30.1, also found in Eus. *HE* 5.8.6). All in all, it seems that for Irenaeus the human link to the 1st century, the living link that gives a ring of historical verisimilitude to stories of the past, was clearly broken. For him, the previous century was simply a nebulous historical setting into which he could place sundry anecdotes of early Christianity that he had heard. This observation does not invalidate Bockmuehl’s “three generation structure of living memory”, but it does suggest that the typical

¹² Pagan writers also gave credit to claims of extreme longevity. Pliny the Elder lists many famous Romans who reached old age and even reports ninety individuals 100 or older registered in two districts of Italy during the census of Vespasian (ca. 74); several of these were allegedly aged over 130 years old (*Nat.* 7.48-49).

lifespan of apostolic oral traditions must have been much shorter.¹³ In fact, studies on the duration of oral traditions in ancient Greece indicate that they did last up to three generations but, on average, gave out after about 80 years. I shall return to this issue in the next section.

A second problem with Bockmuehl's construct concerns the stability of the information transmitted. He, too confidently, believes that some 1st century stories preserved by Irenaeus can be considered "primary source" material.¹⁴ Could we expect that information reported by "those who had seen the Lord" (Eus. *HE* 5.20.4-6) to have reached Irenaeus in the late 2nd century unmodified?¹⁵ As we shall see in the rest of the dissertation, traditional stories become distorted and altered, shortened or expanded early in their transmission. This process, as a rule, gives rise to a number of discrepant versions. Notice that this process begins even while eyewitnesses are still alive. Docetism — the belief that Jesus did not have a human body — appears to have emerged before all of Jesus' disciples had died (1 John 4.1; Ign. *Trall.* 9-10). Likewise, conflicting traditions about the legacy of Paul and Peter appeared very early and were

¹³ A story related by Justin Martyr (born ca. 100) exemplifies this phenomenon. Ca. 150 CE, he wrote that Simon Magus had gone to Rome during the reign of Claudius (41-54), performed acts of magic and was honored as a god by the locals with a statue on the Tiber island that bore the Latin inscription *Simoni Deo Sancto* (1 *Apol.* 26). The belief that Simon Magus (cf. Acts 8:9-24) had visited Rome might have derived from an earlier oral tradition, but Justin's historically implausible setting for the story clearly indicates that for him the mid-1st century was in great part an imaginary past to which he had no human connection. The statue mentioned by Justin was found in 1574; the inscription reads *Semoni Sanco Deo*, in honor of the Sabine divinity Semo Sancos. Presumably Justin or his source misinterpreted its meaning. Notice that to substantiate his story of Simon Magus' visit to Rome, Justin cited what we now call "material evidence" rather than oral tradition. The same story appears in the writings of later Christians, probably based on Justin's report.

¹⁴ Cf. Bockmuehl 2010:123-124.

¹⁵ Note again that my interest here is on the stability of these traditions rather than their reliability. Although the latter is not my primary concern, the extant evidence seems to point towards not enough skepticism among those Christians who collected traditions. For instance, Papias, a contemporary of Polycarp, who collected personal memories from first generation Christians, claimed to have sought creditable sources. Still, Eusebius (*HE* 3.39), who preserved some of his fragments, was unimpressed with Papias' work and rejected some of these stories as "farfetched" (μυθικώτερα), a term that he uses pejoratively when referring to pagan theology (cf. Eus. *Praep. Ev.* 1.6.5, 2.5.1 and 3.17.1).

magnified in later decades.¹⁶ Even in non-theological matters, the same instability in traditions of apostolic times can be observed. Ca. 180 Irenaeus himself compiled the first extant catalogue of “popes” (*Haer.* 3.3). According to him, Peter and Paul cofounded the church and appointed Linus, who was succeeded by Anacletus and then Clement. This tradition differs from that of Tertullian (*De Praes.* 32), who wrote that Peter had ordained Clement.¹⁷ To sum up, Bockmuehl’s assertion that “primary source” material originating from the apostles’ generation could still be found ca. 200 is excessively optimistic.

My last objection to Bockmuehl’s construct concerns the name of his model: “three generational structure of *living memory* of the apostles”; its discussion offers me an opportunity to define key concepts in this chapter. First, I propose that the expression “**within living memory**” be reserved for events that could have been remembered (regardless of the accuracy of their memories) by Christians who were alive when these events took place.¹⁸ Even if we were to admit that Irenaeus had at his disposal orally transmitted stories about the apostles, these were no longer *living memories*. Once the Christians of the apostolic generation were dead, it was no longer possible to question the participants in the events, and by Irenaeus’ times their personal

¹⁶ Recall that the gnostic Basilidians and Valentinians defended the legitimacy of their doctrines by asserting that their founders had been the spiritual grandchildren of Peter and Paul respectively. Still, their teachings would likely have bewildered the apostles and those who knew them, had they been alive. The Basilidians believed in the transmigration of the souls, and according to some of the Valentinians Christ and Jesus were two separate beings temporarily united.

¹⁷ See discussion in Lampe 2003:404-406. Irenaeus’s interest in early papal chronology was more rhetorical than historical; he used it to buttress apostolic succession. Although some of the names may represent actual leaders of the early Roman Church known from earlier traditions, the list is of dubious historical value. The sixth bishop of Rome is coincidentally named “Sextus” and the total number of bishops is the symbolic 12. Lampe thinks that Irenaeus retrojected to the 1st century the phenomenon of Roman monoepiscopacy that, although prevalent in his own time, had developed gradually sometime after 150 CE.

¹⁸ My objections do not extend to Bockmuehl’s insight that oral information can be transmitted through three generations; although in *The Remembered Peter* he overestimated the length of time that the inter-generational oral traditions last (see discussion in § 2.2).

stories, at least partially, would have inevitably been altered.¹⁹ Ancient writers intuitively knew that and for that reason, as we shall see in the next section, deeply valued oral information that could be traced back to its original source. We shall call this type of traceable information “**oral memory**.”²⁰ Note that all oral memories are **oral traditions** in the sense that they constitute information that has been orally handed down from the past to the present. Yet, the opposite is not true. I shall clarify this distinction with a previous example. Recall that Irenaeus traced back to Polycarp, via an intermediary who reported it to him, the story about the alleged encounter between John and the gnostic Cerinthus. The fact that Irenaeus was able to identify Polycarp as the source of the anecdote makes the story an “oral memory.” Had he been unable to pinpoint the person who first told the anecdote as a personal memory, then we would call the story an “oral tradition.” The anecdote of John and Cerinthus allows us to define one more technical term. Bockmuehl called the process by which this story reached Irenaeus a “chain of memory”; yet this name can be misleading because it implies that memories themselves always pass from person A to person B to person C. A more suitable term for this process is “**information flow**”, since the transmission of personal memories in the first centuries of Christianity was more often than not a non-linear phenomenon.

Our final task is to explain what we mean by “**tradition**”, our operative word throughout the dissertation. The word’s meaning is not easy to pinpoint; broadly speaking, and as previously discussed, a tradition is “anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past

¹⁹ This is discussed in further detail in § 2.3. For the moment, recall that we already saw how Irenaeus’ retelling of some 1st century traditions was influenced by his polemical needs. This personal reinterpretation of the past is a common psychological phenomenon that affects all of us. See Byrskog 2000 and Byrskog 2013:31-48.

²⁰ Ancient historians in particular tried to follow a process similar to the modern practice of **oral history**. See discussion in Bauckham 2008:492.

to the present.”²¹ For those interested in the social history of early Christianity, the benefit of studying traditions is twofold, since it is not only their “pastness” that matters, but also their significance for the present at each point in the transmission. Whenever a literary Christian made a decision to commit a tradition to writing, we ought to assume that his decision was influenced by a particular social context that prompted him to gather and share this traditional material.²² Regarding the apostle Paul, needless to say, there is a great deal of traditional material that is unrelated to his death. Thus, for the purposes of this dissertation I propose to use the following *ad hoc* definition of a “tradition” as *a story about Paul’s final days in Rome that can exist autonomously and whose essential identifiable features can be recognized by an external observer at successive steps of its transmission.*²³

Let us now analyze each element of the definition. *Final days of Paul.* This is a period of unclear and varying duration, depending on each particular tradition: days, weeks, several months or even a couple of years. We have extant stories, set during this period, not only about Paul’s death but also about his interactions in Rome with people whom he converted, befriended or fought against. *Can exist autonomously.* Although some stories were fused with others or even succinctly embedded into unrelated narratives, they all form self-contained traditions whose existence did not depend on that of others. *Essential identifiable features.* The core elements of these traditions can be reduced to a few key items. *Recognized by an external observer.* The same story can assume several forms, but we can always distinguish it from other stories because of its essential features. For instance, we have the story of a woman who gave her veil to Paul

²¹ See Byrskog 2013:32

²² See discussion in Pervo 2009:13

²³ This definition is adapted from Shils’ (1981:14-15). For the many 2nd century Pauline traditions unrelated to his mission and martyrdom in Rome, see Lieu 2010:3-14.

which he used to blindfold himself at the time of his execution. In one version of this tradition she is called Plautilla, in another Perpetua, in yet another Lemobia; in one story she is a noble woman, in another she is blind in one eye, and so forth. Despite these differences, it is always possible to recognize the story as a distinct tradition with its own essential features. *At successive steps of its transmission.* Some of these traditions were transmitted through several centuries and thus are found in different narrative contexts with significant changes. Nevertheless, if we compare the latest version of a tradition with its previous one, we can still perceive a sense of filiation.

2. Oral Traditions in Antiquity

As discussed in § 1.1, the first thirty years that followed Paul's death (ca. 65-95) are shrouded in darkness. The earliest references to Paul's final days were written in the period ca. 95-120, still within living memory of the events; however they are frustratingly vague and offer very little information.²⁴ The book of Acts, to be studied in Chapter 3, was also written during that crucial period. It offers copious biographical information about Paul up to his arrival in Rome (28:16-31), where the author leaves the apostle under custody waiting to face trial before the emperor as a consequence of Jewish legal harassment. Although an account of Paul's trial and death are omitted, Luke foreshadows both of them in previous chapters (23:11, 27:24 and 20:25, 20:38, respectively). By far the most descriptive story of Paul's final days is preserved in a 2nd century narrative called *The Martyrdom of Paul*, whose extant literary form was probably composed ca. 150 CE.²⁵ According to this story, Paul arrived in Rome as a free man and

²⁴ See more detailed analysis in § 2.4. In these early references we find allusions to traditions that appear more fully developed in later written sources. We might even say that they represent future traditions in their embryonic state.

²⁵ For the date of *The Martyrdom of Paul* see Eastman 2015:123 and our discussion in § 4.4.

preached for some time successfully, but eventually angered Nero because he converted the Emperor's cupbearer. As a result, Nero ordered the persecution of Christians in the city and sentenced Paul to death. *The Martyrdom of Paul* is the first story that actually describes Paul's manner of execution; it also mentions his tomb where believers gathered to honor the apostle.

As we shall see in Chapter 4, it is quite improbable that the author of *The Martyrdom of Paul* invented these stories about Paul's final days *ex nihilo*. Underlying his account there must have been more primitive, now lost, oral traditions which by analogy with the hypothetical Ur-gospels, I shall call **Ur-traditions**.²⁶ Although nowadays we can merely guess their content, their existence is something we can take for granted. Within the living memory of Paul's death, some Christians were telling stories about the apostle's final days.²⁷ Of these earliest stories, the only ones that survived are those that were committed to writing; at some point in the 2nd century, Ur-traditions not transferred to written documents gave out and fell into oblivion. Given these premises, we shall now embark on a speculative exercise and explore the time-span first of the living memory of Paul's death and then the oral traditions about his martyrdom that ensued; we shall also explore the channels through which these oral traditions were possibly disseminated and how literary Christians would have approached the gathering of information about the apostle's final days.

First we will try to establish how far back oral traditions in ancient societies could reach. Since their preservation and transmission depended on a large number of factors, there is no

²⁶ Ur-gospels are hypothetical earlier gospels that lie behind our extant gospels.

²⁷ As in any oral tradition, the people telling these stories were either (1) reporting them from first-hand knowledge, (2) repeating what they themselves have heard or (3) passing down accounts that they had invented. See Vansina 1961:90.

universal answer to this question.²⁸ Nevertheless, studies by Rosalind Thomas on Athenian speeches have demonstrated that, as a rule, speakers were able to recall information that could be traced back only to their grandparents.²⁹ Her observations coincide with those of the historian E. Vandiver. Indeed, Vandiver noticed that ancient authors who committed oral traditions to writing appear to have considered them reliable within a human period that she called “**the three-generation reachback**”, a term that I shall adopt for the rest of the chapter.³⁰

The lifespan of oral traditions, expressed in years, is even harder to gauge and obviously depends on the individuals who participate in their transmission. We cannot discard the possibility that in exceptional cases information was transmitted orally for over one hundred years. For example, in *De Vir. Illust.* (ca. 393) Jerome claims to have met a certain Paul from Concordia, who, in turn, had met Cyprian’s secretary when he was a young man and learned from him that Cyprian († 258) used to read Tertullian’s writings everyday by asking the secretary *da mihi magistrum*.³¹ Probably Jerome’s more educated contemporaries would have believed Jerome’s extraordinarily long-lived anecdote but considered it an exception to the rule. We have evidence that the ancients intuitively understood that the life and factual accuracy of

²⁸ Oral traditions transmitted in the form of poetry and aided by mnemonic devices probably could be passed down without much change for several generations. Cf. the seminal study of Milman Parry on the oral transmission of Homeric Poems. For a more modern example, see Vansina’s celebrated study on oral traditions in Central Africa (Vansina 1961).

²⁹ See Thomas 1989:95-154. This phenomenon is also observed among modern humans as observed by Aaron Holt (archivist at the National Archives and Records Administration) who has over 20 years of professional experience working with family traditions. Likewise, J. Meyer (2004:19-48) in his study of villages in Turkey noticed that the historical horizon of these families rarely went back more than three generations.

³⁰ Vandiver 1990:225-226.

³¹ The information flow for Jerome’s anecdote, covering over 160 years, would look like this: Cyprian († 258) → Cyprian’s secretary († (?)) → Paul from Concordia († (?)) → Jerome († 420). Whatever we may think of the reliability of Jerome’s *dictum*, it is true that small pieces of information can be handed down for unusually long periods of time. The scholar W. Schadewalt (1985:110) described a pithy saying of his grandfather that had lasted over 150 years within his family. I myself know tiny bits of biographical information of my great-grandfather (from events in his life that took place ca. 1900) that my grandmother transmitted to me and that I can now hand down to my own children. For a more in-depth discussion of personal and collective memories see § 2.4.

oral traditions did not stretch back much further than eighty years.³² This attitude is found very early in Greco-Roman historiography and continues throughout antiquity. For instance, Herodotus, writing ca. 432 BCE, extended his inquiries to slightly over a century before his time, purposely choosing as the starting point of his work the encounter between the Lydian king Croesus and Solon, the wise Athenian legislator. Herodotus was born ca. 484 BCE, so at least in theory he could have heard about the historical king Croesus from his grandfather. At any rate, he explicitly stated that he was relying *on his own knowledge* (1.5.3), by which he likely meant that he had learned the story of the ill-fated king Croesus via oral tradition and that this story originated from a reliable source.³³

What source Herodotus used, we do not know. Regrettably, Greco-Roman historians seldom reveal their sources; when they do, however, we can see the workings of the three-generation reachback in action. For instance, the Roman biographer Suetonius, writing ca. 120, places himself, his father and grandfather as witnesses to events that span 85 years (see detailed discussion in Appendix 2.a). The reliability of Suetonius' stories we can no longer determine. Yet the fact that the earliest story was within the three-generation reachback must have bestowed upon his account a certain amount of verisimilitude.³⁴ Ancient writers took advantage of this

³² Norelli 2002:169, quoting Jan Assmann, calls this period of oral tradition *saeculum de la mémoire communicative*.

³³ Needless to say, this does not make Herodotus' account historically accurate. His story reads more like a moral tale about the perils of *hubris*. Just as Irenaeus (cf. the previous section), Herodotus distorted chronology, positing that Solon, who lived about 30 years before Croesus, had visited the Lydian king. The important point is that for both Herodotus and his contemporaries the "Croesus tradition" had historical value because it had not occurred in the very distant past. See discussion in Vandiver 1990:225-226. In 3.122.2, while talking about Greek rulers, Herodotus uses a similar reasoning to justify his choosing of Polycrates (fl. 538-522 BCE) as his starting point; he writes that Polycrates was "the *first* of the Greeks that *we know of* who had plans to rule the sea".

³⁴ Among Christians, Polycrates of Ephesus (Eus. *HE* 5.24), who wrote to Pope Victor during the Quartodeciman Controversy (ca. 193), made rhetorical use of the three-generation reachback principle to defend Asian ritual practices. Probably a third-generation Christian, Polycrates boasted of having had seven relatives who were bishops and related local traditions about the apostle John, Philip the Evangelist and his daughters. See discussion in Bauckham 2008:438-445.

common perception when relating stories from the past. For instance, Cicero in *De Amicitia* (written ca. 46 BCE) claims to be reporting a long conversation about friendship that had taken place 83 years earlier. His eyewitness-informant for this conversation had been his tutor Q. Mucius Scaevola, who supposedly had told Cicero this story about four decades after the events, when the famed orator was a young man receiving rhetorical training under his supervision.³⁵

Suetonius' and Cicero's reliance on eyewitnesses to obtain first-hand knowledge about past events was in consonance with ancient historians' best practices.³⁶ From Herodotus on, the interrogation of eyewitnesses (αὐτόπται) had become a crucial aspect of the Greco-Roman historiographical tradition. Polybius, writing in the mid-2nd century BCE, criticized his predecessor Timaeus on account of his defective use of sources. According to Polybius, there were three modes of historical inquiry (Plb. 12.27): the historian's personal experience, considered of first importance; next, the interrogation (ἀνάκρισις) of living eyewitnesses; and last, the reading of memoirs (Timaeus's exclusive method). In the same vein, Lucian of Samosata wrote in the 2nd century CE a treatise on historiography in which he emphasized the importance of consulting eyewitnesses, careful investigation, attention to accuracy, and the orderly arrangement (τάξις) of the collected material (*Hist. Conscr.* 46-49).³⁷

³⁵ This dialogue *De Amicitia* centers on Laelius, the father-in-law of Scaevola, who reflects on the meaning of friendship after the death of Scipio Africanus. Cicero's alleged verbatim report of the conversation reminds us of Ireneaus' own claims regarding Polycarp's stories. Although the speeches that Cicero attributes to the main character are heavily colored by Aristotelian ideas about friendship, Cicero's artful rhetorical framing of the story within the timeline of the three-generation reachback gives the conversation a patina of historicity.

³⁶ See discussion in Bauckham 2008:479.

³⁷ Ideally the eyewitness would be the writer himself. Thus, for Josephus, writing ca. 100 in defense of his historical work, the fact that he had been a participant in the Jewish War made him an eyewitness and a qualified collector and interpreter of information provided by others (*C. Ap.* 49-50) and thus a suitable person to commit to writing the stories of the events that had been handed over (παράδοσις).

Interestingly, we know of two literary Christians of the post-apostolic generation, Papias (fl. 90-130) and the author of Luke-Acts (ca. 95-120), who explicitly claimed to have conducted their inquiries in the manner of good historians. Of Papias' work, only some fragments have survived; yet we can still compare his prologue (Eus. *HE* 3.39.3-4) to Luke's (Luke 1:1-4). Both are filled with the standard terminology used by classical and Hellenistic historians.³⁸ Papias calls his account Ἐξήγησις, Luke a Διήγησις, and they both claim to do their work with attention to accuracy (ἀκριβῶς) and order (τάξις). To report traditions (παράδοσις), both have consulted eyewitnesses (αὐτόπται), to which Luke adds "from the beginning" (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς).³⁹ Papias interrogated (ἀνάκρισις) "persons who had followed closely participants in the events". Luke claims for himself the Christian term for this type of person (παρηκολουθηκῶς). For his part, Papias ranks information from books below reports "from the living and surviving voice" (τὰ παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης); Luke acknowledges the existence of previous accounts but implies that his will be more carefully done.

As is well known, Luke's book of Acts, apart from the apostle's own letters, is our primary source for biographical information about Paul and will be the focus of the following chapter. Papias, who was bishop of Hieropolis in Asia Minor, either said nothing about Paul's last days, or whatever he said has not survived.⁴⁰ For our purposes, the value of Papias' fragments derives not from what he knew about Paul's death but from his explicit discussion of

³⁸ Papias, bishop of Hieropolis, wrote ca. 110-140 a book which is now lost, *Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord* (Λογίων Κυριακῶν Ἐξήγησις). See detailed discussion of Papias' prologue in Bauckham 2008:12-38; see also Bauckham 2003:28-60.

³⁹ Cf. Paul's own reference to eyewitnesses to validate his doctrines in 1 Cor. 15:3-8.

⁴⁰ Eusebius does not include Papias as a source in his notice about Paul's death in *HE* 2.25. As far as we can tell (Norelli 2002:163), Papias' work consisted of (1) sayings and deeds of Jesus, (2) his interpretations of Jesus' *logia* (divinely inspired statements) and (3) traditions regarding Christians of the first generation. Probably, as Pervo 2010:224 suggests, Papias did not purposely ignore Paul but preferred to limit authoritative status to "the prophets" (i.e. Israelite scripture) and "the Lord" (sayings of Jesus or writings about him).

how he handled oral traditions. Although he wrote his book as an old man ca. 110-140 (Ehrman 2003:86), Papias, born ca. 60, had likely gathered his material beforehand (in the 80s).⁴¹ Thus, his youth must have overlapped with the old age of some first-generation Christians such as Paul. In the prologue to his work, Papias shared with his readers the nuts and bolts of his method for collecting information from those acquainted with the apostles.⁴² R. Bauckham carried out a thorough analysis of Papias' prologue and identified four groups of people mentioned as sources of information. (1) Seven of Jesus' apostles, the original eyewitnesses (αὐτόπται). (2) The people called "elders" (πρεσβύτεροι), senior teachers in various cities of Asia (cf. Acts 20:17). (3) Followers of these elders, i.e. those who had been present at the elders' teachings (παρηκολουθηκώς), who accompanied them and were actively engaged in absorbing the elders' teachings.⁴³ (4) John the Elder and Aristion (a group of direct disciples of Jesus, distinct from the apostles), who were still alive and teaching.⁴⁴ It follows that, just like Greco-Roman historians, Papias tried to collect stories for his book from participants in the events. In Hieropolis, he was uniquely placed to receive gospel traditions coming from various directions. Yet, for whatever reason, he was unable to visit and question the two "disciples of Jesus" who were still alive, i.e.

⁴¹ For Papias' dates see Bauckham 2008:12 and Yarbrough 1983. Irenaeus (*Ad. Haer.* 5.33.4) called Papias "a hearer of John and companion of Polycarp".

⁴² "I shall not hesitate to put into properly order for you everything I learned,... and if by chance anyone who had been in attendance on the elders (παρηκολουθηκώς τις) should come my way, I inquired (ἀνέκρινον) about the words of the elders – [that is,] what [according to the elders] Andrew or Peter said, or Philip, or Thomas, or James, or John, or Matthew, or any other of the disciples of the Lord, and whatever Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord (τοῦ κυρίου μαθηταί), were saying (λέγουσιν). For I did not think that information from books would profit me as much as information from the living and surviving voice (τὰ παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης)." Eus. *HE* 3.39.3-4, in the translation of Bauckham 2008:293-294. Papias' candid disclosure of his sources is most unusual among ancient historians; one would love to have access to Tacitus' sources for the Neronian persecution of 64 (*Ann.* 15.44) and to Luke's sources for Paul's arrival in Rome (Acts 28:16-31).

⁴³ The verb παρακολουθέω is used in this strict sense in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 4:6 and 2 Tim. 3:10) and in the preface of Luke's gospel (Luke 1:3).

⁴⁴ As previously stated, the identity of John the Elder and his relationship with John the Apostle is unclear and remains highly contested. According to Bauckham 2007, the two Johns were different persons although both were direct disciples of Jesus. For our purposes, the issue is immaterial.

John the Elder, who resided in Ephesus, and Aristion, who lived in Smyrna.⁴⁵ Likewise, he was unable to hear directly the elders who were teaching in neighboring cities; instead, he questioned those who had listened to the elders whenever they came to his own area.

In summary, Papias, in principle, could have had gathered traditions as follows:

Ideal Information Flow: John the Elder and Aristion (disciples of Jesus still living) → Papias

Yet in practice he got his information from two less efficient channels requiring, in one case, one intermediary and, in the other, at least three:

Information Flow A: Aristion and John the Elder (still living) → disciples of the elders → Papias

Information Flow B: specific apostle of Jesus: Andrew, Peter, etc. (now dead) → (intervening stages?) → the elders (still living) → disciples of the elders → Papias

Bauckham's analysis of Papias' methods suggests the following. On the one hand, Papias was able to ask questions to a significant number of Christians who had first-hand information. That the traditions that Papias sought were attached to the memories of individual apostles is a very important insight that moderates the heavy-handed focus on communities that is typical of form criticism. On the other hand, Papias was dependent on informants coming to Hieropolis to question them. Traditions on the same topic originating from different geographical sources are less likely to be consistent with each other. Moreover, a quick look at Information Flow B leads us to suspect that at one point Papias' ability to trace back stories to

⁴⁵ Hieropolis, Papias' homeplace, was within less than 15 miles of both Laodicea (cf. Rev. 3:14-22) and Colossae, two churches mentioned in the Pauline corpus (see map in Appendix 2.b for places associated with Paul). In relation to other centers of Pauline memory, Hieropolis stood at the meeting point of two great roads: one running east-west between Antioch (Ignatius' city) and Ephesus (cf. Acts 19-20), the chief city of Asia, and the other southeast to Attalia and northwest to Smyrna (Polycarp's city). The reason for Papias' apparent inability to leave Hieropolis is left unresolved in Bauckham's analysis; at any rate, the three cities to which Hieropolis was connected via highways, Antioch, Ephesus and Smyrna, were huge urban centers of over 200,000 inhabitants. Their traffic through Papias' hometown must have been intense.

their original source must have failed.⁴⁶ These stories that reached Papias in indirect fashion, rather than personal memories, must have been more of the type “everyone knows that...” Evidently, stories continued to be told even when people could no longer tell (or cared about) their origin. Shaped collectively in each community, these stories became gradually more or less stable with the aid of frequent rehearsal, and were passed down, not as oral memories that could be traced back to individual Christians of the apostolic generation but rather as oral traditions of unknown origin. These oral traditions were subsequently transmitted to the next generation. Over the long haul, those not committed to writing fell into oblivion (see appendix 2.c)⁴⁷

As we shall see next, the observations that we have made above can shed light on the transmission and preservation of Ur-traditions about Paul’s final days that were still circulating when Papias was writing his *Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord* ca. 110 CE.

3. A Model for the Early Transmission of Traditions of Paul’s Final Days

Many people who receive sudden news of important historical events, such as the death of a prominent figure, tend to form a detailed and vivid memory of the occasion that can last a lifetime. In modern times, this type of intense remembrance has been called flashbulb memory (FBM). The assassination of President Kennedy is the standard example. Decades after his murder, many of those who heard about his assassination, even those who were teenagers at the time, can still recount stories of how and when they heard the news, what was said to them and

⁴⁶ Note that Papias was after genuine “oral memories” rather than traditions of nameless origin. See discussion in previous section.

⁴⁷ The corpus of oral traditions is larger than what a single person remembers because stories do not go from only one person to another. Stories are typically told in front of audiences, not single auditors (cf. what Irenaeus himself recalled about Polycarp’s speeches (apud Eus. *HE* 5.20.4-6). In the long run, traditions that have a better chance of being transmitted are those known to most members of the community. See Vansina 1961.

their emotional response. As one would expect, personal attachment to the leader who has died intensifies the FBM. Indeed, a 2009 study on the FBM of people who heard the news of Pope John Paul II's death revealed that both emotional intensity and rehearsal has a positive influence on memory consistency. Recent research suggests that FBMs are not more accurate than regular memories; what makes them different from other personal memories is their intensity and persistence, traits especially useful for a model on the transmission of traditions of Paul's final days, like the one I shall develop in this section. Indeed, we can conjecture that possessors of FBMs about Paul's death were consulted as sources for oral traditions since their memories of "what had happened" (regardless of their accuracy) were vivid and the passage of time was less likely to impact their emotional attachment to the stories.⁴⁸

Ideal FBM possessors would have been those who were physically present at the time and location of Paul's martyrdom. Needless to say, it is impossible for us to know if there were any eyewitnesses of Paul's death. However, we can safely assume that there must have been those who heard about Paul's death at or near the time it occurred, and that some of these people later in their lives continued to tell stories of the apostle's martyrdom. A few of these stories must have become incorporated into one or more of the Ur-traditions described in the previous section. Although the content of these stories is now lost to us, by analogy with other Christian and non-Christian stories of noble death of the same period (see analysis in Appendix 2.c) we can make an educated guess as to their probable narrative elements. These Ur-traditions were likely eulogistic in nature, depicting Paul's fortitude and wisdom during his last trial and

⁴⁸ FBMs differ from other autobiographical memory because its emotional content can significantly boost the strength of the memory formed; the endurance of FBM is also aided by group discussion. It is important to emphasize that despite their endurance, FBMs can be just as inaccurate as regular memories. For a general discussion see Schacter 1995, Talarico 2003 and Crombag *et al.* 1996. For FBMs of those who heard the news of Pope John Paul II's death see Tinti *et al.* 2009.

reporting *chreiai* (memorable sayings) that he uttered before being executed. Also by analogy with other traditions of noble death, we can conjecture that (1) these stories were not consistent with each other as to what happened to the apostle in his final days, and that (2) early in the 2nd century, literary Christians would have been keenly aware that these stories risked falling into oblivion if not committed to writing.⁴⁹

While we can only speculate about the content of the earliest stories of Paul's death, we fortunately have sufficient data to create a quantitative model of how information about his death could have been disseminated, preserved and transmitted from the time of the event itself down to the period when most of Paul's contemporaries were dead.

Our starting point for this model will be the reconstruction of Paul's social network. As a tool to harness information about connections among individuals, social network analysis provides an effective methodological framework. Ideally one would like to diagram the lines linking Paul's main associates to each other, their own subordinates, and those connected to the apostle by three or more degrees of separation. Needless to say, this is now impossible. Still, we have enough evidence to presuppose that Paul's network was fairly large, and, as I intend to show next, we can get a fairly good estimate of its optimal size. Clues in both Paul's letters and the book of Acts suggest that Paul had carefully planned the geographical spread of his gospel. Taking advantage of the efficient road system built by the Romans, he established communities in the largest population centers, which were reachable via paved roads. From there, local converts could take the message into more remote villages where their own acquaintances lived

⁴⁹ To draw an account of Paul's death, literary Christians in the early decades of the 2nd century had at their disposal the standard Greco-Roman genre of "noble death" known as *teleute*. Whether Christians of that generation ever wrote a story of Paul's death we do not know. Yet we can hypothesize that among them, Marcionites and Valentinians were those most likely to have had practical reasons to do it (see discussion in Appendix 2.c).

and thus found there new communities. As typical of new religious movements, family ties, friendships and household membership likely outweighed any other factors at the time of conversions.⁵⁰ Despite all-too-human clashes, interpersonal attachments must have helped to hold Pauline Christians together, since congregations in the areas that Paul or his associates had visited were still in existence in the late 1st century. Apart from this network of interweaving communities that recognized Paul — either directly or indirectly — as their founder, there were Paul’s associates in cities such as Corinth and Rome in which the apostle was but one among several Christian leaders.

On the whole, the geographical spread of Paul’s network was impressive. Ehrman (2012:319) produced a map of places that New Testament writings associate with Paul; as a whole, over 40 locations all around the Mediterranean basin (see Appendix 2.b). Travel time between these places was faster than what scholars previously thought. For instance, the estimated travel time (in July) from Rome, where tradition holds that Paul was martyred, to other important Christian centers, in order of increasing distance, was as follows: from Rome to Puteoli, 1.8 days; to Corinth, 9.4 days; to Ephesus 12.6 days; to Smyrna 14.2 days; to Antioch 17.7 days; to Philippi 18 days; and to Sinope 32.7 days. We also know that some members of Pauline communities had the financial means to travel around frequently.⁵¹ This would have facilitated the sharing of information about Paul’s demise among the many Christians across the

⁵⁰ See discussion on Paul’s evangelism strategies and conversion of entire households in App. 1.a. See Stark 1996:9 for the importance of interpersonal ties in new religious movements: “The basis for successful conversionist movements is growth through social networks, through a structure of direct and intimate interpersonal attachments.” Cf. the Pastoral and Deutero-Pauline epistles for geographical spread of Pauline communities in the late 1st century.

⁵¹ The online simulation utility ORBIS created at Stanford University calculates travel times under different conditions. As Cook (2010:110) states “Travel was efficient, and this would have aided the dissemination of news about the Neronian persecution.” Ibid, 254-255, see Hadrian’s impressive schedule of visits across the Roman Empire in the years 122-123. For prosopography of Pauline communities and a discussion of the economic classes to which their members belong, see Stegemann and Stegemann 1999:292-303.

Roman Empire, who, as the letters of the Pauline corpus attest, were worried about Paul's welfare.⁵² We shall call these people "first-generation tradents" (FGT), i.e. the type of people who would have retained FBM of the news of Paul's death even decades after the events and could have acted as active transmitters of traditions or be consulted by later Christians seeking a first-hand version of the events.

Now let us try to estimate this pool of FGT, starting with the data compiled by Felix Just (see Appendix 1.A) who counted about 100 associates of Paul. In all likelihood, Paul had many more associates who were not fortunate enough to have their names recorded for posterity. Possibly he made some converts in Arabia (Gal. 1:17) before his first missionary phase in Macedonia and Achaia. Paul is said to have had a sister, whose son alerted him of a Jewish plot in Jerusalem (Acts 23:16). Presumably, he also had other relatives in Tarsus (cf. Acts 9:11) in the province of Cilicia where he went after his conversion before visiting Jerusalem (Gal. 1:21). That we know of over 100 people in Paul's network and that we suspect many more is not surprising. The average person has a social network of about 150 people (also known as "Dunbar's number", see App. 1.A). Yet there is great individual variability, and some persons number 300-350 people in their networks.⁵³ Such must have been the case of Paul, as an important religious figure. Moreover, we may expect that some converts who had briefly met the apostle counted him as a member of their own personal networks, although Paul himself may have had only a vague familiarity with them. And even Christians who had never met him personally, but had been converted by close-associates of Paul, would have cared about Paul's

⁵² Green 2010:43.

⁵³ Naturally not all of them have the same degree of attachment or emotional closeness. For instance, within a network one normally has a clique group (~ 5 people) and a sympathy group (~12-15 people) of close friends. Notice that 12, the number of Jesus' disciples, is the number of members on a modern US jury. See Gladwell 2000:169-192 for an entertaining discussion of the sizes of human groups.

welfare and would have been touched by his death. In academic circles, this indirect connection with a prominent figure is quantified by the so-called ‘Erdős number’. We can conjecture that Christians associated with Paul by no more than two intermediaries (an Erdős number of 3) would have felt sufficiently moved when receiving news of his death to retain a vivid memory of it.⁵⁴ In consequence, we should triple the number of individuals within Paul’s personal network to estimate the maximum number of FGT of his martyrdom. We arrive thus at about 1,000 people — slightly more than one out of five Christians ca. 64 (see App. 1.A) — who probably retained through their lifetime a fairly vivid memory of the day in which they heard that Paul had died. An alternative way to look at this number is by assuming an average of about 25 FGT per Pauline community (cf. Ehrman’s map in App. 2.b).

Needless to say, 1,000 is the number of FGT under optimal conditions. Moreover, we cannot expect the vividness of their FBM to have been uniformly persistent.⁵⁵ We shall temporarily leave aside a more detailed discussion of memory quality. For now, let us determine how the number of FGT would have decreased in the decades following Paul’s death; in this way we will establish the point in time at which the living memory of the apostle’s death finally gave out. This estimation can be made with life expectancy tables, which, as with any anthropological

⁵⁴ This number measures the “collaborative distance between a researcher and the famous mathematician Paul Erdős († 1996). See “The Erdős Number Project Website” at wwwwp.oakland.edu/enp. For instance, someone who coauthored a paper with Erdős himself has an Erdős number 1, someone who coauthored a paper not with Erdős but with the first individual has an Erdős number 2. The median Erdős number is 5. From a social perspective, one can conjecture that a Christian convert with an Erdős number > 3, although he might have considered Paul important, would not have had a significant emotional closeness to him, due to interpersonal distance. For that reason, in my analogy with the apostle Paul I only triple his own personal network to estimate the number of FGT impacted by his death.

⁵⁵ It bears repeating that my interest here is in the vividness of FBM. Let me use a personal anecdote of the philologist W. Schadewaldt to illustrate this point. In his old age, Schadewaldt recounted this about his meeting with the famous Werner Jaeger in 1921: “I have a **vivid** picture of the scene, which happened now fifty-five years ago, and I can remember what he said down to the last word” (Schadewaldt 1985:109-110). Regardless of the accuracy of Schadewaldt, what matters is that, by his own account, his memory was “vivid” and he was able to tell a detailed story of his encounter with Jaeger more than half a century after the events.

data coming from antiquity, must be used with caution.⁵⁶ Notice also that our pool of FGT was by no means a static population; probably, some of Paul’s associates may have died as a result of persecutions (for instance, the Neronian at Rome), others may have stopped being Christians (cf. Plin. *Ep.* 10.96.6), and so forth. Unfortunately, we have no way to know how these complex factors affected the number of FGT and we must accept the fact that our numbers represent ballpark figures in a “best case scenario” situation. The reader is invited to think of them as the the upper-limit of possible FGT and use them as heuristic devices from which to make general inferences (cf. App. 1.a). Having said that, assuming that a hypothetical maximum of 1,000 FGT of Paul’s final days were 15 or older ca. 64, the table below estimates how many of them were still alive 20, 30, 40, 50 and 60 years after the events.⁵⁷

Year/Important Events and writings containing allusions to Paul’s final days	Maximum number of first-generation tradents still alive
ca. 64 (Paul’s martyrdom)	1,000
ca. 85 (Papias’s gathering of oral traditions about the apostles; John the Elder still alive)	470
ca. 95 (<i>1 Clement</i>)	290
ca. 105 (<i>2 Timothy</i> and Ignatius’ letters)	150
ca. 115 (Polycarp’s letter to the Philippians)	50
ca. 125 (first disciples of Marcion)	10

⁵⁶ These life tables (Frier and Coale-Demeny, derived from anthropological studies) appear in McIver 2012:206-207. McIver utilized these tables to estimate the number of Jesus’ eyewitnesses who were alive at various times after his death. As McIver himself acknowledges, we should not presume that the tables give us precise figures (the numbers are based on very limited data). To simplify the presentation of these estimates, I have averaged the numbers found in the table and rounded off the average to the closest multiple of ten.

⁵⁷ McIver’s data were compiled for adult eyewitnesses of Jesus who were 15 or older at the time of the events. There is no universal agreement about the dates of the writings and events listed in the table; if one were to consult different scholars, they would fall within a range of dates. Still, for illustrative purposes, I have listed them in their most accepted chronological order and in proximity to their preferred dates. All these writings are further discussed in § 2.4. For the date of Marcion’s initial converts (ca. 125 if not earlier), see Lampe 2003:241-252.

What can we learn from the above data? First notice that Bockmuehl's "three generational model of living memory" (cf. § 2.1) clearly overestimates the number of the apostles' disciples alive by 140. Practically all of them would have been dead by then. Even ca. 125, the early disciples of Marcion — who deeply revered Paul — would have had a measly pool of about ten FGT to consult, had they wanted to write first-hand account of Paul's death. On the other hand, it is interesting to observe that there must have been a very large number of FGT still alive (among them some of Paul's associates) when the author of *1 Clement*, ca. 96, sent his letter from Rome to Corinth. Likewise, there were still many of them when Ignatius (ca. 110) wrote letters to various Christian communities on his way to Rome where he would be executed. It is unfortunate that these two authors only refer to Paul's death tangentially and that nobody else wrote about the events, since in the decade following Ignatius' martyrdom the number of FGT who were still alive must have fallen dramatically.⁵⁸

Now by analogy with Papias' method of work (cf. § 2.2), let us conjecture how a literary sophisticate Christian like him would have gone about gathering oral memories of Paul's last days. In all likelihood, direct disciples of Paul who had known him personally would have been his FGT of choice, for instance, Timothy, who appears to have been Paul's closest assistant.⁵⁹ If someone like Timothy was not available, then he would have consulted senior leaders trained by disciples of Paul who had heard the news of the apostle's death in their youth. A third group of

⁵⁸ These two authors are studied in the next section. Recall from Appendix 1.b that Paul in 1 Cor. 15:6, a letter written ca. 57, remarked that the majority of the "five-hundred people" to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection (ca. 30) were still living about twenty-seven years after the events. According to McIver's tables about one third of them would have been alive. So the table is not far off from Paul's impressionistic understanding of Christian demographics.

⁵⁹ Timothy is mentioned 26 times in the New Testament and is named as the co-author or deliverer of six of the letters in the Pauline Corpus (2 Cor., Phil., Col., 1 Thess., 2 Thess., and Phlm.). The Pseudo-Hippolytus lists him as the bishop of Ephesus. According to our table, at least in theory, it must have been possible for a few early 2nd century Christians to meet Paul's disciples who like Timothy had had a close relation with the apostle. Recall that the Valentinians claimed that their founder had been instructed by a certain Theudas, a direct disciple of Paul.

avored FGT would have been influential Christians, now in their old age, who had met Paul at one point during his missionary career. An example of this group would be the daughters of Philip the Evangelist, at whose house in Caesarea Paul and his companions had stayed for several days, according to the “we passage” of Acts 21:8-9. We have evidence that Philip’s four daughters, probably all dead ca. 120, were quoted as sources of important oral traditions throughout the 2nd century.⁶⁰ Using a diagram *à la* Bauckham, we may sketch the possible sources of oral memory available to a hypothetical Christian writer (C.W.) interested in drawing up an account of Paul’s final days:

Ideal information Flow: direct disciple of Paul (FGT of his death) → C.W.

Information Flow A: disciples of Paul (still living) → their own disciples → C.W.

Information Flow B: influential Christian who had met Paul (still living) → C.W.

Information Flow C: specific disciple of Paul (now dead) → (intervening stages?) → the elders of Pauline communities (still living) → disciples of these elders → C.W.

If we are to base our speculation on how Papias collected information about Jesus and the apostles, probably our writer would have had to content himself with the rather circuitous information flow C. Now we may ask how many of these literary Christians were around ca. 100. To answer this question, we can use Hopkins’ estimates of Christian literacy in the 2nd century (cf. Appendix 1.a). During the crucial period 95-105 CE, in which the number of FGT, although declining from about 300 to 150, was still sizable, there probably were no more than

⁶⁰ For the “we passages” of Acts, see § 3.1. Philip’s daughters are mentioned several times in Book 3 of Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Eusebius lists them along with Quadratus when he refers to famous Christians possessing prophetic gifts during the reign of Trajan (*HE* 3.37.1). We are also told that Papias (*HE* 3.39) stated that the daughters of Philip — who had then moved to Hieropolis — told him the story of Barsabbas Justus who drank poison but suffered no harm (cf. § 4.4). According to Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 3.31), Philip later married two of his daughters. As to their burial place, Polycrates (*HE* 3.31.3) in his letter to Pope Victor mentioned that two aged virgin daughters of this Philip were buried with his father in Ephesus and another daughter was interred in Hieropolis. Proclus (*HE* 3.31.4), in his *Dialogue with Caius* (see next section), affirmed the same.

sixty Christians who were fluent and skilled literates and thus capable to draw up an account of Paul's final days. In our extant evidence we have records of five of these "literary sophisticates" who wrote something related to Paul's trial or death: the author of 1 Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, and the authors of Luke-Acts and 2 Timothy. It just so happens that they all alluded to Paul's final moments but did not describe them. For whatever reason the other Christian literary sophisticates of that era either (a) did not write about Paul's death or (b) if they did write something, it is now either lost or it became incorporated into the *Martyrdom of Paul* (cf. § 4.4). Notice also that soon after the mid-2nd century, when oral memories of Paul had already given out, the number of Christian literary sophisticates must have increased sharply. Using again Hopkins' estimates, the numbers went from about 240 ca. 150 CE to about 1,300 at the end of the 2nd century. Apart from the emergence of martyrdom literature, it is partly due to the increasing availability of fluent Christian literates that we have detailed accounts of the trials and deaths of Christians who never reached Paul's renown.⁶¹ Unfortunately, fresh information originating from oral traditions about Paul's death — and not already institutionally reinforced in liturgy or preserved in writing — had become virtually inaccessible to the average literary sophisticate Christian in 150-200. As we shall see in § 2.4, by then, references to Paul's death in that period seem based entirely on "common knowledge", written sources or material evidence.

In summary, in this section I have proposed a model to reconstruct the living memory of Paul's death. Under optimal conditions, ca. 64, there would have been about 1,000 FGT of these events, virtually all of whom would have been dead sixty years later. Obviously, the quality of

⁶¹ Polycarp (ca. 157), Justin Martyr (ca. 165), the Martyrs of Lyon (177), and also minor figures such as Ptolemaeus and Lucius (165), the Scillitan Martyrs (ca. 180), Apollonius (185) and Perpetua (ca. 203). I am aware that the textual transmission and compositional date of many of these documents in their final form is problematic. For a discussion, see Moss 2012. My point here is that when these lesser known Christians were martyred there were by then more literary Christians available to gather information about the events and draft initial reports.

their FBMs would have weakened over time, depending on a variety of personal factors (personal memory ability, emotional closeness to Paul, age at the time of Paul's death, etc.). Psychological research has shown that there are a number of causes that affect personal memory acquisition, storage and retrieval and still others that diminish the factual accuracy of the remembered information. Two findings of particular significance to us are that the influence one's social group can shape the remembrance of past events, and that over time group memory is more stable than individual memory.⁶² This happens because orally transmitted memories escape the confines of what a single person remembers; in practice, oral stories do not go from only one person to another as described in Papias' prologue. Although decades after the events Christians such as Papias and Luke could still consult FGT of Paul's death, the same stories had already reached Christian communities through separate routes. More likely than not, some of these FGT held performances of their stories in front of groups; we may recall Irenaeus' note (Eus. *HE* 5.20.4-6) on how Polycarp told his stories before crowds. Pauline communities were generally tight-knit and many of these FGT would have talked in front of groups of relatives and friends. Thus, over time, the contours of these stories must have taken shape within different groups, each of them incorporating details that fitted the interests of the initial FGT/storyteller. Frequent retelling infused consistency into the stories of Paul's final days but also must have turned their remembrance into stereotyped narratives. This is the process that likely gave rise to collective oral traditions of the apostle's martyrdom.

⁶² For a scholarly discussion on how psychological research can help us make conjectures about the memories of early Christians see Redman 2010:177-197.

4. Earliest Allusions and References to Paul's death (ca. 95 to 200 CE)

Within the period 95-115 CE, we have four writings that contain allusions to Paul's final days; four more have survived from the period 145-200. In none of these documents does Paul's death constitute the focus; the allusions all occur in passing and are tangential in nature. Teasing out any useful data from them thus makes one think of the reading of weak signals in a spectral graph, masked by random noise. That being said, the tidbits of historical information found in these documents can help us conjecture about the content of some Ur-traditions about the apostle's death. Do these stray allusions about Paul's final days originate from personal memories or oral traditions? It is difficult to demarcate the end of the former and the beginning of the latter, since most likely both processes overlapped (see § 2.3). Overall, what these writers mentioned was very likely common lore shared by many of their readers. Working on that premise, we shall investigate these issues. How much do these authors and their communities appear to know about events that took place in the 60s CE? Do they seem to be acquainted with people who knew the apostle? Do they look up to Paul and, thus, were they motivated to gather and hand down stories about his final days?

Our first reference, *1 Clem.* 5.5-7 (ca. 96) furnishes the first and fullest - albeit maddeningly vague - allusion to Paul's death.⁶³ The pertinent passage reads as follows:

By reason of jealousy and strife (διὰ ζῆλον καὶ ἔριν) Paul pointed the way to the prize for endurance. Seven times he bore chains; he was sent into exile and stoned; he served as a herald in both the East and the West; and he received the noble reputation for his faith. He taught righteousness to the whole world and came to the limits of the West (ἐπὶ τὸ τέλος τῆς δύσεως), bearing his witness before the rulers (μαρτυρήσας ἐπὶ τῶν ἡγουμένων). And so he was set free from this world and transported up to the holy place (καὶ εἰς τὸν ἅγιον τόπον ἀνελήμφθη), having become the greatest example of endurance.

⁶³ For translation and Greek text see Ehrman 2003:1.44-45. For a brief discussion on the date and content of *1 Clement* see *ibid.* 1.18-30.

It is generally agreed that this letter, of Roman provenance and addressed to the Corinthian Church, was written within living memory of the events. Hence, scholars often cite it as the closest to the historical events surrounding Paul's martyrdom. Conventionally attributed to "Clement", the identity of the author is debated. Is this Clement the person mentioned by Paul as one of his coworkers in Phil. 4:3? Different traditions make him either the second (Tert. *De Praes.* 32) or fourth bishop of Rome (Ir. *Adv. Haer.* 3.3) or possibly a person within the Roman Christian church who was in charge of foreign correspondence in the first part of the 2nd century (Hermas, *Shepherd* 8.2). Jeffers (1991) advanced an intriguing hypothesis that connected Clement to Flavia Domitilla, granddaughter of Vespasian, and even identified a late 1st century room under the current Basilica of Clement that could have served as a house church to Clement's congregation.⁶⁴ Unfortunately the evidence is insufficient. At any rate, the author of our letter definitely had historical information about the Neronian persecution and the men and women who had died in it (cf. our discussion of *1 Clem.* 6.1-2 in § 1.2). He was also evidently influenced by Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, which he mentions explicitly to buttress his arguments about the perils of infighting among the Corinthians (*1 Clem.* 47). It is also interesting that the two aged men chosen by the Roman Christians to take the letter to Corinth, Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Biton (*1 Clem.* 63.3 and 65.1) are said to have been Christians from their youth (ὀπὸ νεότητος). Lampe (2003:184-186) identifies them as freedmen of the Claudian and Valerian families and Claudius Ephebus as a former slave of the imperial house of Emperor Claudius (41-54 CE). This concurs with the predictions of our quantitative model in §

⁶⁴ See Jeffers 1991. The alleged meeting place of Clement's congregation is nowadays open to the public at the lowest level of the present basilica.

2.3; ca. 96, there would have been senior members of the Roman Church whose living memories could stretch back to the Neronian persecution and Paul's martyrdom.⁶⁵

The part of the letter that deals with Paul's demise comes right after a reference to Peter's death. This is the earliest example of what scholars call "the catholic tradition", a retelling of events that connects the missions and deaths of both apostles.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, the lines that describe the final part of Paul's life are not precise enough to draw any conclusions and remain the object of ongoing debates. Scholars argue whether or not ἐπὶ τὸ τέλος τῆς δόσεως should be interpreted as an indication that Paul had gone to Spain. The semantic scope of the verb μαρτυρέω is not clear enough to draw any inferences. Likewise, the meaning of ἡγούμενος (ruler) is too vague to make any inferences regarding the officials before whom Paul bore testimony.⁶⁷ The passage cites Paul as a moral example, just like the other individuals from the past mentioned in the same section, and implies that Paul suffered (and was killed?) on account of jealousy and rivalry (διὰ ζήλον καὶ ἔριν). Whether what is said about Paul should be understood as a historical statement or part of a rhetorical argument is hard to tell.⁶⁸ At the end of the passage Paul's death is described in extraordinarily vague terms ("departure from the world") that offer no information about the circumstances of his martyrdom. Yet this should not

⁶⁵ This is by no means unexpected. On the Roman side, we know of similar cases. Verginius Rufus, consul in 63, was consul with Nerva again in 97. We can safely assume that at the turn of the century there were still a few Roman officials alive who had participated in the Neronian persecution.

⁶⁶ The term "catholic traditions" in reference to joint Petro-Pauline accounts was probably started by R.A. Lipsius in his *Acta Apocrypha* of 1891.

⁶⁷ For an interpretation of ἐπὶ τὸ τέλος τῆς δόσεως as meaning that Paul went to Spain, see for instance Tajra 1994:108-111 and Lieu 2010:9. Overall, no early traditions that Paul was in Spain have survived. For the semantic development of μαρτυρέω in early Christianity, see Barnes 2010:1-42. It is normally agreed that when 1 Clement was written, the verb μαρτυρέω had not acquired yet the martyrological sense with which it is found in 2nd century *Acta*. According to Tajra 1994:169, ἡγούμενος (ruler) could refer to a high but nonetheless subordinate official, which would exclude Nero's personal participation in Paul's trial.

⁶⁸ See Eastman 2013:34-53.

be construed as a sign of factual ignorance. References to Paul's death written in the patristic period are also characterized by the same flowery elusiveness, although by then several detailed accounts of Paul's martyrdom were available.⁶⁹ As a letter, *1 Clement* seems to belong to the genre of "advice literature." Its goal is to help solve the ongoing internal crisis in the Corinthian Church. To address this issue perhaps the author saw it as more beneficial to stress the theological significance of Paul's death rather than reiterate traditional accounts of it, which, presumably, were already known to his Corinthian readers.⁷⁰

The second reference, 2 Tim. 4:16-17 (written ca. 100) is our lone and meager source for the circumstances surrounding Paul's trial in Rome. Writing in the voice of Paul, the author portrays the apostle as having been abandoned by his friends at either "his first trial" or "the preliminary hearing of his trial".⁷¹

At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me — may it not be held against them (Ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ μου ἀπολογία οὐδεὶς μοι παρεγένετο, ἀλλὰ πάντες με ἐγκατέλιπον — μὴ αὐτοῖς λογισθεῖη). But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

2 Timothy is one of the three "Pastoral Epistles", a group of letters written pseudonymously and in all probability by the same person, so-called because they address issues

⁶⁹ Cf. § 4.1. The epigram of Pope Damasus (366-386) written in honor of Peter and Paul at their joint martyr-site on the Appian Road reads: "On account of the merit of their blood and having followed Christ through the stars, they have traveled to the bosom of heaven and the kingdom of the righteous". Damasus' epigram leaves unexplained when, how and why the apostles died. In fact, the Pope manages to describe their deaths in terms even vaguer than those found in *1 Clement*. See Eastman 2015:389-443 for a full list of patristic references to Paul's (and Peter's) martyrdoms.

⁷⁰ See discussion about the genre of *1 Clement* in Foster 2007:26-28.

⁷¹ On the meaning of τῇ πρώτῃ μου ἀπολογία see Tajra 1994:86-89. For the date of 2 Timothy see Ehrman 2012:419. Some scholars construe 2 Tim. 4:7-8 as implying that "Paul" viewed his death as imminent. Even so, these two verses lend themselves to other possible interpretations such as a belief in a coming *Parousia*.

related to the pastoral oversight of churches. That the letter is not an authentic work of Paul is revealed by the significant differences in its vocabulary as compared to that of the authentic Pauline letters, its unhistorical theological outlook and its anachronistic portrayal of Timothy as a young man. That being said, the letter does present “an abundance of verisimilitude” (Ehrman 2013:209).⁷² Hence, it is often read as the “last will and testament” of Paul before his death. In the letter, “Paul” remembers many individuals by name: Timothy’s grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (1:5); his faithful benefactor Onesiphorus (1:16, 4:19); his enemies in Asia, Phygelus and Hermogenes (1:15); his “opponents” Hymenaeus and Philetus (2:17); Demas (4:10) and Alexander (4:14), who did him harm; and Luke (4:11), the only one who is still with Paul at this crucial period. The letter also mentions some of Paul’s prized terrestrial possessions: his cloak, scrolls, and especially his parchments (4: 13). Conceding that the forger’s efforts are directed at assuring the reader that he is actually Paul, we must presume that at least some biographical elements were believed to be historically true by his contemporaries. Written within the living memory of Paul’s death, among the earliest audience of 2 Timothy there may have been Christians whose personal memories of the events could either corroborate or contradict his portrayal of Paul’s last days and his references to the apostle’s enemies and allies.⁷³ Moreover, to make the forgery believable, the author must have chosen tidbits of

⁷² For arguments showing that the Pastoral Epistles were not written by Paul, a view widely shared by other scholars, see Ehrman 2013:202-211. Quite apart from issues of language and theology, the strongest argument against authenticity has to do with the letters’ portrayal of Timothy as a young companion of the apostle (cf. 1. Tim. 4:12 and 2 Tim. 2:22). Presumably “Paul” is writing 2 Timothy at the end of his life (4:6-7), ca. 64. However, Paul himself cites Timothy as a coauthor of 1 Thess. (which was written ca. 49 CE). Timothy must have joined him in his missionary activity even earlier than that (as is also implied in Acts 16:1). So by 64 CE the historical Timothy must have been a middle-aged man, rather than a young man who still needed to combat “his youthful passions” (2 Tim. 2:22).

⁷³ See Tajra 1994:84-86. Cf. “Only Luke is with me” (2. Tim. 4:11) with the salutation in Phlm. 23, an authentic captivity letter.

historical information that were already familiar to the audience of his letter because they had heard them as part of widely circulating oral traditions.

The most important contribution of the letter regarding early traditions of Paul's final days is arguably its portrayal of the apostle as a man deserted by his Christian friends at his first defense. Unless the forger wanted to trace a parallel with the less than honorable behavior of Jesus' disciples, he would not have lightly invented this unflattering depiction. Thus, it is quite possible that an early story about Paul's friends abandoning him when he faced legal troubles in Rome was embedded in one of the Ur-traditions that was never committed to writing.

Our third reference is found in Ignatius' *Letter to the Ephesians*, written ca. 110.⁷⁴

I know who I am and to whom I am writing. I am condemned; you have been shown mercy. I am in danger; you are secure. You are the route for God's victims. You are a passageway for those slain for God; you are fellow initiates with Paul, the holy one who received a testimony and proved worthy of all fortune (Παύλου συμμύσται τοῦ ἡγιασμένου, τοῦ μαρτυρημένου, ἀξιομακαρίστον). When I attain to God, may I be found in his footsteps, this one who mentions you in every epistle in Christ Jesus. (Ign. *Eph.* 12.1-2).⁷⁵

Just like *1 Clem.* 5.5-7 Ignatius' reference is too vague to draw any information about the circumstances of Paul's death.⁷⁶ Still, the passage contributes to our understanding of the status of Ur-traditions about the apostle's martyrdom in the early 2nd century. According to Origen (*Hom.* 6 in *Luke*), Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch after Peter, whereas Eusebius (*HE* 3.2.22) makes him the third bishop after Peter and Evodius, holding office presumably after Evodius' death (ca. 69) till his martyrdom. If Ignatius' birth occurred close to the middle of the

⁷⁴ See Ehrman 2012:464.

⁷⁵ Translation taken from Ehrman 2003:1.233.

⁷⁶ Cf. the fuller reference to Paul's death ("slain with the sword") in the spurious letter to the Tarsians (composed pseudonymously, in Ignatius' name, probably in the 4th century).

1st century, as it is generally believed, then, he could have been old enough (if raised Christian) to be a first-generation tradent of Paul's martyrdom in the first half of the 60s. Whatever the case, Ignatius quotes from the Pauline corpus and is knowledgeable about events in Paul's last years (Ign. *Rom.* 4.3). In *Eph.* 12, he reminds his readers of Paul's emotional attachment to the Ephesian Church (cf. Acts 19-20). His reference to the Ephesians being "a passageway for those slain for God" may allude to Paul's visit to the city before his arrest in Jerusalem. Notice also Ignatius' heightened language: Paul's martyrdom has made the apostle ἡγιασμένος, μαρτυρημένος and ἀξιομακάριστος. His keen interest in Paul as a model martyr is very telling and leads us to suspect that in Ur-traditions Paul was portrayed in the same sort of way. Elsewhere Ignatius, following the "catholic tradition" (cf. *1 Clem.* 5), twins Paul's preaching in Rome with Peter's (Rom. 4:3); in this letter, however, he mentions only Paul's martyrdom, probably as an expression of personal preference. Furthermore, as Moss points out, Ignatius' "practice of writing letters - in *imitatio Pauli* - to the churches in Asia Minor and Rome represents an attempt to cast himself as a deutero-Pauline martyr".⁷⁷ Note that in the lines quoted above Ignatius even describes his upcoming execution as an opportunity to join Paul ("may I be found in his footsteps").

The fourth reference appears in Polycarp's letter to the Philippians (ca. 115).⁷⁸

Therefore I urge all of you to obey the word of righteousness and to practice all endurance (πᾶσαν ὑπομονήν) which you also observed with your own eyes (εἶδατε κατ' ὀφθαλμοῦς) not only (οὐ μόνον) in the most fortunate Ignatius, Zosimus and Rufus but also (ἀλλὰ καὶ) in others who

⁷⁷ See Moss 2012:54-55.

⁷⁸ Hartog (2013:41-45) has a thorough review of scholarly opinions regarding the date of Polycarp's letter. He concludes that "external (yet disputed) evidence and internal (yet inconclusive) evidence converge toward the late Trajanic period (between 112 and 117)...A much later placement, such as the 140s, although possible in theory, seems unnecessary in light of the totality of the evidence." (ibid., 44-45).

lived among you, and in Paul himself (ἐν αὐτῷ Παύλῳ), and the other apostles. You should be convinced that none of them acted in vain, but in faith and righteousness, and that they are in the place they deserved, with the Lord with whom they also suffered. (Pol. 9.1-2).⁷⁹

As discussed in § 2.1, Polycarp was probably born ca. 69 (Bauckham 2007:18) — possibly to a Christian family — and was according to Irenaeus personally acquainted with several of the apostles and a direct disciple of John (Eus. *HE* 5.20), who ordained him first bishop of Smyrna (Tert. *De Praes.* 32.2). He was also a companion of Papias of Hieropolis (Iren. *Adv. Haer.* 5.33) and a correspondent of Ignatius of Antioch; the latter wrote a personal note to him. Regrettably, the letter to the Philippians is Polycarp’s only extant writing.⁸⁰ Just like Ignatius, Polycarp singles out Paul among the apostles of the prior generation, implying that he also viewed him as a model martyr. Polycarp, born after Paul’s martyrdom, must have been about 45 years old when he wrote this letter; yet we cannot rule out that a few of his Philippian readers (in their seventies) had personally known Paul in their youth.⁸¹ At least this is what he seems to imply when he encourages his readers to practice the “endurance” that they had seen “with their own eyes” not only in Ignatius and his companions but also “in Paul himself.” Note also that, just like Ignatius, Polycarp clearly looked up to Paul as a writer. In his letter he quotes from the Pauline corpus over twenty times. He also reminds the Philippians that the “blessed and glorious

⁷⁹ For translation and Greek text see Ehrman 2003:1.344-345. Note that there are problems regarding the unity of the letter. See Hartog 2013:31-37. Although other scholars think that the letter as it stands is made of two original units dating ca.120-135, Hartog shows convincingly that it is a single unit written soon after Ignatius’ martyrdom. For biographical data about Polycarp see *ibid.*, 1-10. There is no scholarly agreement on the identity of the Zosimus and Rufus of our passage (Pol. 9.1-2), apart from the fact that they were companions of Ignatius, who had been known by Polycarp’s readers (εἶδατε κατ’ ὀφθαλμοῦς).

⁸⁰ It is unfortunate that nothing else has survived. Both Pervo and Koester consider Polycarp a key Christian figure of the period 100-150 and our human link to 1st century Christianity (see discussion and references in Hartog 2013:1-2).

⁸¹ Based on our discussion of life tables in the previous section, we know that at least some of Paul’s contemporaries were still alive ca. 115 CE.

Paul” (μακαρίος καὶ ἐνδόξος) came among them and taught the men of that time face to face (Pol. 11.2). Even more interestingly, he adds a note of historical value in 11.3, acknowledging that the Philippian church had been founded before his own church in Smyrna. Although there was probably a time gap of twenty years between the beginning of Polycarp’s adult memory and the events that happened during Paul’s last years, Polycarp apparently possessed some information about the geographical spread of Christianity at least ten years before his own birth. Presumably he got this piece of data from older Christians of Paul’s generation. This would then be an example of a 1st century oral tradition carried and transmitted through the first decades of the 2nd century.

The fifth reference is seldom discussed among scholars. It appears in a document called the *Epistula Apostolorum*, written ca. 145. This text, anti-gnostic in nature, purports to be a letter of Jesus’ disciples containing a revelation of the risen Lord. In the passage that pertains to us (ch. 31), Jesus predicts the future role of Paul in the Church. Regarding Paul’s end, Jesus foretells that “men will be angry with him and deliver him into the hands of his enemies.” Regrettably, these words are preserved only in a corrupt Ethiopic translation. It is uncertain who “the men angry” at Paul or “his enemies” are supposed to be; one may suspect that Jews and Romans are the intended groups. Although the vagueness of the sentence precludes any secure inference, as Muller points out, Jesus’ description of Paul’s final moments is reminiscent of both Acts 9:15 and *1 Clem* 5.7.⁸²

The sixth reference is a quote taken from a letter that bishop Dionysius of Corinth, ca. 170, wrote to the Roman Church. As often happens, it was preserved by Eusebius (*HE* 2.25.8). According to Dionysius, Paul and Peter, after having spent time together in Corinth, “taught

⁸² Translation taken from James 1924:485-503. See Muller 1992:1.249-284 for a discussion of the *Epistula Apostolorum*.

together in Italy and suffered martyrdom at the same time.” His brief notice is yet another example of the catholic tradition that paired the mission and death of Paul and Peter in Rome (cf. *I Clem.* 5, *Ign. Rom.* 4 and *Ir. Adv. Haer.* 3.3 in the 2nd century). The only new piece of information pertains to the apostles’ joint time of death, but in all likelihood Dionysius was merely repeating a tradition already known to his Roman readers.⁸³

The next two references were evidently written after oral traditions about Paul’s final days had already given out. Tertullian in *De praes.* 36.3, ca. 199, furnishes us the first, albeit concise, description of Paul’s manner of death; he says that the apostle was “crowned with a death like John’s [the Baptist] (*ubi Paulus Ioannis exitu coronatur*), by which he means that Paul was beheaded. Elsewhere (*Scorp.* 15.2-4 and *Adv. Marc.* 4.5), Tertullian repeats the same story, adding that the apostle fell victim of Nero, the first persecutor of Christians. Tertullian appears to have gotten the story of Paul’s death from a written source, very likely *The Martyrdom of Paul* that we will study in § 4.4.⁸⁴

The eighth and last reference is also a quote preserved by Eusebius (*HE* 2.25.7). Ca. 200, the Roman presbyter Gaius had an epistolary debate with Proclus, the leader of the Montanists, who had boasted that the tombs of Philip and his famous daughters could be visited in Hieropolis (Eus. *HE* 3.31). Gaius replied, probably in a display of one-upmanship, that he could show to Proclus the (even more prestigious) tombs of the apostles Peter and Paul in Rome. Apart from confirming the existence of a martyr cult of Paul at his alleged tomb on the Ostian Road (see §

⁸³ The same tradition is found, although cryptically written, in *Ir. Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1 (ca. 180). When and how this tradition originated we do not know. At any rate, beginning in the 4th century, Christian writers started to claim that Paul and Peter died on the same day. See discussion in § 5.1.

⁸⁴ See discussion in Snyder 2013:30-33.

4.1), Gaius' reference is interesting because he cites what we nowadays would call "material evidence" as a way to demonstrate that Paul had preached and been martyred at Rome.⁸⁵

In summary, we have defined in this chapter the technical meaning of memory in its various forms and also explained what I mean by "traditions about the final days of Paul." The earliest eight references to the apostle's death appear in the period 70-200, a period in which Bockmuehl thought that scholars could still find primary source material. We have shown that personal memories of the events faded away much earlier than that, and that most oral traditions, not committed to writing, gave out before the mid-2nd century. We also built a quantitative model using concepts of social network analysis and showed that, in the best case scenario, there must have been at most 1,000 first-generation tradents of Paul's death ca. 64 CE. By 125, only a tiny fraction of them would have been alive. During those sixty years their personal memories, repeated in front of crowds, gradually gave rise to more or less stable communal Ur- traditions of Paul's final days. We also stated that literary Christians, although they did not exist in large numbers in that early period, could have written a first-hand account of Paul's death using the literary model of *Teleutai*. If they did, however, we do not know; no written document has survived before the *Martyrdom of Paul* (ca. 150). Yet we have good reasons to believe that before it either the Marcionites or the Valentinians did write something about Paul's death. From contemporary pagan and Christian literature we conjectured that early Ur-traditions about the apostle's death, although differing from each other, would have contained these common narrative elements: a trial scene, Pauls' famous last words and a description of his death.

⁸⁵ Cf. Justin Martyr's use of the misidentified statue as evidence of Simon Magus' presence in Rome during the reign of Claudius and Suetonius' use of a little statue to find one of the names of Augustus (see Appendix 2.a).

Last, we analyzed closely four references written ca. 95-120, within living memory of the events. Without offering much information, they can serve as tiny windows into some of now lost Ur-traditions of Paul's martyrdom. *1 Clem.* 5.5-7 shows that from the very early stages the retelling of Paul's death was connected to Peter's (cf. *Ign. Rom.* 4.3). We termed this "the catholic tradition." Moreover, *1 Clement* appears to imply that Paul's martyrdom was caused by jealousy and *2 Tim.* 4:16-17 portrays the apostle as deserted by his friends when facing legal trouble at Rome. These early documents imply that at the time of Paul's martyrdom, Christians in Rome were not united. Whether this is historically true is impossible to determine. At any rate, this Ur-tradition apparently survived till the patristic period since it is alluded to in a late martyrdom account known as the Pseudo-Marcellus (see § 5.4).⁸⁶ The next two chronological references, Ignatius (*Eph.* 12.1-2) and Polycarp (*Pol.* 9.1-2), single out Paul as a traditional model martyr, although they are strictly silent regarding what those traditions said about the circumstances of Paul's death. Interestingly, in Polycarp's letter we find signs of contact with Christians of the Neronian period. *Pol.* 9.1-2 suggests that among Polycarp's Philippian readers there were some who had known Paul personally and in *Pol.* 11.2, the author shows that he has historical information about the spread of Christianity in the 50s and 60s. The next two references (ca. 145-170) contribute no new information and the last two (Tertullian and Gaius), dating from the period after oral traditions had given out, are based on written sources or material evidence. All eight references deal with the apostle's martyrdom tangentially. This is understandable since they are found in documents that were not composed with the intention of furnishing biographical data about the apostle. The book of Acts, the one writing that gives a

⁸⁶ See discussion in Eastman 2013:34-53.

detailed account of Paul's life from his conversion till his arrival to Rome, will be the subject of our next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: THE ANTI-JUDAIC TRADITION OF ACTS

In Chapter 2 we developed a quantitative model to understand how traditions about Paul's final days were formed and transmitted after his death. We also examined the earliest references to his martyrdom. Apart from the texts that we have already studied, *1 Clement*, *2 Timothy* and the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp, there is one more early Christian text, written within the living memory of Paul's death, which deals with events in his life. That is of course, the book of Acts, our major source of biographical information about the apostle. Its author, "Luke", is identified as a companion of the apostle in the earliest references to the book.¹ Given Luke's alleged familiarity with the apostle's life, Acts would have been the perfect candidate to illuminate the final days of Paul, or at least his trial in Rome. Yet, although the author relates Paul's four consecutive trials after his arrest in Jerusalem, his perilous sea travel to Rome and his meeting with the local Jews, an account of Paul's long awaited appearance before Nero is sadly missing. The hasty ending surprises the reader because in the last third of his book, Luke creates suspense by foreshadowing Paul's visit (Acts 19:21), trial (23:11 and 27:24) and death (20:25 and 20:38) in Rome. These passages, strengthened by the movement of the storyline itself, plant narrative seeds that anticipate Paul's encounter with the emperor. However, after the apostle talks to the Jewish leaders of Rome (28:17-29), the narrative suddenly stops. The last two verses

¹ These sources are Irenaeus' *Adv. Haer.* (ca. 180), the Muratorian Canon, and the "anti-Marcionite" prologue to Luke. The last two (see Schneemelcher 1992:1.34) are believed to have been written in the late 2nd century.

(28:30-31), which furnish the final words of the book, function mostly as a summary statement that forms an *inclusio* with words found at the very beginning of Acts.²

In terms of the plot, it is the scene of Paul's meeting with the Roman Jews (28:17-29) that concludes Acts' storyline. Given Luke's silence on this matter, what are we as readers supposed to think about Paul's fate after this meeting? R. Pervo, on the last page of his long and detailed commentary on Acts, writes that "readers will finally infer that Paul had fallen victim to Jewish intrigue."³ Similarly, H. Tajra, after a scrupulous analysis of the historical circumstances of Paul's trial, concludes that the leadership of the Roman synagogues, "the very men who stormed out of Paul's lodgings' rejecting his Gospel", brought "the charge of *crimen laesae maiestatis* against Paul, the charge on which he was arrested for the final time, tried, condemned and martyred."⁴ It is virtually impossible to prove or disprove Tajra's hypothesis considering that it is ultimately based on his interpretation of the last scene of Acts. Although the overall historicity of Acts is beyond the scope of our study, the least we can say is that at places it is highly problematic (cf. discussion in the dissertation's introduction). Now, regardless of the historical reliability of verses 28:17-29, I believe that Tajra's conjecture reflects quite well the intentions of the leading Jews of Rome — *qua* book characters — as they left Paul's quarters. In that line of thought I will argue in this chapter that Acts 28:29, an overlooked verse that has been dropped from critical editions, plays a crucial role in the book's ending. The meaning of this verse is deliberately ambiguous providing a climax to the insinuations of Acts' anti-Judaic theme and, in harmony with Pervo's literary interpretation and Tajra's historical suspicions, implies that Paul

² Dupont (1979:359-404) considers verses 28:30-31 more an epilogue than a real conclusion.

³ See Pervo 2009: 690 n. 109.

⁴ See discussion in Tajra 1994:76-84. The quote is found on page 84. Tajra points out that it was not unusual for Jerusalem Jews to request the leading Jews of Rome to use their influence upon the Imperial Court in cases of prosecution.

fell victim of Jewish intrigue at the Neronian court. Moreover, Acts 28:29 constitutes probably the first extant witness of an early Christian tradition that portrayed the Jews as the instigators of Paul's demise.

1. Pauline Traditions within Acts' Theological Framework

Considering the nature of my proposal, some discussion of Acts' *Sitz im Leben* is inevitably in order. As those who deal with Lucan scholarship know well, the date and sources of Acts are not settled matters.⁵ Although our understanding of how the book of Acts handles the anti-Judaic tradition of Paul's death does not require a conclusive solution to these complex issues, we still need to consider them to provide an interpretative framework for the rest of the chapter. First we deal with the date. During the 20th century, scholars placed the date of Acts' composition within a remarkably wide-ranging period, with some suggesting dates as early and 60 and others dates as late as 150. If one browses academic books of the past thirty years, one observes that as a rule they settle for an intermediate date, sometime in the 80s, although offering little or no evidence for the proposed date. Nonetheless, in recent years, there has been a growing consensus among Acts' scholars that the book was likely written in the early decades of the 2nd century or, at the very least, after Josephus published his *Jewish Antiquities* (ca. 93-94), a book which Luke appears to have used as a source of information for events before 50 CE.⁶

⁵ Another major issue is the early transmission of Acts in its two different versions. I will deal with these issues in § 3.2 and §3.6.

⁶ Errors in Luke-Acts regarding events that took place from Herod's reign to ca. 60 can be explained with relative ease if one assumes that he was using Josephus as a source. An example often discussed is Acts 5:36-37. In this passage, Gamaliel gives a speech in front of the Sanhedrin suggesting that if the Christian movement is not from God, it will fail without human intervention. In support of his claim, he relates the stories of two Jewish rebels who, albeit initially successful, were eventually killed, Theudas and "after him" (μετὰ τοῦτον) Judas the Galilean. In Gamaliel's speech, Luke makes a serious chronological mistake by inverting the historical order of these leaders; Judas the Galilean (6 CE) was in fact earlier than Theudas (44 CE). The most likely explanation for this mistake is that Luke took the examples from Josephus' *AJ* 20.97-98, in which these persons, for narrative reasons, are mentioned in reverse chronological order. Notice also that Gamaliel, presumably speaking shortly after Jesus' death

Overall, I find the various arguments for a date ca. 95-120 very compelling and thus throughout this chapter I will also examine Acts as if written in that period.⁷ As the reader might recall, some of the writings studied in § 2.4 were also composed within those years. For our purposes, having a more precise time for Acts' composition is unnecessary as long as we recognize that although Acts was written within the living memory of the events, the death of Paul was far from being a fresh memory. Presumably, a rather small pool of first-generation tradents (cf. § 2.3) who had information about the circumstances of his death were available for consultation. Although we have no grounds to reject the possibility that Luke had recourse to them, it is more likely that the information available to him of what had happened to Paul in Rome came primarily from second-hand traditions that had been rehearsed and reshaped in Pauline communities and onto which a scriptural interpretation of the events had already been imprinted.⁸

(ca. 30-35), refers to events that happened ten years later. Likewise, Acts 21:38, in which Paul is mistaken as “the Egyptian who led 4,000 *sicarii* into the desert” seems to be based on an adjacent passage in *Antiquities* (*AJ* 20.169-171, 185-188). See Pervo 2006:152-160. Other passages in Luke-Acts that scholars cite as possibly drawing information from Josephus' works are Luke 2:1-7, 3:1-2 and 13:1, and Acts 11:28-29, 12:21-23, 24:24-26 and 25:13.

⁷ Tyson 2006:1-23, before settling for a late date, gives a good overview of arguments for and against all proposed dates. See Snyder 2013:14 for a list of scholars who have favored a date of composition in the 2nd century. Among them, probably the best known proponent is Richard Pervo, who argued for it in *Dating Acts* (2006). His arguments that Luke drew from Josephus (see previous footnote) are particularly persuasive. Whether Luke drew information from the Pauline corpus for the book of Acts is hotly disputed. Direct quotes from Paul's letters are clearly absent, which is itself puzzling if one considers that Acts contains embedded letters that deal with Paul (Acts 15:23-29 and 23:26-30) and references to letters about Paul (Acts 9:2 and 28:21). Regarding this conundrum, Pervo 2009:12 insightfully states that “It is almost impossible to claim that the author of Acts had not heard of [Paul's] epistles, and it is difficult to propose circumstances in which he had not come in contact with them. The choices are either that Luke knew of the letters but declined to consult them or that he made such use of them as suited his needs and purposes. *Tertium non datur.*” Notice that other writings dated between 95 and 120, *1 Clement*, the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp quote from Paul's epistles (cf. § 2.4 and Koester 2000:2.325). To this group of writings we may add 2 Peter 3:15-16, which bestows upon Paul's letters scriptural status.

⁸ Cf. discussion in § 2.4. In the absolute best case scenario, the number of concerned first-generation tradents alive would have decreased from about 300 ca. 95 CE to fewer than 50 ca. 115 CE.

What about Acts' written sources? At the beginning of Luke-Acts, the author acknowledges that many others have undertaken to draw an account of the events of early Christianity. Evidently Luke utilized some of these prior writings as sources for his gospel; two of these, Mark's gospel and the Q document, are easily recognizable, allowing us to pinpoint what parts of Luke's gospel originate from them. Regrettably, the text of Acts does not afford us similar opportunities. Although it is agreed that Luke had access to written sources to compose Acts, their identification within the text is, except in rare instances, a matter of guesswork.⁹ Many scholars believe that one of these documents may have been – in some form or another – the precursor of the famous “we passages” of Acts. As is well known, within Acts the narrative voice in four instances switches to the first person plural (16:10-17, 20:5-15, 21:1-18, and 27:1-28:16). While at present there is no universally accepted comprehensive theory that accounts for Luke's use of this literary device, scholars who have studied the origin and purpose of the “we passages” have made several perceptive observations.¹⁰ First, there are good reasons not to equate the “we” of these passages with the “I” of Acts 1:1. Within Acts' narrative, the subject of the “we” is never specified and membership in the “we” group does not appear to be consistent; the first person plural suddenly pops up and equally abruptly disappears without explanation. Moreover, as a narrative voice, the “we” of Acts seems suspiciously omniscient, lacking the limitations of human speakers. It has been proposed that Luke had access to a travelogue written

⁹ In a few cases, efforts to analyze Luke's handling of his sources have been fruitful. For instance, Koester 2007: 255-259 has proposed a quite convincing theory on how Luke managed his sources to compose the beginning of Paul's mission in Ephesus (particularly Acts 18:18-21, where he can identify the place at which Luke's source breaks down). Likewise, Pervo 2009:13 has cogently argued that 20:1-21:19 (one of the “we passages”) derives from a written source.

¹⁰ On the origin, characteristics and purpose of the “we passages”, see hypotheses and review of previous scholarship in Ehrman 2013a:265-282, Porter 1994:545-574, Mount 2002:155-156, Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger 2009:249-257, Alexander 2006:151-165 and Pervo 2009:392-396. It is worth noticing that, likely based on the “we passages”, our earliest references identify the author of Acts as Luke, “the beloved physician” of Col. 4:14, who is also mentioned in Phlm 24 and 2 Tim. 4:11.

by some associate of Paul in which the “we” pronoun was used. This is quite probable. Yet since the vocabulary and style of the “we passages” cannot be distinguished from the rest of the text, even if the travelogue hypothesis is correct, it appears as if Luke heavily redacted his source before incorporating it into Acts’ storyline, purposely preserving here and there the first person plural voice so as to increase the credibility of his narrative by slyly implying that he had sometimes participated in Paul’s mission.¹¹

Probably we should evaluate the information found in the “we passages” from an interpretive viewpoint similar to that used in § 2.4, in which we examined 2 Timothy’s vignettes on the historical Paul. In Acts, the “we passages” may contain actual historical reminiscences that originated from Paul’s inner circle; nevertheless, the author’s primary motivation was not to transmit factual information but rather to place and rework the received traditions about Paul’s final days within the theological framework of Acts. This attitude towards historical events was not unique to Luke but a characteristic of Christianity from its early days, and has prompted many scholars to explain in theological terms Luke’s decision to end his story abruptly and pass over in silence Paul’s death.¹² In their view, after the apostle arrives in Rome, he has reached the

¹¹ This literary use of “we” is found elsewhere in the contemporary literature. See Ehrman 2013a:270-274 for a list of early Christian narratives in which the narrator positions himself as an eyewitness using the first person. See also Bauckham 2000:2.800 for the occasional usage of “we” in *Acts of Peter* and *Acts of John*, which he sees as imitation of the “we passages” of canonical Acts. As to non-Christian literature of Luke’s times, in the trial scene of one of the extant *Acta Alexandrinorum* (CPJ ii 158a), the writer uses the first person plural to give the impression that he was personally present at the hearing (see Harker 2008:90).

¹² Consider for instance 1 Cor. 15:3. In this verse, Paul states that the traditions that he had received and was handing down (παρέδωκα) established that Jesus’ suffering and death were to be interpreted according to the scriptures (κατὰ τὰς γραφάς). See discussion in Ehrman 2012:169. As to Luke, presumably among the traditional stories “handed down to his generation” (cf. Luke 1:2, παρέδωσαν ἡμῖν) there were some about Paul’s death that had already passed through the prism of theological interpretation before they reached Luke.

destination intended for him by Luke. Paul has taken the Gospel to the very heart of the Empire, echoing Jesus' instructions ("the ends of the earth") in Acts 1:7–8.¹³

Whether the above is the best justification for Luke's omission of Paul's final moments should not detain us. Regarding the complex problem of Acts' sudden ending, dozens of theories have been proposed.¹⁴ In practice, there is no single solution to this conundrum, since the subject can be approached from different angles. For our purposes, the question of interest is what Luke's omission of Paul's death tells us about the ideological compromises that he had to make regarding that subject. In my view, Luke faced a dilemma, as he was writing to both Christians and potential converts. First recall that, thanks to the farewell speech to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:13-38) which foreshadows Paul's death twice, it must have been clear to both types of readers that the end of Paul's life was not far off. Yet, to his more well-off pagan readers curious about Christianity but comfortable with the political stability provided by the Roman Empire, Luke wanted to show that the new religious movement presented no threat to the *Pax Romana*. Needless to say, dwelling on the execution of a prominent Christian who had been condemned by an emperor was not an effective way to write an *Apologia pro Ecclesia*. Probably for that reason Luke decided not to recount the climactic trial to which he had referred before (Acts 23:11 and 27:24), and never refers to Nero by name. On the other hand, Luke was also writing to contemporary Christians who must have heard discrepant stories about Paul's death. I shall argue in later sections of this chapter that Luke left subtle clues for his most perceptive readers about his own views on this matter, suggesting that Paul, at some unspecified later time, fell victim of Jewish judicial intrigue.

¹³ See Green 2010:42 for an example of a scholar who believes that when Paul arrives in Rome he has fulfilled the instructions of Jesus at the beginning of Acts.

¹⁴ For a survey of different theories see discussion in Troftgruben 2009:9-45.

Apart from the difficulty of simultaneously addressing the contrasting interests of both a Christian and a Gentile upper-class audience, Luke felt the need to subordinate historical events in Paul's life to the overall theological conception of his book. In that regard, for Luke, what mattered most was not to relate the circumstances of Paul's death but rather to show that the apostle's death had been a matter of divine necessity. This matter is often discussed in the scholarly literature, and indeed we have evidence within the text itself of Luke's conviction that Paul's demise had been divinely planned: right after his conversion, Paul's eventual fate is foreshadowed with a series of advance notices about his visit, trial and death in Rome. Luke's foretelling of what was in store for Paul is often punctuated by the repetition of the word δεῖ ("must"), indicating that events leading to Paul's death (being persecuted by Jews and brought to trial) had been intended by God as crucial moments in salvation history.¹⁵

In summary, in this section we have examined the date, sources and overall theological outlook of Acts. Throughout the book, the Jews are portrayed as Paul's enemies, and verse 28:29, as our analysis will show, insinuates that the leading Jews will be involved in the apostle's final and fateful trial. We have assigned Acts' historical context to the period 95-120 CE, in agreement with a growing historical consensus that places the date of composition in the early 2nd century. Around this time, Paul's death was no longer a fresh memory, and based on the models developed in Chapter 2 we may surmise that not many first-generation tradents were still

¹⁵ See Theissen 1999:179-184 for an analysis of the conception of salvation history in Luke-Acts. Regarding the importance of δεῖ, see discussion in Mattill 1975:26-27. The word is regularly used in the passages that foreshadow Paul's destiny (except his death). Suffering. Acts 9:29, Jesus talking to Ananias: "I will show him [Paul] how much he must suffer (δεῖ ... παθεῖν) for my name"; Visit to Rome. Acts 19:21 Paul said "I must visit Rome (δεῖ με καὶ Ῥώμην ἰδεῖν)". Trial at Rome. Acts 23:11: "The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, 'Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome (σε δεῖ καὶ εἰς Ῥώμην μαρτυρῆσαι)"; again at Acts 27:24: "Last night, an angel of God... stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar (σε δεῖ παραστήναι)'." Interestingly, in Acts 27:26, Paul himself uses this language as he addresses his fellow travelers regarding their incoming shipwreck "we must be cast ashore (δεῖ ἡμᾶς ἐκπεσεῖν) to an island". These foreshadowing instances in Acts have parallel counterparts in the Gospel of Luke regarding Jesus' fate (see Mattill 1975:26).

alive. For Luke, their small number and geographical dispersion must have led to the same type of problems that Papias (cf. § 2.2) had in trying to gather memories from those who had been with Jesus' disciples.¹⁶ Although Luke could certainly have written about the circumstances of Paul's death by having recourse to second-hand traditional material, he purposely chose to pass over his death in silence. As a result of this decision, canonical Acts differs significantly from the apocryphal Acts, since the latter narratives recount the lives of their heroes till their very end.¹⁷ As it is often said, Luke was driven by a desire not so much to relate complete biographical information about the apostle but rather to place the events that led to his death within the framework of salvation history, i.e., the overall theological theme of Acts.

2. The Anti-Judaic Tendency of the Western Text of Acts

In the next three sections, I shall analyze the meaning of Acts 28:29, the last verse in the final narrative scene of Acts (verses 28:17-29). In this final episode, Paul meets with the leading Jews of Rome in anticipation of his upcoming trial; he preaches to them unsuccessfully and then reprimands them on account of their unbelief; lastly, his Jewish guests leave his quarters. The verse in question, Acts 28:29, describes their departure: *καὶ ταῦτα αὐτοῦ εἰπόντος ἀπῆλθον οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι πολλὴν ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς συζήτησιν* or, in the translation of the New American Standard Bible (NASB), “When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves”. As the adage goes, “last words are lasting words”, and considering the meticulous care with which Acts constructs its narrative, it defies reason that the final verse

¹⁶ Even if Luke had consulted first-generation tradents — as discussed in § 2.3 — probably their genuine memories would have already been turned into stereotyped accounts by frequent retelling.

¹⁷ The five apocryphal Acts (Thomas, Andrew, John, Peter and Paul) were put together as a corpus in the 4th century by the Manicheans. Each focuses on the life of one apostle and ends with his death. Notice that within canonical Acts, both John and Peter also disappear at early stages of the narrative without any account of their end. See Bauckham 2000:798-799.

of the storyline may have been added sloppily. Although Acts 28:29 has now been removed from critical editions, the verse was historically part of the “received text” and still appears in some modern translations.¹⁸ The verse originally belonged to the so-called Western Text, a form of the text of Acts that has long puzzled scholars. Although Luke intended Acts to be the second volume of his Gospel, we know from the documentary evidence that both works circulated independently from a very early stage. Also from an early stage, Acts was transmitted in two versions, the “Alexandrian Text” (AT) and the “Western Text” (WT), which is about 8.5 % longer. The relationship between the two versions is highly problematic and still debated.¹⁹ Philologically, the vocabulary and style of WT has been shown to be thoroughly Lucan. Thus, from a purely linguistic point of view it is plausible that the Western Text was written by Luke himself.²⁰ Yet, regarding its internal structure, WT frequently reads like a revised expansion of AT and for that reason is often considered a secondary form of the original text. Then again, although WT does not differ significantly from AT’s tradition, at times it seems to be witness of independent sources of information. Without introducing changes to the plot, the Western Text corrects or clarifies here and there historical information found in AT about places (Acts 12:10,

¹⁸ Before the 19th century, Acts 28.29 was present in the Textus Receptus, the Geneva Bible, the KJB and the Clementine Vulgate. In the modern, scholarly oriented UBS⁴/NA²⁷ editions, 28:29 has been relegated to the *apparatus criticus*. In popular New Testament editions in the English language, the verse is omitted in the NIV, RSV and ESV, but is included in the NASB⁹⁵, the World English Bible and the HCSV. The verse is also present in New Testament editions in major European languages (French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, etc.).

¹⁹ The difficulties in resolving textual difficulties in the book of Acts are best illustrated by this curious fact: while Acts constitutes no more than 13% of the pages in a modern edition of the New Testament, it occupies about 30% of Metzger’s renowned *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. For a detailed analysis of the issues discussed in this section see Metzger 1994:222-236 and Strange 1992:1-107.

²⁰ Throughout the chapter, when I quote from the Western text, unless otherwise stated, it will be in reference to the critical edition of WT produced by Boismard and Lamouille in 1984. The reconstruction of WT is not an easy task. The earliest most complete Greek witness is Codex Bezae (also known as the D-text). Unfortunately it is lacunose, missing the following sections: Acts 8:29-10:14, 21:2-10, 21:16-18, 22:10-20, 22:29-end. Thus, Boismard and Lamouille also have recourse to Latin and other versions. Moreover, they have to deal with corrupt readings, which they term WT² to distinguish them from the pure (WT¹) Western variants. For a detailed discussion of their methodology, see Boismard-Lamouille 1984:1-95.

20:15) and times (Acts 19:9, 27:5), occasionally adds new “we passages” (11:28, 13:14 and 21:29) and sometimes recasts certain scenes. What is more, several variants introduced in WT have an ideological bent.²¹ For instance, the Western Text downplays the influence of women found in AT and, of particular significance to us, it heightens the hostility of the Jews towards Christians. These variants suggest a different author, probably someone who had great respect for the vocabulary and style of the original but also wanted to polish the story and fancied himself a “faithful continuator of Luke.”²² In my view, considering the present *status quaestionis*, although there is not enough evidence to entirely discard the possibility of Lucan authorship of the Western Text; the “reviser hypothesis” favored by a plurality of scholars is the most sensible. Thus, I shall adopt it throughout the chapter, assuming that WT is the product of a reviser who worked on his version probably no later than 150; this reviser was loyal to the form and spirit of the original Lucan text and careful to preserve its language, vocabulary and overall theological outlook.

As mentioned above, WT often alters the Alexandrian Text in order to heighten hostility towards Jews. Scholars have termed this propensity the anti-Judaic tendency of Western Acts. The tendency was analyzed in great detail about half a century ago by Eldon Epp, who concluded that about 40% of the western variants are anti-Judaic in nature. Many of these deal with Jewish antagonism towards Paul, beginning with his first journey in chapter 13 and

²¹ This is perhaps the major problem that remains unaccounted for by those who view WT as the primitive form of Acts. See Head 1993:415–444.

²² See discussion in Hull 1988:695-707. Citing the studies of Wilcox and Martini, Hull (ibid. 706) states that in terms of vocabulary the D-text “out-Lukes Luke!” Martini 1979:33 assesses the language of Western Acts as follows: « Le milieu des variantes longues montre un respect non seulement pour la langue et pour la substance doctrinale du texte, mais aussi pour son vocabulaire. L’interpolateur... a eu soin de se rendre familières les expressions de l’oeuvre lucanienne ... l’interpolateur se sent et veut être un continuateur fidèle de l’oeuvre de l’auteur. » Ibid., 34, Martini discusses the date of composition of the Western Text and, citing Hanson, settles for some time between 120-150 CE.

continuing till the end of the book.²³ To give the reader a flavor of this phenomenon, I shall relate three examples. (1) In the Alexandrian Text, while Paul is successfully preaching at Lystra (Acts 14:8-20), out-of-town Jews come to incite the locals against him (Acts 14:19); Paul is stoned and left for dead. The Western Text elaborates on the methods used by the Jews to persuade the Lystrans by adding that the Jews “were saying that [Paul and Barnabas] were not telling the truth but were liars at every point” (λέγοντες ὅτι οὐδὲν ἀληθὲς λέγουσιν, ἀλλὰ πάντα ψεύδονται).²⁴ (2) In Acts 23:23–24, Paul is escorted by hundreds of Roman soldiers as he travels to Caesarea to stand trial before Felix; the Roman commander orders his men “to provide horses for Paul to ride”, to which the Western Text adds “for he was afraid that the Jews would seize him and kill him” (ἐφοβήθη γὰρ μήποτε ἀρπάσαντες αὐτὸν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀποκτένωσι).²⁵ (3) In the Alexandrian Text (Acts 24:24-27), the Roman governor Felix decides to keep Paul in prison of his own accord, whereas in the Western version we are told that Felix did so to please Drusilla, his Jewish wife.

Some of the anti-Judaic Western variants listed by Epp are subtle or restrained in nature and can be explained away as neutral clarifications of the storyline in the Alexandrian Text.²⁶ However, there are many other variants of overt anti-Judaic character that fully support Epp’s theory and cannot objectively be dismissed as disinterested expansions (see discussion in

²³ See Epp 1966. The anti-Judaic variants of particular interest dealing with Paul are 13:8, 14:2, 14:19, 18:12, 23:15, 23:23–24, 23:29, 24:7-8, 24:24-27, 25:21, 25:24-26 and 28:19 (for the Greek text of these variants, see Metzger 1994:355-444). Notice that although my arguments in this chapter do not depend on any particular theory about the authorship of Acts, if we were to accept that WT, just as AT, originates from Luke, we would be forced to explain why he decided to intensify in it the negative portrayal of Jews.

²⁴ For Greek text and translation see Metzger 1994:375.

²⁵ See *ibid.*, 433.

²⁶ For instance, the Western variant in the Drusilla episode (Acts 24:24-27) results from slightly changing the sentences while meticulously preserving consistency with the “non-Western” portion of the Alexandrian Text. If evaluated outside its anti-Judaic context, one could conclude that the Western Text merely wants to clarify a minor detail of the story. Cf. the entry for 24:24 in Metzger 1994:434 and discussion in Appendix 3.a.

Appendix 3.a). Particularly in passages that deal with Paul and Jews, whenever the Western Text adds material in chapters 13-28, the additions consistently intensify Jewish hostility against the apostle. As I will discuss in detail in sections 4 and 5, Acts 28:29, the last Western verse in the storyline also features this anti-Judaic motif.

3. Acts' Depiction of Jews as Paul's Mortal Enemies

Before continuing, it is imperative to stress that the Alexandrian Text already exhibits a strong anti-Judaic tendency; what the Western Text does is to heighten it even further. Overall, the negative portrayal of Jews as Paul's relentless foes permeates Acts from Paul's first missionary journey in chapter 13 to the end of the book, and it is within this framework that we must reevaluate verse 28:29, the closing verse of the book's final scene. Three days after his arrival in the city, Paul meets with the leading Jews of Rome to discuss his future trial. He states that he has done nothing against Jews. Arrested in Jerusalem, he has been forced to make an appeal to Caesar (28:17-20). In reply, the Roman Jews say that they have not received letters concerning Paul and ask to meet with him to hear his views (28:21-22). A meeting is arranged, in which Paul preaches at length about the kingdom of God (28:23-24). Some Jews believe, yet others do not. As the Jews begin to leave (28:25), the apostle reprimands them by quoting from Isaiah 6:9-10: the Jewish people have closed their eyes, their calloused hearts will not understand. God's message will now go to the Gentiles (28:26-28). At this point in the passage, the Western Text adds verse 28:29, "When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves." At first sight the verse seems completely innocuous. In fact, Eldon Epp, in his seminal work on the anti-Judaic tendency of the western version, did not include 28:29 in his list of anti-Judaic Western variants. As to textual critics, they have paid

little attention to this verse and dismiss it as a bland Western interpolation inserted merely to complete the pericope in which Paul encounters the Roman Jewish authorities.²⁷ Yet in my view the verse deserves much closer attention.

The first point to notice is that in both the Alexandrian and Western Texts, verses 30-31 furnish a theological conclusion and show no continuity with Paul's meeting with the Roman Jews. In the Western Text, the last two verses are further disjointed from the events in 28:17-29.²⁸ In this version, Acts 28:30-31 is very short, only twenty-one words. The picture of the Roman Jews leaving Paul's quarters is followed by a summary statement that repeats doctrinal information found in Acts 1:2-3 (Jesus' actions and instructions before he was taken up to heaven).²⁹ Thus, in terms of the narrative structure, in the Western Text of Acts, 28:30-31 ends the book whereas it is 28:29 that ends the story line. The very fact that it provides closure to the episode invites us to examine the verse more closely.

²⁷ According to Metzger 1994:444, "the addition was probably made because of the abrupt transition from verse 28 to verse 30". For his part, Aland 1995:304 advances a similar explanation: "The transition from verse 28 to verse 30 was felt by the Majority text to be too abrupt. A concluding sentence was lacking, and it was supplied by repeating the content of verses 24-25." Notice that Aland's interpretation of the verse does not prove satisfactory from a grammatical perspective. In 28:24-25 the Jews "were in the process of leaving" (*ἀπελύοντο*, imperfect tense) before Paul stopped them with his quote of Isaiah 6:9-10, whereas in 28:29 "the Jews departed" (*ἀπῆλθον*, aorist tense). More importantly, we are bound to think that the state of mind of the departing Jews in 28:29 changed relative to verse 28:25, following Paul's harsh rebuke and taunting in verses 28:26-28. See Pervo 2009:386 for a review of other opinions about the language and purpose of Acts 28:29.

²⁸ Interestingly, the famous and rare word *ἀκωλύτως* that ends the Alexandrian Text, describing Paul's teaching as "unhindered", is missing in the Western version of Acts 28:30-31. The legal significance of *ἀκωλύτως* was analyzed in § 1.1. In short, as Paul preached unhindered in Rome, the spread of gospel continues unhindered.

²⁹ The *inclusio* is patent when one puts side by side the Western version of verses 28:30-31 and 1:2-3. "Ἐνεμίειεν δὲ διετίαν ὄλην ἐν ἰδίῳ μισθώματι, **κηρύσσων τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διδάσκων τὰ περὶ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ** μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας" (Western Acts 28:30-31). Cf. Western Acts 1:2-3 which reads: "...καὶ ἐνετείλατο **κηρύσσειν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον** ἐπὶ ἡμέρας τεσσαράκοντα ὄπανόμενος αὐτοῖς καὶ **διδάσκων τὰ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ**." Notice the absence in the Western version of Acts 28:30-31 of information about Paul welcoming those who came to see him while imprisoned at Rome (found in the conventional Alexandrian Text). See text and discussion in Boismard and Lamouille 1984:1.226, 2.3 and 2.194.

Apart from being the last verse of the story, 28:29 contains the very important phrase οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, which throughout Acts serves to punctuate Jewish persecution against Paul.³⁰ As a rule, the group designation οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι does not refer to the Jewish nation as a whole but to those Jews who reject Paul's message and are hostile to him. After Paul's conversion in chapter 9, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι is used nineteen times. Sixteen times it is used to identify Paul's persecutors. Starting at 9:23 the reader of Acts systematically encounters οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the process of (a) slandering, (b) bringing charges against, (c) stirring up crowds against and (d) trying to kill the apostle Paul. The Western Text compounds even further the theologically loaded condemnation associated with the words οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι by, amplifying almost at every turn Jewish hostility towards Paul. Indeed, a comparison of AT and WT indicates that the expansions of WT regularly come right after the phrase οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the Alexandrian Text (14:19, 18:12, 24:24 and 28:19). Moreover, at times when the Jews are not mentioned explicitly in AT, the Western variants (23:23–24 and 28:29) themselves add οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι. Thus, having been conditioned to expect the worst each time οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι appear in Acts, the attentive reader finds the use of the phrase in 28:29 rather anomalous. Could the Jews have left Paul's lodgings without planning anything evil against him? Within Acts' storyline, this would be uncharacteristic of them, especially considering that this is their last interaction with Paul and that the apostle has finished his speech (28:26-28) with a verbal antagonism towards the unbelieving Jews that is reminiscent of Stephen's final words before the Jews stone him (7:53-55). Yet in the very last scene of Acts, by contrast, the Jews are strangely passive. Notice that Paul seems to be irking them on purpose when he states that the

³⁰ Before Paul's conversion, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (in the Nominative Plural) is used three times in quick succession during the Pentecost episode (Acts 2:5, 2:11 and 2:14). After Paul's conversion in chapter 9, it is used nineteen times (excluding Acts 28:29). Sixteen times it serves to identify explicitly Paul's enemies (Acts 9:23, 13:45, 13:50, 14:2, 14:19, 17:5, 17:13, 18:12, 21:11, 21:27, 23:12, 23:20, 24:9, 24:18, 25:7 and 26:21). In three other instances, 25:15, 25:24 and the Western variant of 28:19, the Jews collectively or their authorities are negatively portrayed in the genitive plural (τῶν Ἰουδαίων).

Gentiles will be willing to hear about God's salvation.³¹ One wonders why would the leading Jews of Rome leave Paul's quarters (28:29) "having a great dispute among themselves" after the apostle has reprimanded and offended them collectively. One might point out that it is common human nature to unify positions when facing a common aggressor.

In any case, Jewish crowds in other passages of Acts would not have taken Paul's taunts in 28:26-28 so lightly. From a literary point of view, Acts 28:17-29 echoes three previous episodes in which Paul's announces to Jews that he will take God's salvation to the Gentiles (Acts 13:13-51, 18:4-17 and 22:1-25). In all these cases, Paul's reprimand triggers the vindictiveness of the unbelieving Jews.³² This is part of Acts' recurrent motif of Jewish hostility towards the apostle, which is fleshed out by no less than thirteen plots to kill him in which Jews take part. The plots are listed in Tables I and II of Appendix 3.b.³³ A quick look at Table I reveals that starting in 9:22, immediately after his conversion, Jews tried to kill Paul in Damascus, Jerusalem, Lystra, Thessalonica, Berea and Greece. Even after he escapes from one

³¹ Interestingly, Luke's portrayal of Paul in this passage has affinities with what Paul himself says in the letter to the Romans. In Rom. 9:25-28 he states that God has chosen the Gentiles as his new people and in Rom. 10:13-21 he explains that one of the purposes of his Gentile mission is to make Jews jealous so as to save some of them.

³² See for instance what happens when Paul announces his mission to the Gentiles in Acts 22:21-22. From the beginning of chapter 22, Paul has been speaking to a large crowd of Jews in Jerusalem. We are also told that they are quiet since he speaks to them in Aramaic (Acts 22:2). Yet when Paul tells them "the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles'" (a much milder version of what he says in 28:28 and without the harsh chastisement found in 28:26-27), the Jews become almost irrationally angry and shout "'Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!" (22:22). Their shouts recall the scene in Luke 23:18 when the crowd asks for the death of Jesus and the release of Barabbas. In Paul's final meeting with the Roman Jews, the Western Text adds these Jewish threats to Paul after verse 28:19, when the apostle recounts to his guests what happened to him in Jerusalem.

³³ Cf. Wills 1991:631-654. Wills' article contains pericopes dealing with Jewish hostility, from chapter 13 on, in which he observes a narrative pattern that he terms "missionary action / opposition / expansion". Wills counts 17 instances of this pattern, i.e. four more entries compared to my lists on Tables I and II. One of Wills' entries is technically a case of internal opposition to Paul (the Pharisaic Christian Jews in 15:1-5 who want to impose circumcision on the Christians and are later rebuked by the Jerusalem Council). Wills also counts three exceptions (16:1-40, 1:1-7 and 19:21-41) of material that does not fall under this pattern. Paul's troubles in 16:1-40 originate from the owners of a fortune-telling girl; 19:1-7 shows Paul admonishing some unidentified disciples who "knew only the baptism of John"; 19:21-41 is the only case of Gentile opposition (the devotees of Artemis in Ephesus). Wills explains the occasional presence of Jews as recipients of the missionary expansion saying that "the worldwide mission may include some Jews ...but the general body of Jews opposed Christianity" (see *ibid.* 644).

place, they go after him and stir up the Jewish crowd in the next town. The Jews of Antioch and Iconium follow Paul to Lystra, the Jews of Thessalonica follow him to Berea. Table II shows that Jewish attempts against Paul's life do not stop after his arrest in Jerusalem. Although he is now under the protection of the lieutenant of the Roman garrison, the Jews keep trying to assassinate him. In 23:12-15, more than forty Jews form a conspiracy and bind themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed Paul. The Jews try one more time after Festus replaces Felix as Governor (25:3). They fail again.

Yet despite all these previous plots, when Paul arrives in Rome, the leaders of the Jews in the city are mysteriously unacquainted with Paul's ill fame among their eastern co-religionaries. They tell him "we have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of our people who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you" (28:21). Their response is at odds with what readers would expect.³⁴ Now that the Jews finally have Paul under custody in Rome, compelled to make an appeal to Caesar, it seems as if his Jerusalem foes, including the committed forty assassins under oath and his relentless Jewish enemies from Asia Minor, have suddenly given up. Not only do they not follow Paul to Rome; they do not even warn the Roman Jews about Paul by letters. Yet after Paul had asked the Roman governor Festus to be tried before Nero, we would expect his Jewish accusers in Judea to have contacted the Jews of Rome, since they were legally obliged to send a delegation to Rome to participate in

³⁴ In the early 20th century, the famed Bible expositor Alexander MacLaren lamented that — based on the Roman Jews' statement in 28:21 that they had not heard about Paul — this passage of Acts had been called by some "unhistorical" and used to discredit the historical reliability of Luke's narrative. MacLaren was suspicious of the Roman Jews (Acts 28:17-29), and their proclaimed ignorance of Paul and their wish to listen to him. He conjectured that Paul summoned the chiefs of the Jews to ascertain their feelings, and if possible to secure their neutrality in regard to the approaching investigation. The heads of the Roman synagogue, on the surface non-committal, knew a good deal more but took refuge in professing ignorance. They attended Paul's proposed conference so as to carry back to their synagogues all they could to procure his condemnation. See MacLaren 1908:377-379.

his trial.³⁵ Recall that for Paul's trial before Felix in Caesarea, the Jerusalem Jews had gone personally there and hired a lawyer named Tertullus (Acts 24:1-9). Moreover, Paul himself in Acts 28:20 has implied that he is meeting with the leading Jews of Rome in anticipation of his upcoming trial before Nero. Still, his interlocutors are "remarkably uninformed."³⁶ Does the narrator want his readers to be suspicious about the proclaimed ignorance of the Jewish leaders at Rome concerning Paul's trial?

It follows from a close reading of Acts 28:17-29 that the last verse of the story line is very unlikely to be merely an innocuous Western interpolation. In light of the presence of the ominous οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι that reminds the reader of the prior thirteen Jewish attempts against Paul's life, in light of Paul's minatory rebuke of the leading Jews of Rome, in light of the behavior of Jews in previous instances in which Paul taunted them with his Gentile mission, in light of the Western Text's clear tendency to heighten their hostility, in light of their unexpected passivity in 28:29, there are solid reasons to suspect that there is more to this verse than meets the eye. As I intend to show in the next two sections, 28:29 is part of a parallel with the Emmaus scene in the Gospel of Luke and was intentionally inserted to hint at Jewish participation in Paul's trial before Nero.

4. The Analogous Passages Luke 24:10-27 and Acts 28:17-29

Having considered Acts 28:29 from a literary point of view, we move now to philological matters. Two devices commonly used by the author of Luke-Acts are repetition and parallelism.

³⁵ See discussion in Pervo 2009:683-684.

³⁶ See Pervo, *ibid.* These claims of ignorance conflict with the information given in Acts itself. In 18:2, Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla, a Jewish Christian couple who have come to Corinth after they abandoned Rome following Claudius' expulsion of the Jews.

We shall examine repetition first. Throughout the text of Acts, repeated key words or summary statements play an important role, serving as signposts that reiterate theological motifs and separate narrative units, thus guiding readers throughout the story.³⁷ For instance, as discussed in Section 1, the important theological concept of divine necessity which permeates Luke-Acts is regularly hammered into the reader's head by the use of the word "must" (δεῖ).³⁸ As we have also previously discussed, the repeated use of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι serves as a marker of Jewish opposition to Paul.³⁹ Another example of repetition worthy of our notice is that of the verb συζητέω (from which συζήτησις of 28:29 derives), which is found in Acts 6:9 and 9:29. These two verses open and close two consecutive narrative sections in which Paul starts as a persecutor of Christians and ends a persecuted Christian. Acts 6:9 describes the confrontation between Stephen and a group of Greek-speaking Jews who are living in Jerusalem. The narrator introduces in this verse a hint of Paul's presence into the story: "Opposition arose, however, from ...Jews of ... the provinces of Cilicia and Asia — who began to argue with Stephen" (ἀνέστησαν δέ τινες ... ἀπὸ Κιλικίας καὶ Ἀσίας **συζητοῦντες** τῷ Στεφάνῳ). Thus we see Stephen debating against Greek-speaking Jews of Cilicia (Paul of Tarsus' province) and Asia (the place from which many of Paul's future Jewish enemies will spring). One can expect Paul to be among those Jews who are quarrelling with Stephen, given that he appears among those

³⁷ A commonly cited example is the repetition of summary statements stressing the growing strength of the Christian Church. This motif, used to separate individual episodes within the book, is expressed by words such as Ὁ δὲ λόγος τοῦ Κυρίου ἠϋξάνεν (with variations) in Acts 2:37, 6:7, 12:24, 13:49 and 19:20.

³⁸ See Mattill 1975:26-27. For Luke, God's plan is foreordained. The word δεῖ appears 102 times in the New Testament, of which 42 are in Luke-Acts (in contrast to 6 in Mark and 8 in Matt.). About 50% or 20 of the occurrences in Luke-Acts show the radical extent to which, and the parallel ways in which, Jesus and Paul from the beginning are controlled at every turn by God. When we examine every instance of δεῖ — in the sense of "must" — in Luke-Acts, we find that, with the single exception of Judas (Acts 1:16), Luke only applies it to Jesus and Paul.

³⁹ In the words of Daniel Marguerat 1999:224, "à la fin des Actes, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι est le chiffre de l'opposition à l'Évangile". Based on this depiction of the Jews in Acts, Wills 1991:653-654 suggested that Acts was written after the last Jewish rebellion of 135. According to Wills, the author, positioning himself from the perspective of the Roman ruling class, portrays the Jews as troublemakers and Christians as model citizens.

who stone him in Acts 7:58.⁴⁰ In Acts 9:29, soon after his conversion on his way to Damascus, Paul returns to Jerusalem; there, he follows the same path of the fallen Stephen by debating with the same Hellenistic Jews (ἐλάλει τε καὶ **συνεζήτει** πρὸς τοὺς Ἑλληνιστάς). Just as they did before when they faced Stephen, this group of Jews attempts to murder Paul. In Pervo's words, Paul has gone full circle, "from an ally of Stephen's murderers to their most wanted enemy."⁴¹

The second major literary device continuously used in Luke-Acts and often discussed by Lucan scholars is parallelism. In the Greco-Roman world, teachers called this technique *σύνκρισις* and taught it as a basic rhetorical technique.⁴² For example, Plutarch, Luke's contemporary, used this technique to write his famous *Parallel Lives*. Within the literary framework of Luke-Acts, parallelism is used repeatedly to compare the lives of Jesus and Paul.⁴³ For instance, both Jesus and Paul predict their own passions, they both give a final address, they both meet an angry Jewish crowd that demands their death, they both have trials at the Sanhedrin at which agents of the High Priest slap them, and they both have to stand before Roman

⁴⁰ In this quasi-cinematographic scene, the eyes of the reader follow the downward movement of the witnesses' coats as they are being thrown "at the feet of a young man named Saul" (καὶ ἐκβαλόντες ἔξω τῆς πόλεως ἐλιθοβόλουν. καὶ οἱ μάρτυρες ἀπέθεντο τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν παρὰ τοὺς πόδας νεανίου καλουμένου Σαύλου). The motif of "laying down the cloaks" is repeated in 22:20-23 when Jews try to kill Paul at the Jerusalem temple.

⁴¹ See Pervo 2009:247.

⁴² While Luke's mastery of parallelism is undoubtedly one of his greatest strengths as a writer, *σύνκρισις* was not a Lucan invention; as a rhetorical tool it is discussed in ancient educational manuals (see Nicolaus's *Progymnasmata* 9). While Luke's marked preference for symmetry as a rhetorical device is unmistakable, the literary reasons that led him to use parallels so extensively are less obvious. A practical motivation must have been the instructional effectiveness of symmetric passages. Parallels are esthetically pleasing and for that reason they can function not only as connectors but also as mnemonic devices. Indeed, the echoing of previous passages combats the tendency to forget important ideas in a long narrative such as Luke-Acts, providing internal commentary and suggesting additional nuances. See discussion in Chambers 2012:116-118, and references therein.

⁴³ See Pervo 2010:154. Similarly, within Acts, Luke takes great pains to trace a parallel between the missionary activities of Peter and Paul. See Ehrman 2012:161 and Zwiep 2010:166-167.

governors and Herodian kings.⁴⁴ It is also interesting to observe that Acts 28:17-29, the last passage of the book describing Paul's meeting with the Roman Jews, brings to full circle the initial missionary act of the gospel of Luke (verses 4:14-30). In Luke's gospel, Jesus starts his mission by announcing at the synagogue of Nazareth that God's message will be taken to non-Jews. This is a passage that Luke rearranges chronologically from its Markan source to turn it into Jesus' first preaching act. In the local synagogue, Jesus reads from the scriptures (from Isaiah, the prophet quoted by Paul in Acts 28:26-28). Then Jesus rolls up the scroll and utters the famous words "no prophet is accepted in his hometown" (Luke 4:24) as he recalls stories of the prophets Elijah and Elisha and how in time of need they assisted non-Jews rather than Jews. The synagogue listeners become furious and try to kill him. Paul's last missionary speech at Rome (Acts 28:17-29) has similar undertones: Paul preaches to local Roman Jews and announces that, since they will not embrace the Christian gospel, he will take his message to the Gentiles. Yet then, abruptly, the narrative stops. Considering Luke's keen interest in drawing parallels between events in the lives of Jesus and Paul it is rather surprising that he decided not to show Paul's final trial and martyrdom as a mirror episode of Jesus' passion.

As we said in § 3.1, modern scholars have postulated dozens of theories to explain Acts' brusque ending. The issue is primarily theological in nature and does not pertain to us. What I want to demonstrate is that, although Paul's death is missing in Acts, there is a final Jesus/Paul parallel that seems to have escaped the notice of previous scholarship. This overlooked extended parallel can be detected if one compares Acts 28:17-29 with Luke 24:10-27. Table III of Appendix 3.b shows the matching elements of this six-tier parallel. Luke 24:10-27 depicts the

⁴⁴ See analysis in Pervo 2010:154. Pervo highlights the extent to which Luke goes to force symmetry between the "passions" of Jesus in Luke and of Paul in Acts.

famous encounter of Jesus after his resurrection with two disciples on their way to Emmaus.⁴⁵ Acts 28:17-29 has Paul meeting with the Roman Jews at the end the book. This is how the analogy works. (1) To Luke 24:11 (the women testify about Jesus' resurrection; the disciples do not believe them) corresponds Acts 28:24 (Paul testifies about Jesus, some of the Jews do not believe him). Note that these parallel verses contain the only two occurrences of the verbal form ἠπίσταν in Luke-Acts. (2) In Luke 24:15 two of the disciples discuss (συζητεῖν) the recent events; in the contested verse Acts 28:29 the Jews engage in a συζητήσις about Paul's recent words. (3) The eyes of the disciples cannot recognize Jesus (οἱ δὲ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῶν ἐκρατοῦντο τοῦ μὴ ἐπιγνῶναι αὐτόν); the Jewish people cannot see with their eyes (μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς).⁴⁶ (4) The disciples explain to the stranger what happened: Jesus was delivered to death by the chief priests and "our rulers" (παρέδωκαν αὐτόν [Jesus] οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες ἡμῶν); their messianic 'Hope for Israel' has been dashed (ἠλπίζομεν ὅτι αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ μέλλων λυτροῦσθαι τὸν Ἰσραήλ). Paul, in turn, meets with the leading Jews (πρῶτοι Ἰουδαίων) of Rome, after he has been delivered to the Romans by the Jerusalem Jews (παρεδόθην εἰς τὰς χεῖρας τῶν Ῥωμαίων... ἀντιλεγόντων δὲ τῶν Ἰουδαίων) as Agabus had prophesied in Acts 21:10-1.⁴⁷ Yet he has good news; he is bound with a chain because of the "Hope of Israel" (τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ Ἰσραήλ). (5) Jesus rebukes the unbelieving disciples because "they are slow of

⁴⁵ In an interesting article, Goldberg 1995:59-77 proposed a connection between the Emmaus narrative of Luke 24.10-27 and the famous *Testimonium Flavianum* (AJ 18.3.3). According to Goldberg, Josephus and Luke may have used similar or identical sources in composing their passages. If Goldberg is correct, then the literary importance of the Emmaus passage within the Luke-Acts would be even greater than scholars have previously thought.

⁴⁶ Luke 24:16 (matching Acts 28:26-28) takes up the theme of Isaiah 6:9 also found in Luke 8:9 ("though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand"). Cf. Justin (*Dial.* 123.6), who describes with the same words the Jews of his times as unable to grasp Christian gospel (see § 3.6).

⁴⁷ "After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles'" (Τὸν ἄνδρα οὗ ἐστιν ἡ ζώνη αὕτη, οὕτως δῆσουσιν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ παραδώσουσιν εἰς χεῖρας ἐθνῶν).

heart” (βραδεῖς τῆ καρδία). Paul rebukes the unbelieving Jews in very similar terms: “the heart of this people has grown dull” (ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου). (6) Jesus explains to the disciples what was said in the Scriptures concerning himself “from Moses and the Prophets” (ἀπὸ Μωϋσέως καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν προφητῶν). Paul testifies about Jesus “from Moses and the Prophets” (ἀπὸ τε τοῦ νόμου Μωϋσέως καὶ τῶν προφητῶν). Notice that in these parallel scenes, Acts 28:29 plays a key role, and constitutes the punch line of 28:17-29; without it, the six-tier analogy with Luke 24:10-27 is not as forceful.⁴⁸

As with other parallels that link Jesus and Luke within the Luke-Acts narrative unit, the literary relation between Acts 28:17-29 and Luke 24:10-27 has some noticeable unevenness. The sequence of matching sentences is somewhat scrambled; in the Gospel, Jesus’ kerygmatic announcement gives the scene an upbeat ending, whereas Acts’ scene ends negatively with Paul rebuking the unbelieving Jews.⁴⁹ Despite these irregularities, the presence of identical or closely akin words and phrases in the matching elements of the analogy defies any effort to explain it away as purely coincidental. For our purposes, the great benefit of this parallel is that it allows us to determine the function of συζήτησις and to reconsider its translation within verse 28:29.

We should first point out that συζήτησις is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament and a very rare word in general. Its primary meaning is “discussion”. Why introduce in Acts 28:29 a new noun that has never been used before? There are many other words in Luke-Acts that have the broad meaning of “debate-discussion”. For instance, the word ζήτησις, from which

⁴⁸ Needless to say, the parallel also exists in the Alexandrian Text but as a five-tier analogy.

⁴⁹ I will make no pronouncement on the theological purpose of this extended parallel apart from highlighting this obvious contrast. The beginning of the passage in the Gospel of Luke is gloomy, the end is cheery; the disciples, who initially did not believe the women, finally “open their eyes” and “understand the scriptures”. The beginning of the passage in Acts presents a cheerful Paul ready to convert the leading Jews of Rome, yet the end is not upbeat this time: the Jews — as Isaiah predicted — “do not understand the scriptures” and leave his quarters.

συζήτησις derives, does appear elsewhere in Luke-Acts and means much the same thing.⁵⁰ In my view, the presence of the συζήτησις in Acts 28:29 is best explained as an effort to match συζητεῖν in Luke 24:15, the verse in which the Emmaus disciples discuss with each other the recent death of Jesus and what they view as unfulfilled prophecies.⁵¹

With that in mind, let us refine the translation of the word within 28:29. In modern New Testament translations that contain this verse, συζήτησις is translated with the sense of “antagonistic disputation”; for instance, “dispute” (in NASB) or “debate” (in HCSB). Yet as previously discussed, within the context of the passage it does not make sense to assume that the Roman Jews, after Paul’s harsh reprimand, will leave his quarters having a strong disagreement among themselves. Notice that in Luke 24:15, the verse that corresponds to Acts 28:29, the nominalized verb τὸ συζητεῖν (semantically equivalent to the noun συζήτησις) is rendered in English translations as “discussion.” Needless to say, συζήτησις as used in the Emmaus disciples’ discussion of the events of Jesus’ crucifixion is non-antagonistic, and there is no reason to expect συζήτησις as used by the Roman Jews in Acts 28:29 to be any more hostile. If one looks at definitions of συζητέω, the parent verb of συζήτησις, one finds that the verb entails communication within a semantic spectrum of varying forcefulness, from “converse/discuss” to “dispute/debate.”⁵² Therefore, by analogy with Luke 24:15, we should not color negatively the

⁵⁰ There are a few MSS containing Acts 28:29 (noted as “minuscule 104 et pc” in the apparatus criticus of NA27) that read ζήτησις instead of συζήτησις. Likewise there is an interesting variant in Codex Bezae that replaces the ζήτησις of the Acts 15:7 in the Alexandrian Text by συζήτησις. These scribal alterations prove the close semantic resemblance of ζήτησις and συζήτησις in the minds of Koine Greek speakers in antiquity.

⁵¹ If we were to postulate that verse 28:29 was added merely to provide a concluding sentence for Acts 28:17-28 – the usual scholarly explanation for the presence of this verse -- then we would be forced to explain the insertion of the word συζήτησις in this verse as an unplanned choice that fortuitously connected Acts 28:29 with Luke 24:15 within the context of a very complex six-tier analogy.

⁵² The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament of Louw and Nida (1999) separates words into distinct semantic domains. It places συζητέω in Section 33 under the heading “Communcation”; in the subcategory 33.K (Converse, Discuss), συζητέω (33.157) is translated as “talk”; in the subcategory 33.X (Dispute/Debate), συζητέω

discussion of the Roman Jews who left Paul's quarters and imagine some sort of quarrel, but rather translate the verb neutrally and leave the content of their discussion to the reader's imagination. A more accurate translation of Acts 28:29, faithful to the spirit of the sentence and its intended parallel with Luke 24:15, would thus be "After Paul had said these things, the Jews left, conferring intensely with each other."

5. The Double Meaning of Acts 28:29

It must be granted that our refined translation of Acts 28:29 has done little to diminish its perceived banality. Yet as I intend to show next, the noun συζήτησις has a second meaning that gives the verse's seemingly bland statement a much more ominous cast. The rare noun συζήτησις, like several other prefixed verbs and nouns in the New Testament, shares the basic semantic scope of ζήτησις.⁵³ Presumably Luke and his contemporaries sensed a slight difference in meaning between these words, yet such distinctions are no longer accessible to us. Interestingly, ζήτησις and its prefixed compounds have a secondary but not uncommon meaning that appears in judicial contexts, namely "inquiry/investigation". A non-exhaustive search in the

(33.440) is listed as "dispute" (along with its cognates ζήτημα, ζήτησις and ἐκζήτησις). The verb occurs eleven times in the New Testament (in Mark, Luke and Acts). Mark uses it in six instances. The strong meaning "to debate against (a religious rival)" appears in Mark 8:11, 9:14, 9:16 and 12:28 whereas the neutral meaning "to discuss (among your peers) the meaning of an event" is intended in Mark 1:27 and Mark 9:10. Out of the six verses in Mark that contain συζητέω, only Mark 1:27 is preserved in Luke's gospel, in Luke 4:36 which uses συλλαλέω instead of συζητέω when the Jews confer with each other after Jesus' exorcism of the Capernaum demoniac. As discussed above, the other two instances of συζητέω in Acts 6:9 and Acts 9:29 reveal purposeful repetition of the word to open and close a narrative scene.

⁵³ The fondness of ancient Greeks to form (by the addition of prefixes) new verbs (ζητέω → συζητέω) or nouns (ζήτησις → συζήτησις) often puzzles speakers of modern languages. For instance, in Luke-Acts, the verbs δέχομαι, ἀναδέχομαι, ἀποδέχομαι, παραδέχομαι, and ὑποδέχομαι all mean "welcome someone to one's house"; what is more, other New Testament writers also use ἐπιδέχομαι, εἰσδέχομαι and προσδέχομαι with the same meaning. See discussion in Parsons, Culy and Stigall 2010:369 and in section 34.53 of Nida and Louw 1999. Just like the verb δέχομαι and its prefix-formed derivatives, the verb ζητέω and its cognates ἐκζητέω, ἀναζητέω, ἐπιζητέω and συζητέω also participate in this linguistic phenomenon, forming a cluster of words that share a core meaning with minor nuances.

extant literature reveals numerous instances of this judicial usage, several of them in Christian-related writings of the period 100-300 CE.⁵⁴

I will focus here only on the most relevant examples. (1) The word ζήτησις as “legal inquiry”, when found in combination with πολλή, is translated by English-speaking scholars as “strict inquiry”. For instance, D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 8.89.4 reads ζήτησις πολλή ἐγένετο: “A strict inquiry took place” (after it was found that a Vestal Virgin had lost her virginity). Likewise in Plut. *Dem.* 25.6, one reads πολλήν ἐποίησαντο τοῦ πράγματος ζήτησιν: “[The Athenians, furious at Demosthenes] conducted a strict inquiry about the bribery.”⁵⁵ Thus, the πολλή συζήτησις of Acts 28:29, if read independently, could mean not only “much discussion” but also “a strict legal inquiry”. (2) Within Acts itself, Governor Festus, when talking to King Agrippa, refers to the legal investigation of the Jewish charges against Paul as ζήτησις. Indeed, Acts 25:20 reads “I was at a loss how to investigate (ἀπορούμενος δὲ ἐγὼ τὴν περὶ τούτων ζήτησιν) such matters; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges”.⁵⁶ (3) The noun συζήτησις was used in the sense of legal inquiry in the ending of the *Life of Aesop*, a very popular biography, probably written around the time when Acts was composed. At the end of this narrative, Aesop verbally offends the Delphians when he visits their city; hence, the infuriated authorities of Delphi fabricate charges against Aesop, accuse and try him. Although

⁵⁴ See (a) in the classical period (*Dinarchus* 1, 1.8, 1.10 and 1.55); (b) among historians of the Koine period (D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 8.89.4) and among Luke’s contemporaries (Plut. *Dem.* 25.6 and Jos. *AJ* 14.195, 17.62.1 and *BJ.* 7.60.2); (c) in popular literature of the 1st and 2nd century CE (*Charit.* 4.2.8 and *Vita Aes. W.* 142.8); (d) in fragments of papyri that deal with trials such as *POxy.*237 vi7 (ca. 89 CE), *POxy.*97.1 (ca. 115-116 CE) and *P. Fayum* 217 (late 2nd century); (e) among Christian authors (Athenagoras *Leg.* 2.1-5, ca. 175; 2nd century documents preserved ap. Eus. *HE.*4.8.8-9.3 and *HE.* 5.1.14); (f) and within Luke Acts itself (Luke 10:50-51, Acts 18:15 and particularly Acts 25:20).

⁵⁵ See Earnest Cary’s translation of D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 8.89.4 in the 1945 Loeb edition of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the translation of Plut. *Dem.* 25.6 in John Dryden’s 1683 edition of *Plutarch’s Lives*.

⁵⁶ Notice also the use of ἐκζητέω in Luke 11:50-51, which in Louw and Nida 1999 (Section 56.C: Courts and Legal Procedures, Accusation) is listed as “to bring charges against”. Cf. ζητήματα in Acts 18:15.

Aesop is clearly innocent, he is sentenced to die by being thrown from a cliff. In the very last sentence of the book we are told that leading men from Greece came to Delphi to “conduct an investigation” (συζήτησιν ποιησάμενοι) and to punish Aesop’s murderers.⁵⁷

It is worth noticing that *Life of Aesop* offers perhaps the closest linguistic resemblance to the Greek of the New Testament, and it has been proposed that the traditional story of Aesop’s life might have influenced the Gospel writers.⁵⁸ Notice also that the punishment of Aesop (being thrown off a cliff) is reminiscent of what the Jews of Nazareth intend to do with Jesus in Luke 4:30 after his first missionary speech.⁵⁹ We shall never know if the insertion of the rare συζήτησις at the end of Western Acts was influenced by the ending in the *Life of Aesop*. Yet we can certainly tell that Luke-Acts was inspired by its contemporary literary environment. As we shall see in § 3.7, phrases in Paul’s trial scenes of Acts and the recurrent portrayal of Jews as the conniving legal enemies of the apostle have points in contact with the pagan *Acta Alexandrinorum*. These examples serve as another indication that the author (and reviser) of Acts were familiar with common motifs of the non-Christian literature of their period. By the same token, we may presume that popular traditions about the death of Aesop, the unjustly killed

⁵⁷ The idiomatic expression ποιῶμαι + συζήτησιν (“to conduct an inquiry”) used in *Life of Aesop* is also found with slight variations in Plutarch (ποιῶμαι + ζήτησιν, *Dem.* 25.6) and Josephus (ποιῶμαι + ἀναζήτησιν, *BJ.* 7.60.2). Aesop’s biography is extant in two early recensions, Vita G and Vita W; my quote comes from the latter. The date of their composition is not known with accuracy but researchers fit it within the period of New Testament writers (1st century BCE to 2nd century CE). In harmony with the extant textual tradition, *POxy.* XV 1800, a fragmentary papyrus of the late 2nd century CE, briefly addresses the death of Aesop and also states that he was thrown from a cliff. For a critical edition of the Greek texts see Perry 1952:81-107. For a modern translation of *Life of Aesop* see Wills 2006:227-237.

⁵⁸ For a discussion on the importance of *Life of Aesop* as a “Hero Cult Paradigm” and its relevance to the Gospels see Wills 1997:23-50 and Wills 2006:222-237. As to linguistic similarities, Pervo 1998:77-120 remarks that Bauer’s *Lexicon* has 120 references to *Life of Aesop*, indicating its close linguistic kinship to the New Testament. *Ibid.* 81, Pervo notices that some MSS of the W recension of *Life of Aesop* have as a title Διήγησις τοῦ Αἰσώπου. Cf. Luke 1.1 in which the author introduces Luke-Acts as a Διήγησις.

⁵⁹ This passage is unique to Luke’s gospel and historically suspicious, since the closest cliff to Nazareth is more than two miles away; moreover, one would expect stoning as the preferred method of execution.

Greek hero who, just like Paul, was not part of the ruling élite, must have been a known cultural reference to many of Acts' early readers.⁶⁰

So far our philological analysis has shown that Acts 28:29 ends with a word that means not only “discussion” but also “legal inquiry”. Almost any word has multiple connotations, and although one may be primary, the force of the others may also be felt. “Last words are lasting words”, and given that the noun συζήτησις is the final word of the storyline of Western Acts, it was very likely meant to activate memories of judicial trouble in its original readership.⁶¹ An investigation of the literature of Luke's period has revealed that the judicial meaning of συζήτησις, probably murkier for later generations of Christians, was discernible to the early readers of Acts. The ingenuity of Acts 28:29 as a mark of good storytelling does not end there. Further analysis shows that in fact the whole sentence semantically conveys two meanings, a technique that scholars have found in at least seven other passages of Acts.⁶² A detailed

⁶⁰ Cf. the work of Dennis MacDonald on echoes of Homeric epics in the Gospel and Acts. For some examples of his findings, see MacDonald 2006:372-384. Not all of the examples that McDonald posits are persuasive, and his belief in Mark's conscious imitation of Hector's death and burial is too bold. Still, his general insight is no less true. Christian writers in the 1st and 2nd century did not operate in a vacuum, but were very much surrounded by past and present cultural references of the Greco-Roman world which they inevitably absorbed. What is more, for Jewish and Christian writers, these references offered a didactic point of contact with Gentiles when they wanted to transmit their religious views. For instance, Josephus draws an explicit parallel between Moses' parting of waters and the one recorded among the exploits of Alexander the Great (*AJ* 2.347-348).

⁶¹ Recall that Paul's name appears first in Acts at the end of the sentence that describes the stoning of Stephen. In Acts 7.57-59, Σαύλος (Paul's Hebrew name) is purposely placed as the final word of the sentence for maximum effect. As to the emotional impact of ζήτησις and its derivatives, it is worth mentioning that sometimes they also carry the sense of “arrest or search of criminals”. For example, see D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 3.39.4, Jos. *AJ* 17.10.10 and *POxy.* 80.15 (238-244 CE). Among Christian authors this meaning is also observed. According to Eusebius (*HE* 3.33.2) the Greek translation of Trajan's famous decree *conquirendi non sunt*, prohibiting the active search of Christians, was τὸ Χριστιανῶν φύλον μὴ ἐκζητεῖσθαι. See also *Gospel of Peter* 7 (written ca. 150), *Mart. Pol.* 3 and 6, *Mart. Conon* 1, *Mart. Pionii* 3, *ActPl* 14.2 and Eus. *HE* 3.12.1 and 3.32.3-4.

⁶² For a general discussion of stylistic techniques in early Christian writings see Koester 2000:1.109-11. The ancients would have identified the double meaning of συζήτησις in verse 28:29 as an example of *paronomasia*. Some examples from Acts discussed in the scholarly literature are 17:30, 21:28 and 24:3 (Conzelmann 1987: xxxvi), Acts 16:17-18 (Klutz 2004:211) and Acts 19:32 (Pervo 2009:495). Moreover, Given 2001:39-82, in his detailed analysis of the famous Areopagus speech of Paul in Acts 17.16-34, has shown that it strings together three consecutive double entendres (Acts 17:22, 17:23 and 17:30). Outside Luke-Acts, two commonly cited examples of

explanation of how the *paronomasia* of Acts 28:29 works linguistically is given in Appendix 3.c. I summarize the results here. Although at first sight 28:29 seems an ordinary Luke-Acts sentence, apart from the choice of the rare noun συζήτησις as the final word, the verse contains other atypical features such as the three-word separation between the adjective πολλήν and the noun συζήτησιν and the use of the idiomatic expression ἔχω+ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς + noun to convey the actions of the Jews in the sentence. The construction ἔχω+ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς + noun appears five times elsewhere in the New Testament (Mark 4:17 and 9:50, John 5:42 and 6:53 and 2 Cor 1:9). It carries the meaning “to have within themselves”, “to have within their souls”, and by extension “to think about”. Hence, apart from its primary meaning, Acts 28:29 might also be translated as “After Paul said these things, the Jews left thinking about a strict legal inquiry”. In other words, the verse slyly implicates that the leading Jews of Rome somehow acted against Paul in his last and fateful trial.

6. The Early Reception of Acts and Verse 28:29

On first consideration, the purposeful insertion of a semantically ambiguous sentence at the end of the storyline might seem unusual, but it is very much in the spirit of Luke-Acts, faithful to the literary techniques that the Western Text preserves and to the anti-Judaic motif that it amplifies.⁶³ Granted, the *paronomasia* that we have teased out is in no way transparent but requires attentive reading. This is not unexpected. Like the oracles of Delphi in classical times,

this literary device are (a) John 3:3-4, the exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus that contains the word ἄνωθεν (“from above” but also “again”), and (b) Phm 1:10-12, in which Paul plays with the name meaning of the slave Onesimus (“useful”). Cf. Theophilus (“lover of God”), the addressee of Luke-Acts, and Peter (“stone”) in Matt. 16:18. It is interesting to observe that the use of double entendres, termed εὐτραπέλεια, in conversations among Christians is chastised in Eph. 5:3-4. Outside the New Testament, the complex bilingual double entendre used by Suetonius, Luke’s contemporary, in *Nero* 33, playing on the similarity of *morari* (“linger”) and μωρός (“fool”), is worth of notice.

⁶³ In fact, mine is not even the first modern hypothesis that postulates the presence of a semantically ambiguous sentence at the end of a biblical book. See Fullerton 1930:320-374 on the double entendre that ends the book of Job.

a clever, effective and memorable *paronomasia* should not be too obvious but on the contrary craftily masked within the sentence. It should require the reader to exert some effort to decipher it. Presumably, among the intended readership of Luke-Acts there were many able to appreciate more naturally the semantic ambiguity of Acts 28:29 and the others that modern scholars have detected and that we mentioned in the previous section.

On the other hand, it is unlikely that the dual meaning of the verse remained easily accessible to Christian readers in the 3rd and 4th centuries, especially considering Acts' reception history, which I examine next. In general, our ability as readers to sense the linguistic subtleties in a text from the past diminishes rapidly and in proportion to our chronological and cultural distance from the original writing. During most of the 2nd century, Acts went through what some scholars term a "tunnel period". It did not enjoy canonical approval and was less known than Luke's Gospel; the scribes who copied it took liberties in handling the text, mixing Alexandrian and Western readings and thus further corrupting the Western version. It is not until 180 that we get the first unambiguous quotes from Acts. They appear in a book against heresies written by Irenaeus, who found Acts' narrative useful to buttress his theory of apostolic succession and thus rescued the book from potential oblivion.⁶⁴

Furthermore, when by the end of the 2nd century Acts finally began to gain wider canonical acceptance, there was already in existence another account of Paul's death, the *Martyrdom of Paul*, that explained in colorful detail how the apostle had died. This traditional

⁶⁴ See discussion in Mount 2001:20-24. Mount argues that the Gospel and Acts had different histories of reception and that Irenaeus brought Acts "from complete obscurity to a position of importance" (ibid. 20). Mount restates the same observation elsewhere (ibid. 23, 37 and 68). Likewise Strange 1992:16 and 56, quoting Haenchen, indicates that, in the first decades that followed its composition, Acts went through a "tunnel period". Strange does not mention the Muratorian Canon (traditionally dated ca. 170-200 CE), which lists Acts among the New Testament books and is roughly contemporaneous with Irenaeus' writings.

story (which reached its final written form probably ca. 150) is included nowadays as the last chapter of the apocryphal *Acts of Paul*. I shall examine it in greater detail in § 4.4 but will summarize its major traits here. In this brief narrative, Paul arrives in Rome as a free man; he makes converts and resurrects and converts Patroclus, Nero's cupbearer. This angers the Emperor, who in consequence orders the persecution of Christians and Paul's decapitation. After his death, Paul appears to Nero in his court and foretells the divine punishment that will fall on the Emperor. The version of the events presented in the *Martyrdom of Paul* became very rapidly the most popular and preferred tradition of Paul's martyrdom, as it vividly fleshed out the historical information about Paul's final days that was missing in Acts. Tertullian, ca. 200, who is otherwise our earliest reference to Paul's manner of death, draws from this tradition (*Scorp.* 15.2-4).⁶⁵

As far as we can tell, from the late 2nd century onwards, in the imagination of Christians the role played in Acts by the Jews as the apostle's antagonists was eclipsed by their collective memory of Nero, the beast of Rev. 13:18, who had killed not only Paul but also Peter and countless other Christians in the first persecution.⁶⁶ Notice that the tradition preserved in *The Martyrdom of Paul*, apart from being written from an entirely different perspective, presents irreconcilable information if compared to Acts. In canonical Acts, Jews persecute Paul everywhere, try to kill him on multiple occasions and bring charges against him before provincial tribunals (Acts 18, 24-26); it is because of their legal harassment that Paul reaches

⁶⁵ "Paul is beheaded (*Paulus distrahitur*) ... in Rome he springs to life again ennobled by martyrdom (*martyrii renascitur generositate*)". See discussion in Snyder 2013: 32-33. As we shall see in § 5.4, we have textual witnesses that prove that tradition that the Jews of Rome had conspired against Paul survived for several centuries; even so, only one of the many later martyrdom accounts written in the patristic period emphasized Paul's meeting with the leading Jews of Rome as depicted in canonical Acts.

⁶⁶ Accounts of Paul's death in late antiquity were also influenced by the so-called "catholic tradition" that linked the presence and martyrdom in Rome of Paul and Peter. We have already seen the earliest written attestations of this version of Paul's final days in our discussion of *1 Clem.* 5.1-7 and of *Ignatius Rom.* 4.1-3 in § 2.4.

Rome in chains to face yet another trial. In the *Martyrdom of Paul*, Paul arrives in Rome as a free man; neither Jews nor prior trials are ever mentioned. Rather, it is Nero who persecutes Paul and the other Roman Christians after the apostle resurrects his cupbearer. Acts is totally silent about the Neronian persecution and, in contrast to prior emperors, never mentions Nero by name.⁶⁷ As discussed above, although Acts foreshadows Paul's suffering, trial and death (and even, in its last Western verse, the coming judicial intrigues against Paul on the part of the Roman Jews), all this is done with elegant restraint, whereas in *The Martyrdom of Paul* Nero's role in condemning the apostle to death is described in full detail, including a depiction of the apostle's beheading and his post-mortem appearance before the Emperor. It is in great part the vividness of the *Martyrdom of Paul* that contributed to the popularity of the anti-Neronian tradition of Paul's death, turning Acts' anti-Judaic tradition into a second-rank source of information for Paul's final years.⁶⁸

Apart from the existence of a rival, very different tradition, the problematic manuscript transmission of Acts also conspired against the appreciation of the subtle anti-Judaic double entendre of verse 28:29. The Great Persecution of Christians of the early 4th century meant the destruction of many biblical manuscripts, especially of Greek MSS in the eastern part of the Roman Empire where persecution was more severe and lasted longer. Consequently, some of the older text types, such as the Western version of Acts, survived only in translations based on earlier Greek texts, such as the Old Latin (*Vetus Latina*) and Old Syriac. Oftentimes it is only in these versions that nowadays we find Acts' anti-Judaic western variants (particularly from

⁶⁷ On Luke's decision never to refer to Nero by name in Acts see § 1.3. In § 3.7 we shall see that in Acts 25:26 the Western Text implies that Nero is a just ruler.

⁶⁸ In writing "anti-Neronian", I use Snyder's characterization of the *Martyrdom of Paul* as indicating a shift from Acts' presentation of Jews as Paul's historical opponents to Nero. See Snyder 2013:11 and 59-63.

chapter 22 to the end) that deal with Paul.⁶⁹ Aside from the material loss of the earliest MSS, Western Acts' transmission also suffered from textual corruption. As copies of Acts were passed down and copied, MSS went through a hybridization process that mixed Alexandrian and Western readings and resulted by the middle of the 4th century in a recension termed by scholars "the Byzantine Text" of Acts. This form of the text prevailed over the others in the manuscript tradition and, having been transmitted through the Middle Ages, it became the *textus receptus* of the first printed editions of Acts.⁷⁰ Although the *textus receptus* incorporated Acts 28:29, as a composite form of the text it presented a diluted version of the anti-Judaic Western variants, which, by repeatedly heightening Jewish hostility towards Paul, make the reader receptive to the ominous cast of verse 28:29.

On top of Acts' tortuous textual transmission, even after the book gained canonical acceptance in the late 2nd century, Acts' readership throughout antiquity appears to have been rather limited in comparison to the Gospel of Luke, which was being transmitted separately.⁷¹ Indeed, when John Chrysostom wrote his *Homilies on Acts* at the end of the 4th century, he started his treatise by stating that he was about to "unveil a hidden treasure", since many of his

⁶⁹ We are fortunate to have these versions since Codex Bezae, our earliest and most complete Greek witness of the Western version, ends at verse 22:29, thus lacking all the crucial anti-Judaic variants of chapters 23-28 in which Paul is involved. For a discussion of the effects of the Great Persecution on early text types see Koester 2000:2.20-21.

⁷⁰ It is important to mention that scholars dealing with other books of the New Testament have likewise identified two early textual strands, a restrained Alexandrian version and a more expansive Western version, which were superseded eventually by the Byzantine text. However, in none of these other books is the number and extent of the Western expansions as significant as it is in Acts. It was not until the 19th century that these different text-types were reconstructed by scholars. See detailed discussion in Metzger and Ehrman 2005:272-295.

⁷¹ On the early circulation of New Testament texts see Parker 2008:1-10. See also Theissen 1999:267. Acts was detached from Luke and circulated with letters of the apostles, i.e. the seven "Catholic Epistles" (James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1-3 John, and Jude) that are construed as addressing the concerns of the universal church. According to Theissen, the rationale for this editorial decision was as follows: "acts of the apostles" were to be found in Acts while "letters of the Apostles" were to be found in the Catholic Epistles.

contemporaries knew little about the book or worse were completely unaware of its existence.⁷² Presumably, for those interested in the biographical details of Paul's life, Acts had little to offer. They already knew from the *Martyrdom of Paul* and its literary offspring of the patristic period that Nero had been the apostle's nemesis. Christians of late antiquity had no need to exercise their historical fancy trying to tease out from Acts' abrupt ending what could have happened to Paul after his meeting with the leading Jews of Rome.

Despite the fact that Acts' reception and transmission obscured the anti-Judaic Western ending, it is worth noticing that there are many textual variants of Acts 28:29 that demonstrate that some early readers of the book construed the meaning of the verse much less benignly than modern scholars.⁷³ As already discussed, in some MSS (minuscule 104 and a few more) we find ζήτησιν as a variant reading of συζήτησιν; based on this single change, it is impossible to tell whether scribes recognized the verse's double entendre. At any rate, it seems as if they were somewhat bothered by having the unusual noun συζήτησιν as the last word of the Acts 28:17-29 and changed it to the more familiar and semantically equivalent ζήτησιν. A more interesting variant reading of Acts 28:29 is found in Chrysostom's *Homilies on Acts*. While examining the last scene of the storyline, the Church Father commented on the state of mind of the leading Jews of Rome who had just listened to Paul's harsh reprimand in Acts 28:26-28. As he analyzed the effect of Paul's speech (28.16-28) on the departing Jews, Chrysostom wrote that Paul had aroused *again* Jewish jealousy towards the Gentiles (εἶτα πάλιν τὸν ζῆλον κατ' αὐτῶν κινεῖ τὸν

⁷² Chrysostom *Hom. Act.* 55 [NPNF 11:1]. The relative obscurity of Acts continued in the Middle Ages. For instance, it was considerably less popular than the verse history of the apostles known as *De Actibus Apostolorum* composed by the 6th-century poet Arator who used canonical Acts as a source but also narrated the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul.

⁷³ Textual criticism serves two purposes: not only to reconstruct as far as possible the earliest attainable text, but also to shed light on the social history of the church by examining textual variants. See discussion in Epp 2003:111-146 and Ehrman 2013b:803-830.

ἐξ ἔθνῶν). Then he quoted Acts 28:29, replacing πολλήν with πάλιν and thus making a strong connection between Paul’s rebuke and the departure of his “jealous” Jewish guests: “And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, conferring *again* with each other” (Καὶ ταῦτα αὐτοῦ εἰπόντος, ἀπῆλθον οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, πάλιν ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς συζήτησιν).⁷⁴

Even more useful than the Greek textual variants are the Latin versions. In general, these translations function as a window into how early Christian stories were read and interpreted beyond their original *milieux*. In our case, Latin versions of Acts 28:29 give us a peak into the mind of scribes who handled MSS containing this Western verse and tried to make sense of it.⁷⁵

The Vulgate translation of our verse is as follows: *Et cum haec dixisset, exierunt ab eo Iudaei, multam habentes inter se quaestionem*. Just as (συ)ζήτησις in the original Greek, the Latin *quaestio* will be our operative word as we examine the emotional response that reading 28:29 could have elicited among Latin-speaking Christians in the 2nd century. This noun, derived from the verb *quaero* (“to seek”), is regularly used in the Vulgate to translate ζήτησις in the sense of “discussion” or “debate”. Yet *quaestio* has also various legal meanings and is thus also used to translate ζήτησις and related nouns when they appear in judicial contexts (cf. Acts

⁷⁴ Chrysostom *Hom. Act.* 55 [NPNF 11:325]. Chrysostom was likely particularly sensitive to the Jewish rejection of Paul’s message. While he was a presbyter in Antioch (386–387), he wrote eight homilies denouncing the Jews.

⁷⁵ For an analysis of Latin versions see Burton 2013:167–200 and more particularly for Acts, Boismard and Lamouille 1984:1.37–67. The date of the earliest Latin translation of the New Testament books is unknown; the earliest dateable reference (1 Tim. 6.16) is found in the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*, martyred in Africa ca. 180. More evidence of Latin translations (*Vetus Latina*) appear in Tertullians’ loose citations at the beginning of the 3rd century and then, on much firmer ground, in Cyprian’s works (ca. 250). It is believed that for the Vulgate Jerome used already existing translations; as to Acts, he incorporated numerous Western readings that he tried to realign to the Alexandrian text. The early *Vetus Latina* versions survived in the Middle Ages, sometimes intact. For instance, Codex Gigas (dated about 1231) preserves almost verbatim the Western Text of Acts available to Lucifer of Cagliari in the mid-4th century and likely goes back to a lost archetype likely known to Tertullian. Yet, more often than not, western readings survived grafted into Vulgate translations, with which they inevitably exchanged readings. Consequently, all extant Vulgate MSS differ from each other, having a varying number of western readings (some dating from the late 2nd century) either from Jerome’s own recension or from other sources.

18:15 and 25:20).⁷⁶ The Lewis and Short *Latin Dictionary* defines *quaestio* as “public judicial investigation, examination by torture, a criminal inquiry, inquisition.” In classical Latin, the idiomatic expression *habere quaestionem* — like the *multam habentes quaestionem* of 28:29 — is found with the meaning of “conducting an investigation” and “putting someone to the question”.⁷⁷ Tacitus, ca. 115, uses *quaestio* in the sense of examination under torture (cf. *Ann.* 15.57, 14.60, 14.62) and Suetonius, writing ca. 120, tells us that Emperor Caligula enjoyed carrying out capital examinations by torture in front of his dinner guests (*Cal.* 32.1: *seriae quaestiones per tormenta habebantur*). As the last passage indicates, tortures were often applied to those investigated. Hence, by extension, *quaestiones* started to mean “tortures performed in the context of a judicial examination”. For instance, Pliny (ca. 111) writes *per tormenta quaerere* to describe his investigation of the charges brought against the Christians of his province.⁷⁸ The word *quaestio* also appears in the apologetic literature of the late 2nd and early 3rd century, in discussion of legal investigations against Christians which Minucius Felix (*Oct.* 28) calls *perversa quaestio*. For his part, Tertullian (*Apol.* 2.10 and 2.14) complains that unlike what happened in legal inquiries (*quaestiones*) against regular criminals, in Christian trials, their faith itself was considered a crime.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Notice that from the Latin *quaero*, the English language has formed “quest” (in the sense of “search”) and other words related to judicial investigations (e.g., “inquest”, “inquiry” and witnesses “under questioning”).

⁷⁷ See for instance Caes. *Gal.* 6.19 and *Gal.* 6.44 for *habere quaestionem* in the sense of ποιῶμαι + ζητήσιν. See also Cic. *Clu.* 181-182.

⁷⁸ See Plin. *Ep.* 10.96.8 (cf. *ibid.* 10.96.1). Likewise Sulpicius Severus (ca. 400) uses *quaestio* with that meaning in his account of the Neronian persecution: *Igitur [Nero] vertit invidiam in Christianos, actaeque in innoxios crudelissimae quaestiones* (*Chronica* 2.29). *Ibid.*, 2.31, he writes that Trajan persecuted Christians *cum tormentis et quaestionibus*. For a more detailed discussion of Sulpicius’ *Chronica* see § 5.1.

⁷⁹ Other words used in the apologetic literature are *quaestio*’s root *quaero* (“to investigate”) and words belonging to the same family but with a different prefix (*requiro*, *inquirō* and *conquirō* and their related nouns). Cf. the already discussed Greek counterparts ζητέω, ἐκζητέω, ἀναζητέω, ἐπιζητέω.

It follows that *quaestio* and its cognates, as part of official legal language, were often heard in Christian trials of the late 2nd century, the period in which the first Latin translations of Acts must have appeared. Thus we might expect that *quaestio* resonated among the early Latin-speaking readers of Acts with the same evocative power that (συ)ζήτησις had among Christian Greek speakers. All in all, *quaestio* was not a neutral word; presumably images of examination under torture passed across the minds of some readers when they heard the word in isolation.

There are even more revealing textual variants in Latin versions that seem to preserve primitive readings that are lost or poorly attested in Greek. I shall mention two of these variants that do not use *quaestio*. For instance, there are two MSS of Acts 28:29 that read *Et cum non essent intelligentes, egressi sunt Iudes multa secum conquirentes*.⁸⁰ Here, the translator has used the Latin verb *con-qui-ro*, the linguistic equivalent of συν-ζήτεω, rather than a noun. The first part of the variant, *Et cum non essent intelligentes*, is back-translated to its original Greek by Boismard and Lamouille 1984:2.194 as μη συνιέντες, which takes up one of the motifs of Paul's previous reprimand to the Jews as being unable to understand the scriptures (μη συνήτε in Acts 28:26). Note also the usage of *secum* instead of *inter se*; not "with each other" (reciprocal) but "with themselves" (reflexive). A complete retroversion of the verse yields μη συνιέντες, ἐξῆλθον οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι πολλὰ μεθ' ἑαυτῶν συζητοῦντες. This is reminiscent of the Western anti-Judaic expansion at Acts 18:12, when the Jews of Corinth decide to bring charges against Paul and take him to Gallio's tribunal: "having talked together among themselves against Paul (συνλαλήσαντες μεθ' ἑαυτῶν ἐπὶ τὸν Παύλον) and having laid hands upon him, they brought him to the governor". Finally, there are three medieval MSS that contain the most illuminating

⁸⁰ This variant appears in the 9th century Codices Cavensis and Toletanus, two "mixed texts" representative of the Spanish type of Vulgate text into which Western readings of the Vetus Latina were incorporated. These MSS often preserve Western variants shared by Old Latin witnesses (gig and p) that go back to the African Latin text of Cyprian and Tertullian (see Boismard and Lamouille 1984:1.37-67).

textual variant concerning the ability of Acts' readers to detect the *paronomasia* of verse 28:29. In these MSS συζήτησις is rendered as *inquisitio*, thus turning the insinuation of *quaestio* into an unambiguous legal investigation.⁸¹

7. The Larger Context of Acts' Anti-Judaic Tradition

In previous sections we have remarked Acts' portrayal of the Jews as Paul's relentless enemies; unbelieving Jews are responsible for the apostle's suffering and persecutions in Greece and Asia Minor, they bring false charges against him that result in trials at Jerusalem and Caesarea, they malign Paul in front of Roman governors and force him to appeal to Nero. The Western version of Acts further heightens the motif of Jewish antagonism towards Paul and ends by inserting verse 28:29, craftily implying that Paul will eventually succumb to Jewish judicial schemes. In this section, I intend to show that Acts' anti-Judaic bias regarding Paul's legal problems must not be regarded as a special feature of the book but should rather be placed within the context of the anti-Judaic polemics of 2nd century Christian and pagan literature.

First, notice the resemblance between Acts' portrayal of the Jews of Paul's era and that found in Christian authors who wrote later in the 2nd century. For example, Justin Martyr (*fl.* 140-165) accuses the Jews of being hard-hearted and unable to use their eyes to see and their ears to hear (*Dial.* 123.6), just as Paul does in his final reprimand of Acts 28:26-28 when he quotes from Isaiah 6.9-10. Justin also states that the Jews curse Christians in their synagogues (*Dial.* 16.4, 95.4 and 96.2), persecute and murder them (*Dial.* 95.4 and 133.6) and have even

⁸¹ *Par. Lat.* 202, 342 and 16262, three 13th century medieval MSS housed in the Bibliothèque National de France. See Wordsworth-White Vulgate, 2nd edition, 1905 for minor variants among MSS.

chosen and sent emissaries all over the world to malign Christians (*Dial.* 108.3).⁸² Elsewhere (1 *Apol.* 38), Justin Martyr states that in the Jewish war of 132-135 the Jewish leader of the rebellion, Bar Kokhba, gave orders to punish Christians severely unless they denied Jesus and blasphemed him (1 *Apol.* 38). This last Jewish uprising was roundly crushed, and the Jews were expelled *en masse* from their homeland by Hadrian.⁸³

It seems likely that Jewish opposition to the Christian faith and their repeated defeats when revolting against the Roman Empire colored the apologists' conceptualization of historical events in the 1st century and their proclivity to blame the Jews for the suffering of first generation Christians while diverting culpability from the Roman authorities who had actually carried out the punishments.⁸⁴ A commonly cited example of this phenomenon is Melito of Sardis (*fl.* 150-180), who in a liturgical document known as the *Peri Pascha* virulently blamed the Jews for executing Jesus. Ca. 170, Melito composed an *Apology* addressed to Emperor Marcus Aurelius of which fragments were preserved by Eusebius (*HE* 4.26.9). In it, observing that among past emperors only Nero and Domitian had persecuted Christians, he exculpated these rulers by arguing that they had not acted by force of imperial will but "yielding to the persuasion of malicious slanderers" (ἀναπεισθέντες ὑπό τινων βασκανῶν ἀνθρώπων), by which he certainly meant Jews.⁸⁵ Interestingly, in the early chapters of the *Acts of John*, the Jews deflect Domitian's attention to them by sending a letter to the Emperor, who then starts to persecute the Christians.⁸⁶

⁸² In this line of thought, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, whose earliest literary form dates probably from ca. 160, presents Polycarp as a model Christian martyr, victim like Jesus of "an unholy alliance of pagans and Jews." See Frend 1967:216.

⁸³ According to Theissen 1999:262, Jews began to be perceived as a "defeated people" and this contributed to Marcion's success in Christian circles when he decided to separate the new faith from the religion of the Old Testament.

⁸⁴ See discussion in Kannaday: 2004:216-22 and Ehrman 2013a:331-332.

⁸⁵ An analysis of Melito's choice of words is useful. The verb ἀναπειθω means "to urge by evil persuasion". Interestingly, in its only occurrence in the New Testament, the verb is used by the Jews of Corinth in Acts 18:13,

In line with Melito's stance, Tertullian, ca. 200, explicitly accused the Jews of having caused with their calumnies the ill-fame of Christians (*infamia*) in the period between Tiberius and Vespasian (*Adv. Iud.* 13.26).⁸⁷ For Tertullian, this first period of Christian history had begun with Jesus' crucifixion at the instigation of Jews during Tiberius' reign and ended when Vespasian "vanquished the Jews in war" (*Adv. Iud.* 8.16). Like other Christians, he considered the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE a well-deserved punishment, since after Jesus' death the apostles had also suffered at the hands of Jews (*ipsi a Iudaeis insequentibus multa perpassi*) until at last they "had sowed the seed of martyrdom" in Rome under Nero's reign (*Apol.* 21.25).⁸⁸ This overall tendency to stress Jewish culpability while lessening Roman responsibility for Christian suffering in the first historical period of the faith also affected gospel narratives. Thus, the author of the *Gospel of Peter* – written ca. 125-150 – exculpated Pontius Pilate, portraying him as a sympathetic governor and friend of Joseph of Arimathea who was overpowered by the conniving Jerusalem Jewish leaders. Tertullian (*Apol.* 21.24) even went a step further, depicting

who take Paul to the tribunal of Governor Gallio and accuse him of persuading people against the law (*παρὰ τὸν νόμον ἀναπεῖθει οὗτος τοὺς ἀνθρώπους*). Βασκανία is a legal term, a rather malicious type of slander caused by jealousy (cf. Ign. *Rom.* 4.3 and 4.7). Cf. the use of βλασφημία in Rev. 2.9: "I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews (*τὴν βλασφημίαν ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους*) and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." For an analysis of the implications of Melito's accusation concerning Christian historical understanding of the Neronian persecution see Canfield 1913:52.

⁸⁶ See Frend 1967:453. The first seventeen chapters of the 2nd century *Acts of John* are found in a late Greek text but the tradition underlying the narrative must be earlier.

⁸⁷ Cf. Tert. *Ad Nat.* 14.1-2 and *Apol.* 7.3, which repeat the theme of Jews as slanderers of Christians. A century later, Eusebius (*HE* 3.5.1-2) took up the same theme and insisted that the Jews, in addition to their bold crime against Jesus (*πρὸς τῷ κατ' αὐτοῦ τολμήματι*) had repeatedly plotted against the apostles (*τῶν τε λοιπῶν ἀποστόλων μυρία εἰς θάνατον ἐπιβεβουλευμένων*).

⁸⁸ In his presentation of historical events, Tertullian deliberately narrows time gaps so as to link together the Jewish persecution of the apostles (by whom he must mean primarily Peter and Paul), their martyrdom in Rome under Nero and the destruction of Jerusalem under Vespasian. This "cause-and-effect" mode of narrative strings together events that did not occur in a short time frame but rather encompassed several years. It is also found in the late 4th century writings of the Pseudo-Hegesippus and Sulpicius Severus. It also helps to explain why both Eusebius and Jerome in their respective *Chronica* (see § 5.1) placed the martyrdoms of Paul and Peter at the very end of Nero's reign. Evidently, they wanted to link historically Nero's persecution of 64 to the Emperor's downfall in June 68.

Pilate as “a Christian already in his conscience” (*ipse iam pro sua conscientia Christianus*) who sent a report of the post-resurrection events to Emperor Tiberius.⁸⁹

The above discussion furnishes a context for Acts’ refusal to refer to Nero by name and its insistence that it was the Jews who wanted Paul’s death while Roman officers were, as a rule, sympathetic to him. This motif is further accentuated in the Western Text. In fact, there is a variant that discreetly includes Nero in the whitewashing of Roman authorities with regard to Paul’s legal troubles. When Governor Festus discusses Paul’s case with King Agrippa (Acts 25:13-27), he insists that in his opinion the malicious accusations of the Jews against Paul are groundless. Yet Paul will have to go to Rome to face Caesar because the apostle has requested a trial before the Emperor. After Acts 25:26, the Western Text expands Festus’ speech making the governor tell Agrippa that the Jews had shouted “that I should hand him over (*παραδῶ*) to them for punishment without any defense (*ἀναπολόγητον*); but I could not hand him over because of the orders that we have from the Emperor (*διὰ τὰς ἐντολὰς ἃς ἔχομεν παρὰ τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ*).”⁹⁰ This Western variant not only accentuates Jewish hostility to Paul but also takes pains to handle Roman officials favorably. Festus is shown as a fair-minded governor; for him, Paul is innocent, and he sees no reason to yield to Jewish intimidation and hand the apostle over to them without defense (cf. Acts 28:17-20). Likewise, it is implied that Nero is a just ruler who has issued orders opposing the bypassing of due process expected by Paul’s Jewish enemies, who

⁸⁹ Decades earlier, Justin Martyr summoned the apocryphal *Acts of Pilate* in defense of Christian apologetic interests (1 *Apol.* 35 and 48).

⁹⁰ See Metzger 1994:437 for translation and Greek text. The Western text continues by saying that once the Jews got to Caesarea “they cried out that [Paul] should be put to death” (*ἐβόων ἵνα ἀρθῆ ἐκ τῆς ζωῆς*). The *Vetus Latina* reading of this variant in Vg (D) (the book of Armagh) reads: *ut traderem eum morti inaccusabilem non potui tradere eum propter mandata quae habemus cessaris si quis autem accusat eum sequatur cessaream ubi custoditur qui cum convenissent clamaverunt tollite eum de vita*. Philologically, it is worthy of notice that *mandata* and the unusual *inaccusabilem* coincide with Tertullian’s word choice while describing Roman trials against Christians. Cf. *principum mandata* (to which proconsuls like Festus were bound) in *Apol.* 2.14 and the non-classical *inaccusatus* in *Apol.* 49.3 and *Ad. Nat.* 2.4. See Boismard and Lamouille 1984:2.173 for the Latin text of the Western variants.

keep demanding his death.⁹¹ Presumably, it is for this reason that the Western Text stresses in verse 25:21 that Paul not only appealed to Caesar but also *asked* (ἤτήσατο) to be kept in custody for the decision of the Emperor. The implication is that Paul distrusted his Jewish foes and felt safer under Nero's legal protection.

In the above passage, the description of Jewish leaders putting pressure upon a Roman governor so as to get Paul killed strikes many modern readers as suspiciously unhistorical. Yet this motif is regularly observed in Luke-Acts, in the parallel trials of Jesus in the Gospel and Paul in Acts. We have seen that the *Gospel of Peter* further exaggerates this theme in its depiction of the relationship between Pilate and the Jerusalem Jews: moreover, Melito goes so far as to say that Nero punished the Christians under the sway of Jewish defamers.

Interestingly, this portrayal of Jews as scheming slanderers who somehow can persuade even emperors to attack their enemies has a counterpart in the the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, a relevant example of contemporary pagan literature. This collection of texts recounts the trials and executions of noble Alexandrians who faced legal troubles in defense of their city and died noble deaths. Often likened to Christian martyr records, some of the trial scenes depict the Greek Alexandrians, the heroes of the story, outmaneuvered by their arch-enemies, the Alexandrian Jews. Just like the trials of Jesus and Paul in Luke-Acts, the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, although they use the contemporary judicial language, read more like dramatized renderings of the actual trials than copies of their official records. These *Acta*, presumably created shortly

⁹¹ In all likelihood, Nero's alleged *mandata* in this variant reflects – anachronistically – the legal situation of Christians after Trajan's famous rescript of 111 that prohibited violence against them without a proper trial. On the word *mandata* see footnote 90 above.

after the events, encompass almost two centuries, from Caligula to Commodus (37-192 CE).⁹² This is how some of the *Acta* paint the influence of Jews over Roman emperors and their courts. In the trial scene of the *Acta Isidori*, set ca. 53, the accused Alexandrian protagonist calls the Emperor Claudius "a cast-off son of the Jewess Salome" and in the trial scene of *Acta Hermaisci*, set ca. 114, Trajan is caricatured as thoroughly dominated by his wife Pompeia Plotina. It is through her influence that both Trajan and his senatorial council ("filled with impious Jews") are biased in favor of the Jews. While the historical veracity of these claims about Trajan's imperial court must be considered, at the very least, highly doubtful, the *Acta* likely represent what the Greek-speaking nobles said about the ability of Jews to influence the verdict of trials.

In Luke-Acts, we find narrative elements that echo this popular portrayal of Jews. Plotina's presumed sway over Trajan is reminiscent of Drusilla's role in Acts 24:24-25, heightened in the Western text according to which Governor Felix imprisoned Paul to please his Jewish wife.⁹³ The same type of literary consonance applies to the rhetorical themes that appear in Acts' trial scenes. Consider for instance the contrast between *μανία* and *σωφροσύνη* in Acts 26:24-25. Festus shouts: "You are mad, Paul. Your great learning has driven you mad." Paul replies: "I am not mad (*Οὐ μαίνομαι*), most excellent Festus. What I am saying is true and makes sense (*ἀληθείας καὶ σωφροσύνης ῥήματα ἀποφθέγγομαι*)." Now compare this exchange in the *Acta Appiani*. The emperor: "Appian, we are accustomed to bring to their senses (*σωφρονίζειν*) those who are mad (*μαίνομένους*) or have lost their senses . . ." Appian: ". . . I am neither mad

⁹² The *Acta Alexandrinorum* have survived in fragmentary papyri. Their points of contact with Christian literature are discussed in Musurillo 1949:555-564 and Harker 2008:141-173.

⁹³ Cf. the forged correspondence between Paul and Seneca (§ 5.3), in which Poppea Sabina, Nero's consort, is portrayed as a philosemitic empress hostile to Paul. See also the claim in Matt. 27:19 that Pilate's wife had attempted to influence the verdict against Jesus. Luke-Acts presents other similarities with the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, such as the shouts of the Jewish crowd that punctuate the passion narratives of Jesus (Luke 23:20-3) and Paul (Acts 22:22-23). See Harker 2008:158.

(οὐτε μείνομαι) nor have I lost my senses.” The commonality in language in these two passages suggests that both authors were drawing ideas from familiar themes of Hellenistic trial scenes. All in all, while it is impossible to tell whether the author of Luke-Acts knew about the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, the points of contact between Acts and this type of contemporary popular literature sheds light on the historical context in which the story was written. We can now understand much better Acts’ fondness for putting Paul, the hero of the story, in trial scenes and its insistence on portraying the Jews as his legal foes.⁹⁴

In conclusion, in this chapter we have studied the ending of Acts, the earliest extant narrative offering extensive biographical details about Paul. Acts was likely written ca. 95-120, within living memory of the apostle’s death; moreover, its author, by using the first person plural, implies that he was a participant in some episodes of the apostle’s life up to his arrival at Rome. Yet for reasons that scholars continue to argue about, the narrative suddenly stops soon after Paul reaches Rome; although the author had foreshadowed it in previous chapters, he omits a description of Paul’s long-awaited trial before the emperor and the circumstances of his death. Given that Acts repeatedly depicts the Jews as Paul’s unrelenting persecutors, some scholars have concluded that the reader is left to infer that the apostle fell victim of Jewish intrigue. The Western version of Acts heightens this suspicion. This form of the text was likely produced no later than 150 by a reviser who was loyal to the language, vocabulary and style of the original and probably fancied himself a faithful continuator of Luke. At the same time, he heightened Jewish antagonism against Paul in various passages and added a final verse to the story line, Acts

⁹⁴ Trial literature appears to have been “a genuinely popular empire-wide literary form.” See discussion in Harker 2008:159-164. We find no direct references to the recovered fragments of the *Acta Alexandrinorum* in the writings of 2nd century Christians. Yet, we can safely assume that these writers were familiar with popular motifs of contemporary culture, including the resoluteness in trials displayed by glorified Greek heroes. For instance, Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.*, 4.56.1-2) urges Christians to take profit from the tales of pagan “martyrs”. See Musurillo 1949:563.

28:29, which describes the leading Jews of Rome leaving Paul's quarters and conferring with each other. Although considered a bland interpolation by scholars, a detailed philological analysis shows that Acts 28:29 has enormous significance for the ending of the book. Indeed, by adding verse 28:29 the Western Text makes more transparent the implications of the original, as it slyly insinuates that Paul's demise resulted from Jewish legal maneuvering against him. The operative word in the sentence is συζήτησις, which means not only "discussion" but also "judicial inquiry"; moreover the idiomatic expression ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς implies that the leading Jews of Rome left "thinking about Paul's trial". Contemporary pagan and Christian literature and textual variants in Greek manuscripts and Latin versions support this reading. Interestingly, συζήτησις, in the sense of "judicial investigation", appears in the ending of the *Life of Aesop*, a popular biography that has been shown to have points of contact with early Christian literature. The anti-Judaic tradition of Paul's death found in Acts should be interpreted in the context of the anti-Judaic climate of the 2nd century, of which Christian apologists provide ample evidence. Similarly, the portrayal of Jews as conniving slanderers who defeat their foes by judicial influence is also found in the pagan *Acta Alexandrinorum*, whose trial scenes show commonalities with Acts' depiction of Paul's legal troubles.⁹⁵ Because of Acts' problematic transmission, relative obscurity and late canonicity, the anti-Judaic tradition of Paul's death was quickly eclipsed by a very different martyrdom tradition that presented Nero, rather than the Jews, as Paul's arch-enemy.⁹⁶ We shall examine this anti-Neronian story in the next chapter.

⁹⁵ Interestingly, the 4th century *Martyrdom of Luke* depicts the author of Acts as a victim of conniving Jews allied with pagans to denounce him before Nero. See text and discussion in Pérès and Piovanelli 2005:2.963-978.

⁹⁶ This does not mean that the anti-Judaic tradition of Paul's death completely vanished. As we shall study in § 5.4, it survived in two late accounts of Paul's martyrdom in which the Roman Jews are shown plotting against the apostle in order to denounce him before Nero and get rid of him using the emperor's power.

CHAPTER 4: THE MARTYR CULT AND ANTI-NERONIAN TRADITIONS

In Chapter 1 we analyzed the historical context in which the first traditions about Paul's final days must have originated; in Chapter 2 we listed the eight earliest references to Paul's death (in fact, merely chance remarks); in Chapter 3 we examined the book of Acts, which insinuates that Paul fell victim of Jewish intrigue but passes over in silence the circumstances of the apostle's death. Finally, in this chapter we shall study an actual account of Paul's final days, the *Martyrdom of Paul*. This is the first narrative on the subject that has survived and, based on the extant evidence, it appears to have been accepted by Christian writers as *the* story of Paul's martyrdom for over two hundred years after its composition ca. 150.¹ As we shall see in detail in § 4.4, the textual transmission of the *Martyrdom of Paul* is complicated. Nowadays it is published as the last chapter of *Acts of Paul*, but scholars believe that in antiquity it circulated independently and was used for liturgical purposes. This is unsurprising considering that Christians were accustomed to recounting stories at the shrines of the martyrs.² It is generally agreed that the habit of visiting martyr sites started among non-elite Christians and that it thus pertains to the practices of what MacMullen has called "popular Christianity", i.e. the beliefs and

¹ Both Eusebius (*HE* 2.25) and Lactantius (*de Mort. Pers.* 2), born in the mid-3rd century and writing after Constantine's triumph, appear to draw information from the *Martyrdom of Paul* when referring to Paul's manner of death. The next surviving accounts of Paul's death were written no earlier than the late 4th century.

² We have evidence that pilgrims read from related texts while visiting shrines. See discussion in Eastman 2011:81-82. Apart from stories and places of cult, the other two main components in the cult of the martyrs were rituals and objects. See *ibid.*, 1-11. As we shall see in Chapter 5, both rituals and objects (relics) are either alluded to or depicted in martyrdom narratives about Paul of the patristic period.

rituals of the vast majority of Christians who did not leave us literary documents.³ Thus, before we examine the *Martyrdom of Paul*, it behooves us to understand the religious background and interests of the people who read, heard and transmitted it. This analysis will also help us to contextualize some peculiar features of the story such as its relative shortness, patched-up nature and legend-like narrative elements.⁴ With that in mind, in § 4.1 I try to reconstruct the social profile of the early devotees of “Paul, the Martyr”; in § 4.2 I recreate the ambiance of their gatherings at his martyr shrines in Rome, which is the context in which the earliest attested stories about Paul’s death would have taken shape; in § 4.3 I study cross cultural evidence provided by the early devotees of the Argentinean folk-saint Difunta Correa, whose story and veneration was transmitted only by word of mouth for about eighty years; last, in § 4.4, I analyze the underlying sources of the *Martyrdom of Paul*.

1. Paul, a Roman Martyr

Although the evidence regarding the early Christians who commemorated Paul’s death is scarce, it is nonetheless sufficient to form an imaginative picture of the material conditions under which they lived. Hence, in the first section of this chapter I shall attempt to reconstruct the early development of the veneration of Paul *qua* martyr, by analogy with what we know about the early devotees of Peter’s alleged grave at the Vatican Necropolis. Next, I will analyze how the Christian Roman leadership gradually became involved in the apostles’ martyr cult until it

³ See MacMullen’s 2009 book *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200-400*. Unlike our knowledge about the faith of bishops and intellectuals (which can be gathered from written sources), our sources for the faith of non-elite Christians are more limited (archeological remains or chance remarks found in the texts of literary Christians).

⁴ Regarding the length of the *Martyrdom of Paul*, notice that the Passion of Jesus as narrated in the Gospel of Mark (from Mark 14:1 to the end) is twice as long. Likewise, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, an account whose first literary form (see Hartog 2015:178-180) was produced probably not much later than the *Martyrdom of Paul*, is about 2.5 times longer. Finally, the Pseudo-Linus and Pseudo-Marcellus – two later accounts of Paul’s death to be studied in Chapter 5 – are between 2.5 and 4.5 times longer.

took administrative control of it. I will refer back to this review in § 5.4 when we examine later martyrdom accounts and their relationship to places associated with Paul in Rome.

As discussed in § 2.4, the Roman presbyter Gaius (Eus. *HE* 2.25.7), ca. 200 CE, in his *Dialogue* against the Montanist Proclus stated that he could show his Asian rival the shrines (τρόπαια) of the two great apostles who had laid the foundations of the Roman church, Peter's in the Vatican and Paul's on the Ostian way (ἐπὶ τὴν ὁδὸν τὴν Ὠστίαν). Presumably Christians from the East coming to Rome had already started visiting Paul's shrine decades before Gaius offered his services as a tourist guide.⁵ Indeed, one of the few things that we know with relative certainty about the early Jesus movement is that there were many Christians who travelled a lot. The *Didache* (chaps. 11-13), written ca. 100, has detailed instructions on the proper way to receive Christians coming from out of town; additionally, ca. 195-215, we have concrete proof of pilgrimage to Rome on the part of eastern Christians such as Origen of Alexandria and Abercius; the latter, a bishop of Phrygia and admirer of Paul, went to Rome (ca. 200) and died before returning home.⁶

By analogy with contemporary pagan travelers (cf. Epict. *Disc.* 3.7.1 and Apul. *Met.* 2.1), we may surmise that Christian sightseeing in Rome in the period 100-250 likely involved paying a visit to holy sites, among which the shrine of Paul on the Ostian Road must have been a great

⁵ The site of Paul's shrine is discussed later in this section. As probable visitors to his alleged tomb in Rome, apart from Valentinians, Marcionites and proto-orthodox leaders like Polycarp, we can think of anonymous non-Roman Christians who held the apostle in high esteem, for instance, people such as the Scillitan Martyrs (ca. 180 CE), who in their own *Acta* are said to have carried Paul's letters to their own execution and quoted from 1 Tim. 6:16 (see Musurillo 1972:86-89 and discussion in Eastman 2015:xviii-xix). As to Roman Christian leaders, one suspects that bringing to the fore the ties of Paul to their city could sometimes be of help in doctrinal disputes about the apostle. For instance, elsewhere in the *Dialogue*, Gaius discussed Paul's letters (Jerome *De Vir. Illustr.* c.59).

⁶ See discussion in Birch 1998:23, Snyder 2003: 247-249 and Thonemann 2012:257-282. Origen himself stated in one of his writings that he went to the Eternal City "desiring to see the most ancient church of Rome" (apud Eus. *HE* 6.14.10). Information on Abercius comes from his own epitaph in Hieropolis, probably the earliest Christian inscription. In the legible parts of the epitaph, written in flowery dactylic hexameters, Abercius says that the "Holy Shepherd" (Jesus) sent him to Rome and talks of the apostle Paul as "his companion".

attraction. In the 320s Constantine built churches on top of the shrines of both Peter and Paul. This was likely a political move, but also a response to a growing number of pilgrims (cf. Eus. *Theophania* 4.7). Later, ca. 380-405, the Constantinian Basilica of Saint Paul was renovated and expanded under the Theodosians, and a few decades later Leo the Great (440-461) altered the area around Paul's tomb, raising the floor and thus creating additional space for privileged burials near the tomb.⁷ The prestige of the basilica continued to grow, and by the reign of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604), it had become a place of awe and reverence for travelers from outside Rome.

Despite its renown in late antiquity, Paul's martyr-site had very humble beginnings. Paul's grave was located in a pagan necropolis along the Ostian Road, about two miles south of the city walls (see location in Appendix 4.a).⁸ The grave was in a low-lying area irregularly enclosed by steep hills and by the Tiber River; initially a quarry, by the 1st century it had become an area for burial grounds surrounded by farmland.⁹ The necropolis was public property and included *columbaria* (niches in walls for cremation urns), sarcophagi and more modest tombs. In general, the graves of the people buried there, freedmen and slaves, are indicative of low social status. Paul's funerary monument was probably built ca. 145-160 at a time when the

⁷ In excavations performed in 1959 at Saint Paul's Basilica, the burials of the father and wife of Pope Felix III (483-492) were discovered. See Eastman 2011:48. See § 5.5 for a discussion of pilgrimage to the basilica in the Middle Ages and other 20th century archeological discoveries.

⁸ Appendix 4.a (taken from Eastman 2011:16) shows the geographical location of the four most important cultic centers in Rome discussed in this dissertation. These are: (a) Peter's grave at the Vatican Necropolis, (b) Paul's grave on the Ostian Road, (c) the *Memoria Apostolorum* on the Appian Road in honor of both apostles and (d) Aquae Salviae, the alleged location of Paul's martyrdom (to be discussed in § 5.4).

⁹ The ancient Romans made a practice of having their cemeteries built *extra urbem*. This was done primarily for religious and sanitary reasons. Despite its distance from the city, we have data allowing us to conjecture that, occasionally, some Christians must have carried out their daily activities in the proximity of Paul's shrine. Lampe (2003:45-46), based on his reading of the *Shepherd* of Hermas, infers Christian presence along the Via Portuensis (that ran *extra urbem*, parallel to the Ostian Road, on the other bank of the River Tiber). Moreover, the Ostian Road connected Rome to Ostia, where in the late 2nd century there were already some Christians (cf. *Octavius* of Minucius Felix). Presumably Christians traveling between these two cities could have stopped at Paul's burial site.

necropolis was still under development; around the shrine there probably was a paved area surrounding and isolating the monument that served as a gathering place for devotees of the apostle. This burial site lasted till the early decades of the fourth century, when it was enclosed by the Constantinian basilica.¹⁰

Given the general modesty of the graves surrounding Paul's shrine and its distance from the city, it is sensible to assume that, except on occasional visits of Christian leaders from outside Rome, regular visitors to the martyr site (i.e. his early devotees) were humble folks.¹¹ Although we have no direct evidence to support our conjecture, we can work by analogy. Indeed, we can learn more about the social status of Paul's early devotees by making inferences from what has been discovered at the site of Peter's presumed grave, located under the Vatican in another pagan necropolis that was excavated in the 1940s. During these excavations, archeologists found the shrine in honor of Peter to which Gaius had referred ca. 200 CE. What follows is a brief

¹⁰ Modern scholars have inferred the date of construction, size and form of Paul's shrine from the very scanty archeological evidence and by comparison with Peter's *aedicula* at the Vatican (see below). Unlike Peter's Vatican site, opportunities for more careful archeological observations under Paul's Basilica were lost after the church burned in 1823 and excavations were poorly performed. See Brandenburg 2011:351-382 and Bucarelli 2011:219-245; Nicola Camerlenghi has written a lively reconstruction of the beginnings of Paul's burial site in Chapter 1 of a still unpublished book about the history of Saint Paul's Basilica (his manuscript, which he kindly shared with me, is provisionally entitled 'Biography of a Basilica'). Camerlenghi estimates that the ground level of Paul's original burial was about five meters below the transept of the modern basilica. Perhaps the earliest depiction of the location of Paul's martyrdom is found in the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus († 359 CE), which presents the scene of the apostle's execution. The reeds behind Paul probably represent the marshy area *extra urbem* where Paul's martyrdom was traditionally believed to have happened.

¹¹ The material poverty of these early devotees should not come as a surprise. Cf. the story of Jesus' grandnephews (Eus. *HE* 3.20.1-7) being brought to Domitian's court and dismissed by the Emperor, who looked down on them due to their low economic status. Although the story is likely fictional, it probably involves real relatives of Jesus who by the end of the 1st century supported themselves by working a small piece of land with their hands (see Bauckham 1990 for a study on the family of Jesus). As to the relative modesty of Paul's shrine, it is worth noticing that the tombstones of the mid-3rd century Christian martyrs Cornelius and Novatian were also inconspicuous and surrounded by other ordinary tombs (see Green 2010:185 and Février 1996:110). Regarding the early phase of Paul's martyr site, an interesting analogy can be established with Mormonism (the religious movement that R. Stark (1996) used as a modern parallel to trace the demographic growth of early Christianity). Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church, was killed in Nauvoo, Illinois in 1844. To avoid desecration, his corpse was secretly buried and was only transferred to the Smith Family cemetery in the late 1920s. It is only after the 1950s, and in a gradual process, that Nauvoo became a place of historical tourism for members of the Mormon Church. Note also that Smith's tombstone in Nauvoo (which by 2010 counted only 1,149 inhabitants) is discreet, despite the fact that Mormonism has more than 15,000,000 members worldwide and has a majestic temple in Salt Lake City.

reconstruction of historical developments at this site from the early 2nd century till ca. 324 CE when the Constantinian basilica began to be built.¹² Following Lampe (2003:104-116), my focus will be on what the archeological evidence tells us about the first devotees of Peter's martyr cult and the degree of involvement of the Christian leadership at Rome in the administration of this site.

Sometime in the early decades of the 2nd century, Christians started to venerate a modest grave under the open sky located in the Vatican close to the circus of Nero. We know this with certainty because the excavators found graves clustered around the revered grave.¹³ Four of them are dated earlier than the mid-2nd century and clearly belonged to poor people. In the poorest grave, the body was laid in a bare hole in the ground and brick tiles were laid out on top of it. Later in the 2nd century, the newer graves appearing around the venerated grave are indicative of — in Lampe's words — “a small social advancement.”¹⁴ Parallel to these developments, the land around Peter's alleged burial site, starting ca. 120, began to be systematically divided and sold in relatively quick stages. A necropolis came into being. Ca. 150 the Christian site was already surrounded by pagan mausoleums. About 160 CE, the pagans who owned the adjacent burial sites built a *clivus* (a ramp with stairs) as an entrance to their mausoleums. During the same construction phase they decided to erect a wall to shut off this

¹² The construction of the Constantinian basilica of Saint Peter was done so as to ensure that the *aedicula* would be encased directly under the apse of the church. This required considerable work and the large-scale removal of soil and debris from the Vatican hill. The enormous effort and expense can only mean that the builders were convinced that the *aedicula* was an old funerary monument in honor of Peter. Needless to say, the bibliography on the excavation of the Vatican Necropolis is very large. Of notice are the early studies of Toynbee and Perkins 1956 and Guarducci 1960. See more recently Lampe 2003:104-116, Lampe 2015: 273-320 and Barnes 2010:397-413.

¹³ This is likely the earliest example of the Christian fondness for *sepultura ad sanctos*. Cf. Green 2010:188 for extant epigraphical evidence of this custom. For instance, a Christian named Serpentius bought a *loculus* from the *fossor* Quintus near the crypt of St. Cornelius (martyred in 253 CE). The inscription reads *ad sanctum Cornelium*.

¹⁴ It is interesting to observe that one of the graves has a libation pipe, a pagan element that the Christian devotees of Peter adopted for their own graves.

entrance way to the outside world. This wall cut directly across Peter's grave; thus, presumably as a concession to the Christians, the pagan owners of the mausoleums made a recess on the wall to protect the grave and allowed Peter's devotees to build an *aedicula* (shrine) into the wall itself. The *aedicula* was a rather simple "second-rank" monument: a horizontal travertine tablet, supported at the front by two white marble columns and an upper niche in the wall.¹⁵ Facing the shrine there was a small (7 × 4 meters) courtyard where people could gather. As previously discussed, the very scanty archeological evidence of Paul's shrine suggests an open area for visitors of similar proportions.

What does the archeological evidence tell us about the earliest devotees of Peter's martyr cult (and by extension Paul's) in the period 100-200 CE? Notice that Peter's *aedicula*, our earliest surviving piece of Christian material evidence, dates from the mid-2nd century, a fairly well-documented period of Christianity at Rome to which the evidence in the Vatican site can be related.¹⁶ Two questions naturally arise. Why did Peter's devotees not buy the land near the venerated grave to maintain the whole site for themselves? Did they not anticipate the growth of the pagan burial sites? Fortunately we have a ballpark idea of the cost of land and funerary monuments in the necropolis in the first half of the 2nd century. Located less than 80 meters away from Peter's burial site, an inscription on the tomb of Gaius Popilius Heracla informs us that the deceased left 6,000 sesterces to his heirs to build him a sepulcher. As scholars frequently mention, Marcion, ca. 140, made a donation of 200,000 sesterces to the church in Rome (see Tert. *De Praesc.* 30). Yet the church returned to him this considerable gift in its

¹⁵ Architecturally, the *aedicula* has often been compared to the tomb of Sabinus Taurius (dated around 150 CE) at the necropolis of Isola Sacra in Ostia. See Toynbee and Perkins 1956:162-163.

¹⁶ As previously discussed, within the decades 140-165 we know of these developments in Rome: the missionary activity of Marcion and Valentinus, the visit of Polycarp and the stay (and execution) of Justin Martyr.

entirety when he was expelled due to doctrinal differences ca. 144. Apart from shedding light on Marcion's impressive wealth, this anecdote tells us that the Christian leadership at Rome was able to gather, if needed, significant sums of money (cf. evidence for cash collections for the needy described in Justin 1 *Apol.* 67). So, clearly, the leadership of the Roman Church ca. 160 was in a position to build a statelier funerary monument for Peter than the surviving *aedicula*. Yet for reasons that we discuss below, they either did not help monetarily the early devotees of Peter, or if they did, their aid was minimal in proportion to their financial means.¹⁷

This situation does not seem to have changed significantly even after Gaius (ca. 200) cited the shrines of Peter and Paul as points of pride of the Roman church. In the 3rd century, Peter's *aedicula* was partially clad in marble and the flooring of the courtyard decorated with mosaics. In addition, to alleviate the pressure caused by the shrine on the wall, two rough buttressing side walls of unequal thickness were added perpendicular to it. Apart from those changes and improvements, the martyr site as a whole remained modest in comparison to its neighboring pagan mausoleums in the Vatican necropolis. According to Brandenburg, the structural evidence under the Basilica of St. Paul is similar to that found at the Vatican, so the mid-2nd century shrine of Paul probably also remained more or less in the same state until it was enclosed by its 4th century Constantinian basilica.¹⁸

Why did 2nd and 3rd century Christians not decorate these funerary monuments more lavishly? One could speculate that they did not wish to bring attention to themselves by

¹⁷ See also discussion in Lampe 2003:115, who cites *The Shepherd of Hermas* (*Sim.* 9.20; 8.91) as evidence that well-to-do Christians in Rome were reluctant to help monetarily the poor in the community.

¹⁸ See Brandenburg 2011:351-382. If one reads the words found in Eus. *HE* 2.25.5 literally ("their names are preserved in [their] cemeteries"), then it follows that the names of the apostles had been added to their shrines sometime before the beginning of the 4th century. See discussion in Bucarelli 2011:220.

conspicuously venerating the grave of the apostles who, according to tradition, had been condemned as criminals. Yet as Lampe (2003:115) correctly pointed out, it is extremely unlikely that pagans would have cared about this fact more than a century after the events. In my view, several factors may have contributed to the relative lack of involvement of the Roman Christian leaders in the early stages of the martyr cult of the apostles. First, simple demographic considerations (cf. Appendix 1.a) suggest that for a long period of time the venerated graves would not have attracted a large number of devotees. After the Neronian persecution, the Christian community in Rome likely remained relatively small up to the first half of the 2nd century; it is only in the period 150-200, when the shrines were built, that the Christian community at Rome grew to reach substantial numbers, probably from 1,300 to 7,000 members. Another important factor that probably delayed the full blossoming of the martyr cult of the apostles in Rome was that even in the late 2nd century there were still elite Christians who had not given up their expectation of an imminent return of Christ. For those who believed that the end of times was at hand, attending to the graves of Peter and Paul would have seemed of lesser importance than personally preparing for the *Parousia*.¹⁹

All in all, the archeological evidence at the Vatican Necropolis firmly suggests that, for many decades, those who revered the alleged grave of Peter were lower-class individuals.

Considering the location of Paul's shrine — in a pagan necropolis for humble folks surrounded

¹⁹ Note that the leadership at Rome ca. 170-195 was initially sympathetic to the Montanists' intense focus on Jesus' second coming (Tert. *Adv. Prax.* 1). Cf. our discussion in § 1.3; we have evidence for strong *Parousia* expectations throughout the period 50-200. Based on Paul's letters, we know that Christians of the apostolic generation were convinced that the *Parousia* would take place during their lifetimes. The apocalyptic literature also indicates that many Christians of the period 90-130 held this expectation. In the mid-2nd century, Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 30-31), who was at Rome while the shrines of Peter and Paul were being built, warns non-believers about the impending judgement at the *Parousia*. In the same writing (*Dial.* 100) he refers to Peter, highlighting his importance as the apostle who recognized that Jesus was the son of God. We shall never know whether Justin Martyr ever visited Peter's *aedicula* at Rome. At any rate, we can say that there is no evidence in his works of interest in the devotion of martyr graves. Two generations later, Tertullian, although he stresses the importance of Peter and Paul as Roman martyrs (cf. § 2.4), still thinks that he is living in the end of times (*De Pud.* 1)

by farmland, two miles south of the city — the social conditions at his martyr site must have been similar. As we shall see in the next section, the faith of the early devotees of the apostles is best understood as a spontaneous manifestation of *Volksreligion*.²⁰ The devotees seem to have been influenced by the Greco-Roman practices of hero cult, which they adapted to the new Christian religion (see discussion in the next section). Probably this practice was outside the ritualistic scope of most of their contemporary elite Christians. The formal involvement of the leaders of the Roman Church in the martyr cult would have needed an ideological reason, yet “Christian martyrdom” as a theological concept appears to have developed only ca. 140-160.²¹ Hence, the institutionalization of the martyr cult was likely a slow process that materialized after several decades. Notice that although the presbyter Gaius mentioned the tombs of Peter and Paul as points of pride, neither Zephyrinus (198-217 CE), the pope under whom Gaius served, nor any of the other 3rd-century popes (Urbanus, Anterus, etc.) were buried *ad sanctos apostolos* (next to the tombs of Peter and Paul). Instead, their mortal remains were housed in the Crypt of the Popes in the Catacomb of St. Callixtus that can still be visited today. It is only after the construction of the 4th-century basilicas that well-to-do leading Christians became interested in *sepultura ad apostolos*.²²

²⁰ In § 4.2, we shall also examine the concomitant issue of whether early Church authorities approved or not the veneration of graves.

²¹ Cf. Barnes 2010:12: “No Christian who died for his faith before the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161) was or could be commemorated as a martyr because the concept did not exist yet.” Barnes (ibid, 14) cites the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (ca. 157) as the first extant writing that uses μαρτυρέω in the traditional Christian sense. See Snyder 2003:13 regarding the study of early Christian material evidence within the context of *Volksreligion* and also my comparison with the cult of Difunta Correa in § 4.3.

²² A famous example is Junius Bassus, the prefect of Rome, who died in 359 CE and was buried in proximity to Peter’s grave. We have already mentioned his sarcophagus as one of the earliest sources of iconography regarding the scene of Paul’s martyrdom. The attitude towards burial next to martyrs was quite different among non-elite Christians (see MacMullen 2009:51-68 for data from North Africa). Even local and obscure martyrs appear to have been magnets for *sepultura ad sanctos* at an earlier stage. For instance, in Tipasa, in the African province of

As to the direct participation of the Roman Christian leadership in the martyr cult of Peter and Paul, this seems to have started in the second half of the 3rd century. It happened in the context of important urban developments in the catacombs that resulted in the building of a new gathering place for the devotees of the apostles. The catacombs of San Sebastiano and San Callixtus on the Via Appia were the first underground cemeteries owned by the Roman Church. In our sources their initial construction and administration is attributed to Callixtus, a deacon of Zephyrinus who succeeded him as pope. These cemeteries had expanded from a preexisting pozzolan quarry.²³ At first they contained only *loculi* (horizontal cavities carved in the wall), but about 235 CE *cubicula* (burial rooms) also started to be built. Managing these ever-growing underground cemeteries evidently served to strengthen episcopal authority in the city, solidifying and centralizing the administrative machinery of the church. Moreover, after the short-lived persecutions of Decius (250) and Valerian (258) that killed several high-ranking Christians in the city, the leaders of Roman Christianity seem to have remained unmolested until the persecution of Diocletian in the early 4th century.

In Rome, the number of Christians may have grown from about 37,000 in 250 to perhaps as many as 200,000 by 300 CE (see Appendix 1.a).²⁴ The interest of the church in the devotion

Mauretania Caesariensis, Christians wanted to be buried closed to the tomb of St. Salsa, a girl believed to have been martyred in the early 4th century.

²³ *Ad catacumbas* means “near the hollows”. It is only in medieval times that the word “catacomb” started to be used for all underground Christian cemeteries. For a lively and learned discussion of the early Christian catacombs see Green 2010:170-206.

²⁴ As hypothesized by Stark 1996:89-90, the demographic growth in the period 260-300 may have been favored by a lower mortality rate among Christians (due to basic care) during the plague of 250-270. We shall never know how accurate our population estimates are, but as discussed in Appendix 1.a, they concur with our impressionistic historical observations. During Constantine’s reign, a basilica was built to accommodate the needs of the martyr cult of St. Lawrence, a deacon martyred during the Valerian persecution of 258. As Green 2010:164-165 points out, Constantine was likely responding to the popularity of the martyr cult of Lawrence rather than creating it. At any rate, this development, among others, is indicative that Christians were an important fraction of the population at Rome in the early 4th century and that they spontaneously participated in the veneration of martyrs.

of martyrs grew concomitantly. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Pope Fabian (236-250) appointed subdeacons “to faithfully gather the deeds of the martyrs in their entirety”. We cannot check the veracity of this information, yet it seems to reflect the spirit of the times. We know that Cyprian, bishop of Carthage and Fabian’s contemporary, encouraged Christians to set down in writing the dates on which martyrs were killed in order to facilitate their commemoration (*Ep.* 36.2) and in reference to Celerinus, a Christian who had been imprisoned, he lists his older family members who had been martyred before, starting with his grandmother Celerina (*Ep.* 33.3). As to the cult of Peter and Paul, we know with certainty that starting from at least 258 Christians in Rome began to commemorate the martyrdom of both apostles every June 29th at the Catacomb of San Sebastiano on the Appian Road.²⁵ This development is but the materialization of the “catholic tradition” (cf. § 2.4), the belief accepted by both Roman and non-Roman Christians that Peter and Paul had been jointly the founders of the Roman Church, had preached together in the city and had been martyred under Nero at the same time.

The site of this joint martyr cultic center at the catacombs of San Sebastiano was excavated by Paul Styger during the First World War.²⁶ The excavators found a *triclia*, a 23 × 18 meter structure that included a paved courtyard and a dining room with benches along three

²⁵ We have archeological, epigraphical and literary evidence for this development. The famous Calendar of Philocalus of the year 354 contains an entry that informs us that by 258, apart from their respective martyr-sites at the Vatican and the Ostian Road, the Roman Church was now commemorating Peter and Paul jointly on the Appian Road. The entry, transmitted in an incomplete form, can be reconstructed based on the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* as *III. Kal(endas) Iu(ias) Petri in <Vaticano et Petri et Pauli> ad Catacumbas Tusco et Basso cons(ulibus) et Pauli Ost<i>ense* (see Barnes 2010:29-30). In the Calendar of 354, this information is found in a deposition of bishops and of martyrs (compiled in 336) that probably reflects “attempts of the Roman Church in the middle of the third century to organize internally and construct an official, uniform view of the past” (see Salzman 1990:43).

²⁶ For an in-depth analysis of the cult of Paul and Peter on the Appian Road (the *Memoria Apostolorum*), including discussion of previous scholarship and the interpretation of the archeological and epigraphical evidence, see Eastman 2011:71-113.

walls.²⁷ One of these walls was covered with crudely carved graffiti invoking the apostles. After the construction of the *triclia*, this place became known by Christians in the city as the *Memoria Apostolorum*. While this 3rd-century *memoria* attests to the increasing involvement of the Roman Christian leadership in the veneration of Peter and Paul, it was not until the second half of the next century that the popes, particularly from Damasus (366-386) onwards, formally took control of the ceremonial and commemorative aspects of the cult of martyrs. Among the many epigrams that Damasus attached to the walls of martyr graves, perhaps the most well-known is the inscription that he left at the *memoria* of Peter and Paul at San Sebastiano.

*Hic habitasse prius sanctos cognoscere debes,
 Nomina quisque Petri pariter Paulique requiris.
 Discipulos Oriens misit, quod sponte fatemur.
 Sanguinis ob meritum Christumque per astra secuti,
 Aetherios petiere sinus regnaque piorum.
 Roma suos potius meruit defendere cives.
 Haec Damasus vestras referat nova sidera laudes!*²⁸

Damasus' poem is an official declaration of the association of Paul and Peter with Roman Christianity, a claim meant to elevate by proxy the position of the pope, the bishop of Rome, *vis à vis* ecclesiastical authorities elsewhere. Note that it was a full three centuries after the deaths

²⁷ The word *triclia* was coined by Paul Styger, the main excavator at San Sebastiano during World War I. Although derived from "triclinium," *triclia* is not a real word in either Latin or Greek. Yet, it has become the standard term to refer to the banquet hall in the Catacombs and is found everywhere in the literature. See discussion in Eastman 2011:72.

²⁸ "Here the saints abided previously. You ought to know this, whoever you are, you who seek equally the names of Peter and Paul. The East sent the disciples, which we acknowledge freely. On account of the merit of their blood and having followed Christ through the stars, they have traveled to the bosom of heaven and the kingdom of the righteous. Rome capably deserved to watch over its own citizens. Damasus records these things for your praise." See Latin text, translation and discussion of the significance of Damasus' epigram in Eastman 2011:98-107. In the 19th century, scholars hypothesized that in 258 the bodies of Peter and Paul had been transferred to the *memoria* on the Appian Road and that Damasus' epigram referred to this event. The solution to this problem is beyond the scope of our study, which focuses primarily on the formation of traditions rather than on their historicity. That said, in my view, Eastman has skillfully demonstrated that the intended meaning of *hic*, the first Latin word in the epigram, is not that Peter and Paul had been at one point "here" in San Sebastiano, but that they had lived and died in Rome.

of the two most famed apostles during the reign of Nero that Christian leaders at Rome finally took full control of their veneration at their three historical martyrs sites (at the Vatican for Peter, on the Ostian Road for Paul and jointly at San Sebastiano). This was the result of a long historical process, aided by the popes' recognition that the widespread acceptance by non-Roman Christians of Peter and Paul as founders and martyrs of the Roman Church could elevate their ecclesiastical authority and give them an edge in theological disputes.

In summary, in this section we have prepared the ground for our study of the 2nd-century *Martyrdom of Paul* and derivative narratives that were composed during the patristic period. Based on the scarce archeological evidence at the Basilica of Saint Paul on the Ostian Road and extrapolating from the findings of the shrine of Peter at the Vatican Necropolis, we have reconstructed the developments of the early cult of Paul. No later than the mid-2nd century, Paul was venerated at a shrine located along the Ostian Road in a pagan necropolis, two miles south of the city walls, which served primarily the funerary needs of the poor. His cult – just as the cult of other pre-Constantinian martyrs – started as the religious expression of rank-and-file Christians. It must hence be considered within the context of what MacMullen has called “popular Christianity,” as opposed to the practices of the élite minority who wrote all the texts that have survived.²⁹ The interest of the Christian leadership in the cult appeared slowly and late, only accelerating after the shrine was enclosed by a basilica in the 320s. We have also discussed developments at the joint *Memoria Apostolorum* of Peter and Paul at San Sebastiano on the Appian Road (see location in Appendix 4.a). By the late 4th century, the popes had gained full

²⁹ See MacMullen (2009:86) for a discussion of the devotion of early Christians for their martyrs. “To recognize the virtue and power in a martyr didn’t require any official act... They were Marcellinus and Peter the exorcist, or Urbanus the bishop [Pope from 222 until 230], or the martyr Quirinus. Piety born in a private setting could thus reach out and become established by word of mouth among the community and so generally accepted and assume grand dimensions.”

control of Paul's cult and learned how to use it to gain political leverage when dealing with non-Roman Christians. As an example of their increased authority, note that when the Empress Constantina of Byzantium asked Gregory the Great (593-604) for parts of Paul's body, the pope politely rejected her request (Gregory, *Ep.* 4.30).

Having established that the majority of Paul's early devotees were likely poor, non-elite Christians of humble origin, in the next section I examine their natural cultural milieu and in section 3, by analogy with the origins of the Argentinean folk-saint Difunta Correa, how the cult and martyrdom story of Paul could have evolved in conditions of low literacy and material poverty. These two sections will also help us to understand several narrative features of the *Martyrdom of Paul* in § 4.4.

2. Early Christian Martyr Cult in its Pagan Context

In this section I attempt to reconstruct the cultural milieu of the first Roman Christians who venerated Paul as a martyr on the Ostian Road. As previously discussed, the practice of visiting the graves of dead Christians likely evolved separately from the “ideology of martyrdom” with which it gradually became intertwined after the latter was formulated ca. 150-200.³⁰ Before that, at least some members of the Christian elite must have been wary of this

³⁰ According to Eastman 2011:3-4, the designation of particular locations as holy places is the first practice of martyr-cults. Apart from the grave on the Ostian Road where Paul was supposedly buried, we have literary evidence that mid-2nd-century Christians were venerating the mortal remains of more recent martyrs and that this practice was known by their adversaries. When Justin Martyr and his companions were executed ca. 165, we are told that some of the faithful “secretly” removed their bodies and laid them down for burial (*Mart. Justin* 5). After the execution of Polycarp (*Mart. Pol.* 17.1-18.3), there was a dispute over the martyr's body. We are told that the local Jews were guarding it so as to prevent the Christians from recovering it. *Mart. Lyons* 1.59-63 narrates a similar situation ca. 177. One of our pagan sources of this period depicts the same practice. After Peregrinus burned himself to death (ca. 165) some of his admirers tried to gather relics from the pyre (*Luc. Peregr.* 39). For its part, in the end of Acts of Thomas (written ca. 200-225), we are told that the Indian king Misdaeus sought Thomas' relics after the apostle's martyrdom on account of their healing power.

practice since even in the late 4th century there were educated Christians who continued to oppose it on theological grounds (as Jerome's *Ad Vigilantium* demonstrates). In an insightful article, Koester noticed that, in the beginning decades of the Christian movement, such worship was rejected as a typically Jewish and pagan custom. In Koester's view, the story of the empty tomb of Mark 16:6-8 represents a rejection of this type of veneration, in opposition to the rich Jewish tradition of Israel of caring for the tombs of honored ancestors.³¹ In the Gospels, Jesus himself looks down on the practice of burial worship. In one of his "woes" to the teachers of the Law and Pharisees (Matt. 23:29, cf. Luke 11:47-48), he accuses them of "building the tombs of the prophets and decorating the graves of the righteous."³² Jews paid great care to the preservation of burial places, whitewashing the tombs and walls of the enclosure, especially before Passover. It is in reference to this practice that Jesus in Matt. 23:27 condemns again the Pharisees as hypocrites for being outwardly pious (like the whitewashed tombs) but inwardly corrupt (like their contents).³³

Just as Christians of Jewish origin had been raised in the traditional veneration of deceased righteous men, so were gentile Christians amply familiar with this ritualistic practice which in their culture took the form of the Greco-Roman cult of heroes. Moreover, both

³¹ See examples in Koester 2007:86-90. As Koester points out, Moses was the exception (cf. *Deut* 34:6, "nobody knows his burial place to this day"). Christians considered Jesus' death as crucial as that of Moses.

³² Presumably Paul himself, trained as a Pharisee, was familiar with this practice. Jewish pilgrimage to the tombs of renowned Rabbis is attested in the first few centuries CE (see Wills 1997:41). It is worth noticing that some of the venerated tombs in the 1st century were extraordinarily old. See Acts 2:29 in reference to the tomb of David and Jos. *B.J.* 4.532 regarding the tomb of Abraham.

³³ Despite the validity of Koester's insights, we have evidence that at least some 1st-century Christians already showed reverence for their own dead. After Stephen was stoned to death, Luke says that "pious men" buried and mourned him (Acts 8:2). Likewise, after the beheading of John the Baptist, his disciples "took his body and laid him in a tomb" (Mark 6:29). It is also interesting to note that in the gospel of Matthew, we already have evidence of the Christian belief that venerated martyrs were asleep in their graves (cf. Jerome, *Ad Vigil.* 5). According to Matthew, as soon as Jesus died on the cross, "the bodies of many holy people who *had fallen asleep* (τῶν κεκοιμημένων ἁγίων) were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people" (Matt. 27:52-53).

Christian apologists and their adversaries were aware that Jesus's violent and premature death followed the basic pattern of venerated Greek heroes. Ca. 150, Justin Martyr (1 *Apol.* 54, *Dial.* 69) declared that the devil had invented the stories of Herakles as a way to emulate the true story of Jesus. For his part, the anti-Christian writer Celsus ca. 170 remarked that Jesus' return from the dead was not unique, citing as precedents Orpheus, Herakles, Theseus and Protesilaos (*Or. c. Cels.* 2.56). Probably the most informative ancient source regarding the pagan cult of heroes is Philostratus's *Heroikos*, written ca. 220-250 CE. From this work, scholars have drawn many parallels between the Greco-Roman hero cult and the Christian martyr cult of the pre-Constantinian period.³⁴ In the *Heroikos*, the hero Protesilaos is portrayed as a healer who cures illnesses in response to prayer, especially consumption, eye disease and edema (*Her.* 16.1). The same specialization is observed among early saints, Agapitus (martyred 274) against colic, Cyriacus (martyred 305) against eye disease, Pantaleon (martyred 305) against consumption. Protesilaos is also said to smell "sweeter than autumn myrtles". This is reminiscent of *Mart. Pol.* 15.2, which states that, while Polycarp was burning, his flesh had a "sweet-smelling savor".³⁵

Although the parallels between the Christian cult of martyrs and the pagan hero-cult are unquestionable, the extent to which Christian martyr-related beliefs and rituals may have been borrowed from pagans is very difficult to pin down and continues to be debated among

³⁴ Note that Philostratus' references to the cult of epic heroes reflect in practice the historical reality of hero-cults in his own lifetime (ca. 170-250), the same historical period that saw the emergence of the Christian cult of saints. See Bradshaw Aitken and Berenson Maclean 2001:i-xcii).

³⁵ Cf. § 5.3. The corpses of Gervasius and Protasius, allegedly Christian victims of Nero, are said to smell pleasantly in Ambrose's letter about their discovery. For the whole panoply of characteristics of Christian saint folklore (miracles, graves, epiphanies, punishment of unbelievers, etc.) see the stories in Gregory of Tours' *Glory of the Martyrs*. In the same vein, the post-mortem appearances of the Trojan and Achaean heroes of the *Heroikos* serve to contextualize Paul's in the *Martyrdom of Paul*. Appearances of Greek heroes were still common lore among 2nd-century sailors, as the letter of Arrian to Hadrian attests (see examples discussed in Lane Fox 1986:121). Similar epiphanies are found in Christian apocryphal acts and hagiographies of martyrs.

scholars.³⁶ For my purposes, the point that I want to raise is that the 2nd century rank-and-file Christians who became devotees of Paul *qua* martyr were deeply immersed in their contemporary Greco-Roman culture and that, inevitably, both the rituals and stories they told about Paul's death incorporated motifs from that heroic tradition. This borrowing of ideas, also observed among other religious groups, was not a peculiar Christian phenomenon but the natural result of the cultural situation of the early Roman Empire. In that regard, an oft-cited truism bears repeating: during the first two centuries of its existence, Christianity was a marginal sect, immersed in the dominant pagan culture with which it shared the same machinery of life.³⁷ Consequently, it is only natural that for a long time in the matter of honoring the deceased, the boundaries between Christian and pagan practices were, to say the least, very blurred. Indeed, on account of these similarities, we have evidence that in the late 2nd century, many ill-informed pagan outsiders viewed Christianity as just one of the many religious burial societies of the Greco-Roman world. In *Apol.* 39, Tertullian, utilizing this pagan misperception to his advantage,

³⁶ Koester 2007:90 ended his article by stating "The claim of the discovery of the tomb of Saint Peter under the dome of his church in Rome makes this the largest and most magnificent place of Christian hero worship in the whole world." Koester' equating of the Christian martyr-cult with hero worship is extreme and must be tempered in consideration of known differences. The bibliography on this much discussed matter is abundant. Among seminal works see Lane Fox 1986:1-261, Brown 1981:1-22 and Ferguson 1987: 132-141, 195-205 and 237-240 for syncretism of religious practices and ideas as well as Christian points of contact with mystery religions. More recently, see the essays of Betz 2004:25-47, Hershbell 2004:169-79, and Skedros 2004:181-93 (all in Bradshaw Aitken and Berenson Maclean 2004). It is interesting to note that there must have been an overlap of functions as Christian martyrs gradually replace heroes as city patrons. For instance in Tarsus, Paul's hometown, Perseus and Herakles were considered the protectors of the city (Dio 33.47). Probably they remained in this capacity until they were replaced by such local Christian martyrs as Saint Pelagia. As to Rome, by the late 4th century Paul and Peter were replacing Castor and Pollux as city patrons. A big difference between Greco-Roman heroes and Christian martyrs was that heroes were worshiped as divine beings in their own right, whereas Christian martyrs were *with* God and acted as intercessors (see Brown 1981:5). On the role of Paul as intercessor see the discussion in the next section.

³⁷ This is patent if one reads *De Idololatria*, a treatise in which Tertullian gives advice to Christians on how to avoid in different social occasions what – in his mind – amounts to idol-worship. Tertullian ends his book (*De Idol.* 24.1) with a metaphor in which he depicts Christians sailing perilously in a sea of paganism where every whirlpool has the capacity of sucking them down to the underworld (*omnis uertex eius ad inferos desorbet*). Notice that Tertullian's visual picture of the underworld is itself pagan. Ferguson 1987:196-197 notes that the ancient threefold division of the universe and the abodes of the souls was transmitted to the Christian Middle Ages. Cf. in Luke 16.19-31 the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Hades and in 2 Peter 2:4 the description of Tartarus as a place of punishment.

employed it as a starting point for his apologetic efforts and described Christian social practices in terms familiar to pagans.³⁸

Let us now list some examples of pagan influences in Christian funerary practices. In continuity with the Greek tradition of ascribing certain days every year for the honor of particular gods, the Christians honored their martyrs on the day of their martyrdom (*dies natalis*) following a calendar. This is documented in the Calendar of 354, a fascinating almanac prepared by the famous calligrapher Philocalus for a Roman aristocrat named Valentinus that mixes lists of Christian festivities with pagan themes. Material evidence that supports the use of pagan funerary symbols and practices in Christian burials is pervasive. Throughout the 3rd century, Christian funerary inscriptions often began with the letters DM (*Diis Manibus*), *manes* being the traditional Roman term for the dead; interestingly, DM is found in the epitaph that an early Christian admirer of the apostles Paul and Peter wrote for his son.³⁹ Inside Peter's grave, archeologists found votive offerings and coins (cf. "Charon's obol") dating back to the 2nd century; they also found (as noted before), that one of the earliest Christian graves adjacent to Peter's had a libation pipe. For their part, those who found the funerary monument of bishop Abercius (ca. 200) noticed that it was in the form of a βωμός (a pagan altar).⁴⁰

Just as pagan devotees expressed their faith by attending the shrines of Greco-Roman heroes, so too did Christians gather at martyr sites.⁴¹ At these gatherings in honor of martyrs,

³⁸ See discussion in Wilken 1984:31-47. *Tert. Apol.* 39 is filled with technical terms used in connection with these funerary associations (see *ibid.* 46 for examples).

³⁹ See *CIL* XIV 566, the epitaph of Marcus Annaeus Paulus in honor of his son Marcus Annaeus Paulus Petrus. Probably the letters DM were already present in the funerary slab that the father had bought.

⁴⁰ See O'Callaghan 1953:70-87 and Ramsay 1883:370-436.

⁴¹ 4th-century Christians were still curious about Greco-Roman heroes, as seen in the *Itinerarium Burdigalense* (written in 333 CE), perhaps our first extant travel-narrative of a pilgrimage journey. The Christian author, as he

Christians took part in *refrigeria*, commemorative funerary meals of pagan origin.⁴² These meals could turn into what Cyprian in *Epist.* 67.6.2 (written in 251 CE) calls “disgraceful and filthy banquets.” Cyprian wrote this letter in the context of his polemic with Stephen, pope at Rome (254-257), and in opposition to two Spanish bishops whom Stephen had reinstated to their sees. Apart from other practices that he deemed non-Christian, Cyprian accused one of the Spaniards of participating in the banquets of a pagan *collegium*. For our purposes, the letter shows that despite Cyprian’s personal indignation, Pope Stephen did not disapprove of *refrigeria*.⁴³ Indeed, soon afterwards we encounter epigraphical evidence at the joint martyr site of Peter and Paul on the Appian Road indicating that their devotees were holding *refrigeria* in their honor. Among the graffiti crudely carved on the back wall of the *triclia* we find several that allude to these meals, such as one that reads *Petro et Paulo Tomius Coelius refrigerium feci*. Moreover, many decorated bottoms of drinking vessels featuring the images of Peter and Paul have been found. Some participants in the meals must have taken the glasses home but others left them on site. One of these, preserved at the British Museum, has a circular inscription around the images of Peter and Paul; it reads “Biculius, the pride of your friends, may you live piously, and may you drink.”⁴⁴ Once the Constantinian basilicas in honor of Peter and Paul were

passes through Tyana (see *It. Burd.* 578), mentions Apollonius, whose shrine had been rebuilt by Caracalla a bit more than a century earlier (Dio 78.18.4). In the next section, after the pilgrim had travelled less than 100 miles south and was passing through Tarsus (*It. Burd.* 579), he refers to the city as the birthplace of Paul (cf. Acts 21:39). Not far away from Tarsus, Egeria, another Christian pilgrim of the 4th century, mentions the shrine of Thecla, the celebrated female companion of the apostle in *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (*It. Eger.* 1.22.2).

⁴² A pagan writing often cited in the context of this discussion is an extant document of the worshippers of the goddess Diana and the hero Antinous (written in 135 CE) that elaborates on the organization of their annual banquets. See Eastman 2011:75. On Antinous, the deified cupbearer of Emperor Hadrian, see § 4.4.

⁴³ See Bodel 2008:182-183.

⁴⁴ See discussion in Eastman 2011:72-81. *Refrigeria* at the locations of martyr-cults continued to be celebrated up to the late 4th century. Augustine tells us that his mother Monica, raised in a Christian household (*Conf.* 9.8.17), was in the habit of carrying with her a little cup of wine to drink on occasions *honorandae memoriae defunctorum*.

built in the 320s, it is likely that in their initial decades, rather than formal religious services, *refrigeria* were celebrated in their interiors, thus perpetuating earlier Christian practices.⁴⁵

Obviously eating and drinking in the company of fellow devotees was but one aspect of these gatherings at the shrines of the apostles. One would expect that devotees recounted stories about the venerated martyrs, and indeed we have evidence of this practice, which should probably be interpreted as a continuation of the pagan cult of the dead.⁴⁶ For instance, we may easily imagine that the devotees who gathered at Paul's shrine on the Ostian Road and – from the mid-3rd century – at the *triclia* on the Appian Road told stories about his death drawn from the traditional material partly preserved in the *Martyrdom of Paul*. As we shall see in § 4.4, the story about the final days of the apostle transmitted in this narrative was much more vivid and suitable for this type of commemorative occasion than the account of canonical Acts, which passes over in silence Paul's death. That these storytelling features would have pleased the Christian pilgrims at the *triclia* of San Sebastiano is not unsurprising. It is impossible to know whether the visitors to the *triclia* in the second half of the 3rd century were long-time Christians

Augustine explains that his mother took little sips and did not succumb to drunkenness like other devotees. When Ambrose, Bishop of Milan in the 380s, forbade the practice on account of its pagan origin and associated bad behavior, Monica obeyed piously the prohibition (*Conf.* 6.2). Augustine himself in 395 CE decided to rein in these celebratory meals as Bishop of Hippo. The devotees reacted by asking why their bishop was interfering with a practice that been allowed in the past. Augustine explained in a sermon that prior Christian authorities had made a concession to this practice so that Christian converts would renounce their pagan festivals and honor instead the holy martyrs. Being practical, they had allowed the new Christians to celebrate the saints with similar boisterous joy (*quamvis simili luxu celebrarent*). See *Epist.* 29.8-9. Note that these reactions of ecclesiastical authorities against the cult of martyrs is more complex than it seems. It can also be interpreted within the context of their struggle against the Donatists who cherished martyrdom and had a special devotion for their own martyrs.

⁴⁵ See MacMullen 2009:69-94. Under Saint Paul's Basilica, just like in the other earliest basilicas, cooking vessels have been found (*ibid.* 86). We also know that a *mensa* (funerary table) with a libation hole covered the sarcophagus discovered by excavators in 2002. A funerary slab that originally covered the sarcophagus reads *Paulo Apostolo Mart(yri)*. See Eastman 2011:36-42.

⁴⁶ There is an extant Christian inscription in North Africa, dated 299 CE on the *mensa* (that the children of Aelia Secundula built in memory of their mother after she passed away. At the funerary banquet in her honor stories about Secundula were retold (*Libenter fabulas ... redimus*). See discussion in Eastman 2011:81-84.

or recent converts; yet in all likelihood their background and mindset did not differ significantly from that of the 2nd-century humble folks who had venerated the apostle's alleged burial site on the Ostian Road.⁴⁷ In studying the names found among the hundreds of graffiti carved on the *triclia*, Marichal concluded that the majority of the pilgrims were of eastern origin and of low social status.⁴⁸ Besides, it is unlikely that their *refrigeria* would have been supervised by local church authorities more prone to read "scriptural passages". The devotees' presence at the *Memoria Apostolorum* on the Appian Road was a matter of private initiative, resulting from a sort of personal devotion to the apostles that expressed itself with only a minimal amount of church control, which as we saw in the previous section would only develop in the 4th century.⁴⁹

To sum up, the gathering of lower-class pilgrims at the martyr shrine of Paul provides the context in which the earliest attested stories about Paul's death are likely to have taken shape. In an ambiance of unstructured worship, it is natural to conjecture that the stories that pilgrims shared among themselves (of which we may regard the *Martyrdom of Paul* as our only extant witness) differed from those favored by elite Christians in their written documents. The latter, as seen in the 2nd-century references studied in § 2.4, were of a much loftier tone and a decided theological bent. On the other hand, as we shall see in § 4.4, we have evidence that stories of Paul's death told among non-elite Christians ca. 64-130 were passed down in the narrative format of folk legends. This must not have been a conscious decision but a spontaneous conversion of traditional material into a popular, pre-existing format of storytelling, typical of

⁴⁷ Recall that in his diatribe against Christians, Celsus (ca. 180) had repeatedly denigrated them as scum belonging to the lower and ignorant classes (Or. C. *Cels.* 1.27, 3.44, 3.55 and 3.59).

⁴⁸ See Marichal 1953:60-68. The majority of the graffiti are written in Latin, thirty-three are in Greek and some are written in Latin using Greek letters. Representative names of pilgrims are Leontius, Parthenius, Sozomen, Antimachus, etc.

⁴⁹ See Pietri 1997:1322. The graffiti at the *triclia* of Peter and Paul are collected in *ICUR*, NS, 5, 12907-13906.

the cultural milieu from which most of Paul's devotees had emerged. In the next section, I trace an analogy with a similar phenomenon, the adaptation of the modern Catholic cult of the saints to the local cultures of South America.

3. *Difunta Correa*: a Model for the Early Martyr Cult (and Martyr Stories) of Paul's Death

Another major similarity between many Greek heroes and Christian martyrs is that both groups had suffered terrible fates. It is in response to their tragic deaths that both pagans, at least at times, and Christians established cults to venerate them. The impulse to render meaningful the suffering of those who have passed away and attribute to it a redeeming quality seems to be widespread human trait, found in many cultures and at different times throughout human history. In this section, I examine the documented history of the cult of the Argentinian folk-saint *Difunta Correa* to shed light on the traditional stories that were formed and handed down about Paul's death, the early developments of his martyr-cult on the Ostian Road, and its formal institutionalization in the 4th century.⁵⁰ Our discussion will thus serve as a useful analogy for points discussed not only in this chapter but also in chapters 2 and 5. The cult of *Difunta Correa* has now lasted for about 175 years, so in length of time it would correspond to the cult of Paul in the period 64-239, from Paul's death till the generation of the first pilgrims who carved graffiti in honor of the apostle on the *triclia*'s wall at San Sebastiano. I will show, however, that developments in the cult of the Argentinian folk-saint in the last five decades are in fact more

⁵⁰ In her 2004 work *Martyrdom and Memory*, E. Castelli used a similar methodology devoting her last chapter to Cassie Bernall, one of the Columbine victims, to explore issues related to the martyr cult phenomenon. Cf. Meyer's comparative study on patriarchal villages in modern Turkey to shed light on male and female social spheres in classical Athens (see Meyer 2004:19-48).

comparable to the developments in the cult and martyrdom accounts of Paul that can be observed in the 4th century.

Difunta Correa (“the deceased Correa”) is a folk-saint of the Argentine province of San Juan, whose cult has by now extended to the whole country as well as to neighboring South American nations. Before examining the stories underlying the origin of her cult, I shall first describe some of its social characteristics.⁵¹ Correa’s devotees are in general humble folk, although after the cult gained massive popularity in 1950s it has also attracted middle class and well-to-do people. The major cult shrine of Difunta Correa is located in Vallecito, next to a road in a desert area of San Juan province.⁵² The vast majority of devotees are Roman Catholics; however, the cult is not officially recognized by the Catholic Church, whose attitude *vis à vis* the folk-saint — as we shall see later — has evolved through the years. As social scientists have noticed, on the whole the religious motivations expressed at her shrine are largely indistinguishable from what an impartial observer would encounter at the chapels of other popular but officially recognized Catholic saints.

For our purposes, it is worth pointing out the many resemblances between the rituals and beliefs of devotees of Difunta Correa and those that we have discussed regarding the early cult of Paul. The devotees’ invocations ask for protection and assistance, mostly showing a belief in the

⁵¹ My analysis will focus primarily on the field observations that social scientists made in the 1960s when information in San Juan about Difunta Correa was still obtained primarily via word of mouth and printed media. See Chertudi and Newbery 1978. Although at present cult practices have not changed significantly, the emergence of global media has not surprisingly had an impact on the expressions of the devotees’ faith. The cult of South American folk-saints is a complex field of study. I have chosen the cult of Difunta Correa as my model because its origin and development have obvious points of contact with the early martyr-cult of Paul.

⁵² Vallecito is 37 miles east of the city of San Juan, the capital of the province. The closest town, Caucete, is located 19 miles away. The shrine receives about 700,000 visitors yearly, particularly during festive occasions. Apart from the main shrine in Vallecito, there are very many small roadside shrines in multiple locations in Argentina and neighboring countries.

intercessory power of Difunta Correa. Invocations posted at the shrine before the 1960s have been collected and studied by social scientists. They bear a very close resemblance to invocations found on the *trichia* of San Sebastiano.⁵³ Some pilgrims at the *Memoria Apostolorum* dedicated to Paul and Peter the banquets which they had previously promised them. For instance, one of the graffiti reads *Dalmatius votum eis promisit refrigerium*. This should be understood as a gift-giving manifestation of the *do ut des* principle (“I give that you might give”), an implicit pact between the martyr and the pilgrim.⁵⁴ The same phenomenon is observed at the shrine of Difunta Correa. As an example, an old plaque reads “I have fulfilled my promise, Difunta Correa.” Interestingly, the devotees call themselves *promesantes*, since they have promised the folk-saint that they would visit her shrine as a sign of respect and gratitude. The general atmosphere is one of quiet piety mixed with a sense of community gathering.⁵⁵ Devotees leave on the site bottles of water (the characteristic ex-voto of the cult, since Correa died of thirst) or more sophisticated offerings such as miniature models of the modest houses they have been able to purchase. Another interesting parallel with the cult of Paul and Peter is the content of the prayers for Correa (often printed on small devotional cards). Just like the epigram of Pope Damasus at San Sebastiano or the earlier remarks of Christian writers of

⁵³ For example, “Protect us” or “Help us Difunta Correa”. See Chertrudi and Newbery 1978:140-142. These are similar in spirit to several of the graffiti at San Sebastiano such as “Paul and Peter, keep us in mind” or “Peter and Paul, protect your servants...” See Eastman 2011:84-87.

⁵⁴ Traditionally, the earliest pilgrims to the shrine of Difunta Correa often asked for a “safe trip” (through the desert), just as the early Christians who visited the martyr-site of Peter and Paul sometimes asked for a “safe sail”. More mundane wishes (such as victories at sports events) are not uncommon. Among other famous sportsmen, the world boxing champion Carlos Monzón (from 1970-1977) left his gloves and boxing shorts as an ex-voto at the shrine of Difunta Correa (see del Brutto 2007:131). Cf. pilgrims praying to Peter and Paul for the victory of their favorite at the chariot races (likely in reference to the track on the Appian Road), see MacMullen 2009:85, 168-169.

⁵⁵ A 1951 written report from San Juan province states that “strong devotion to Difunta Correa is sometimes expressed by family picnics that combine fulfilling promises with having a good time.” See Grazziano 2007:186. The similarity with the ambiance of *refrigeria* held at the *trichia* of San Sebastiano in honor of Peter and Paul should not go unnoticed. One should remember that *refrigerare* means “to chill out” (see MacMullen 2009:76).

the 2nd century regarding Paul's death, as a rule the prayers for Correa offer little information regarding the historical circumstances of her death.⁵⁶ This is strikingly reminiscent of the problems that we have faced trying to reconstruct the circumstances of Paul's martyrdom. Why is that? Studying the origins and developments of Correa's cult as a cross-cultural comparison may help us formulate an answer.

Correa's cult drew the attention of social scientists from the 1950s through the '70s. The seminal studies were done by Chertudi and Newbery, who, given the available evidence, posited that the earliest form of the traditional story underlying the cult runs as follows.⁵⁷ The "Deceased Correa" was a young woman who died ca. 1841 as she tried to cross the desert in search of her husband (who had been conscripted into a local army against his will). The couple had recently had a son. Correa faithfully followed the army that had taken her husband, on foot and carrying her infant; however, on the journey she got lost, collapsed and died of thirst and exposure under the sun. Some livestock drivers found her corpse; the baby was miraculously alive, still suckling at her breast. They buried her piously and left a cross on the site.⁵⁸

The first extant written record regarding the cult dates from 1865; it is a chance observation made by the author of a biographical account of an unrelated famous bandit of San Juan province. The brief reference indicates that by 1865 in Vallecito, among many crosses, there was one that had a collection box. It marked the grave of "the miraculous Correa". The

⁵⁶ If all devotees had simultaneously stopped venerating Correa and her shrine had been suddenly abandoned in the 1950s, an archeologist from the future visiting the site would have found copious evidence of votive offerings, invocations, prayers, and words of gratitude but very little data to reconstruct Correa's life and death.

⁵⁷ Chertudi and Newbery 1978. Their book draws from previous field works (by themselves and others) and also from the sociological analysis of Buntig (1970).

⁵⁸ This reconstruction is based on divergent oral traditions collected in 1921 (see below) and oral memories committed to writing by scholars prior to the 1960s. None of this can be corroborated by contemporary historical records (there is no birth certificate, no marital record, etc.).

writer added that the local travelers were in the habit of invoking her aid, praying to her and leaving coins in the box. The human conditions in the area at the time merit our attention. The venerated grave was (and continued to be) in the middle of a desert; Caucete, at 19 miles, was the closest town, and the entire county (more than twice the size of Rhode Island) had fewer than 5,000 inhabitants by 1869, a time when the literacy rate of San Juan was 16% and material poverty was prevalent.⁵⁹ Although nominally Catholic, the local population lacked religious instruction as the province had little clerical presence. Despite conditions of low literacy, poverty and social isolation, in the decades following this first brief reference of 1865, the story of Difunta Correa was handed down by word of mouth and the cult persisted as a local tradition.⁶⁰

An important event took place at the site in 1898 when a traveling cattle driver named Zeballos lost his herd in a storm and prayed next to the grave of Difunta Correa for help in return for building her a chapel. In the morning he found all the animals grazing in a canyon and, after selling his cattle, fulfilled his promise and built a modest shrine on the site. This “miracle” apparently helped to popularize the cult of Correa.⁶¹ Starting from 1910, pilgrimage to the site

⁵⁹ The data are taken from the First Argentinean Census (year 1869). That year, the whole province of San Juan (bigger in area than South Carolina) had only 66,000 inhabitants. The book *Recuerdos de Provincia (Recollections of Provincial Life)* written by D. Sarmiento in 1850 is also a good source of information for the social conditions in the province. As noted by Chertudi and Newbery (1978:23-24), for most of the 19th century there were very few church authorities in San Juan. Regarding those considered literate in the 1869 census, presumably few were able to write a sophisticated account of Difunta Correa’s death. Cf. our discussion in § 2.2-4 about the parameters for written accounts of Paul’s martyrdom in the period 64-125 CE.

⁶⁰ Chertudi and Newbery 1978:88. The next evidence comes from church records of masses said for Difunta Correa in 1883. After that, we have an 1895 stone plaque that has survived, offered “to the charitable soul of La Difunta Correa” (*a la caritativa alma Difunta Correa Q.E.P.D. Junio de 1895*), presumably to express gratitude for some received favor.

⁶¹ Chertudi and Newbery (1978:207) did not vouch for the historicity of Zeballos and dated the “miracle” in their book to ca. 1890 (same in Grazziano 2007:167). Yet it is important to notice that Zeballos was a real person and not someone later invented to explain the existence of the shrine. His name (with different spellings) appears in some of the oral stories about the cult of Difunta Correa collected in 1921 (see below). In 2011 a documentary was

was facilitated by the arrival of the railroad to the area. Then came 1921, a landmark year for researchers studying Correa's cult. Until then, stories about Difunta Correa's death had been transmitted only by word of mouth. In 1921, the Argentine Government commissioned teachers around the country to collect local stories dealing with folklore and popular devotion. Over a dozen oral reports on Difunta Correa's death and her cult were committed to writing in an official document entitled *Encuesta del Magisterio*. These reports allow us to trace the oral traditions about her death that had circulated for around eight decades.⁶² As one would expect, the stories show discrepancies. Some are minor (her place of residence, her first name, her husband's name and the precise location of her death) while a few are more significant as they deviate from what later became the dominant tradition; interestingly, some of these early stories already allude to the survival of Correa's baby, which nowadays, apart from her miraculous breasts, is probably the most emblematic feature of her story.⁶³ The existence of several

made named *Promesantes de La Difunta Correa*. In it, one can watch and listen to Dr. Victor Hugo Zeballos, the grandson of the cattle-driver, who, in April 4th 2006, when he was in his eighties, donated to the shrine the poncho that his grandfather Pedro Flavio Zeballos (1857-1917) used to wear. Apparently members of the Zeballos family have been devotees of Correa for over a century.

⁶² Fortunately, the school teachers who recorded stories about Difunta Correa also preserved the names, age and place of origin of the informants. Most reports are verbatim oral memories in which the informants traced back the story to an original source (cf. § 2.1). Thus, their testimony is a form of oral history. The majority of the reports were collected in San Juan but some came from other provinces, which shows that the cult of Correa had expanded, presumably when local devotees migrated to other geographical areas. By 1921, most of the informants had heard the stories from their parents or someone else; yet one of them was 92 years old at the time (born in 1829), so his report can be considered first-hand information. Ten of the reports can be found in Gentile 2009. There is also another testimony, considered "the most faithful", that was recorded — after the 1921 reports — by a history professor at the regional university. This professor interviewed a woman born in 1844 who heard the story from her mother. According to her, Correa's child, after being rescued, was raised as an orphan and used to play with her own brothers. She also said that Correa's son died of pneumonia at the age of 21 (see Chertudi and Newbery 1978:82-83).

⁶³ Here are some examples of divergent reports: in one report Difunta Correa is said to have been following her son rather than her husband; in another she was pregnant while travelling and died while giving birth but the son survived; in yet another both the mother and son died. This variety is unsurprising considering that the cult and the story of Difunta Correa was transmitted only in oral form for about eighty years (see Chertudi and Newbery 1978:107). Some elements in the stories of Difunta Correa exhibit syncretistic influences. For a discussion of traditions of maternal goddesses and miraculous breasts (probably brought to the area by Spanish Conquistadors),

divergent stories about the circumstances of Correa's death eighty years after the alleged events buttress our hypothesis that when the *Martyrdom of Paul* was composed ca. 150, there must have been conflicting traditions about Paul's death (cf. § 2.4). Although some stories probably originated from "first-generation tradents" of Paul's martyrdom (cf. § 2.3), by 150 CE they must have differed among themselves quite significantly.

Another striking feature of the 1921 reports on Difunta Correa is that they are all brief, some very brief, and that for most informants the biographical aspects of the story were clearly less important than the cult itself, particularly the rituals of the devotees and the evidence in favor of Difunta Correa's intercessory power. Minimal biographies are a feature commonly observed among devotees of folk-saints in South America. That the traditional stories of their tragic deaths are short and admit variations has an additional benefit: brief martyrologies give devotees the chance to project onto the stories their own concerns and aspirations.⁶⁴

Traditions about the circumstances of Correa's death gained a certain degree of stability when early oral traditions were committed to writing in the 1930s. Indeed, as the cult continued to grow, literary accounts of her life began to be published in anonymous brochures. A local journalist named Martos played a major role in further popularizing the folk-saint, and he is said among other things to have invented Correa's "official" first name, Deolinda. Martos collected data, interviewed elderly people and, after mixing factual information with legend and fiction, wrote a longer account that was presented as a theater piece in 1948.⁶⁵ The same year, a private

see Grazziano 2007:173-181. There are also other possible syncretistic influences of local origin such as the story of the Andean divine entity Hijo del Rayo (see Gentile 2009).

⁶⁴ See discussion in Carozzi 2005:18.

⁶⁵ See Chertudi and Newbery 1978:108-110. From the 1940s, Difunta Correa was also featured in radio shows of San Juan province as well as songs and poems. From the 1960s, her image was popularized in novels. A successful movie about her life was made in 1975 that further contributed to spread her cult in other South American countries.

foundation was established to administer Correa's shrine. A local businessman named Mercado is said to have been instrumental in institutionalizing the cult and fostering religious tourism to the site. He was apparently also responsible for promoting the iconography of Difunta Correa (who previously had been venerated without images); nowadays the more or less standardized picture of Difunta Correa depicts her dead on the ground with her child at her breast.⁶⁶

By 2006 Correa's shrine was said to attract 700,000 visitors per year. Today as in the past, the cult lacks its own authorities or hierarchy, and devotees continue to attend the shrine motivated solely by personal faith; yet the administration of the site is nowadays under the control of the Government of San Juan province, which actively fosters religious tourism to Correa's shrine in Vallecito. After local authorities became involved in the cult, the tragic death of Difunta Correa has also been placed within the larger historical context of General Lamadrid's military invasion of San Juan. Lamadrid was a leader of the Unitario party, which favored a centralized government from Buenos Aires.⁶⁷

Of particular interest to us is the evolving position of the Catholic Church regarding Correa's cult. After its obscure beginnings sometime in the mid-19th century, for over a century

⁶⁶ On Mercado's role in promoting tourism and the iconography of Difunta Correa see Gentile 2009. Correa's iconography, as Grazziano (2007:180) observed, is likely based on an unrelated painting entitled *Yellow Fever in Buenos Aires* that was donated to the Sarmiento Museum in San Juan in 1949. The painting shows a child holding the breast of his dead mother, but not breastfeeding. That Correa's iconography took over a century to develop reminds us of Paul's martyr-cult iconography, of which the earliest surviving examples are the images found in the broken glasses that devotees used at the *trichia* of San Sebastiano. As Cartlidge (2001:138-148) has pointed out, Paul's facial features (receding hair and pointed beard) were borrowed from Socrates'. The purpose of a portrait in Greco-Roman terms was not to show a "likeness" but to present the dignity and virtue (*areté*) of the person portrayed. For Christians, Paul, as "the church Socrates", represented the martyr to the cause of truth (ibid. 142).

⁶⁷ The Government of San Juan province organized a "Parade of the Faith" in honor of Correa in 2006. The original legislative project (Expediente 1089-D-2006, dated 03/28/2006) contains information regarding the "historical" details that have been found about Correa's life. It is interesting that Correa is said to have had a sister, that the sisters married a pair of brothers and that both brothers were victims of Lamadrid. The importance of pairs in folk-legends is examined in the next section. One suspects that a desire to vindicate historically the Federales, those who fought against the Unitarios, motivated the portrayal of General Lamadrid as the villain of Difunta Correa's story.

the cult went unnoticed as an unsanctioned devotion for an unrecognized saint. Yet in the 1960s, when the cult was gaining massive appeal, the Church intervened; in an effort to redirect devotees to an approved form of faith, a chapel in honor of the Virgin of Carmen was built next to Correa's shrine. In their 1978 book, Chertudi and Newbery partly reproduce a 1965 printed account of Correa's death, prefaced by the Archbishop of San Juan, that catholicizes the story. In this new version, Correa holds a scapular of the Virgin of Carmen as she walks through the desert in search of her husband and before dying prays to the Mother of God to save her child.⁶⁸ When Grazziano visited the shrine forty years later, he found that some devotees appeared to have embraced elements of this new narrative, yet he also remarked that the chapel of the Virgin of Carmen drew little interest and that plaques in honor of Correa were affixed to its pews.⁶⁹ In the early 1970s, Church leaders began to view the growing popularity of Correa's cult with concern. Thus, in 1976 the Argentinian Episcopal Conference declared Correa's cult illegitimate and asked Catholics to abstain from it (Chertudi and Newbery 1978:210-211). Yet this antagonistic stance proved to be ineffective and short-lived. Nowadays, although Correa's cult is neither recognized nor approved and there is still a range of ecclesiastical attitudes, in general church authorities try to be accommodating when dealing with Correa's devotees (who are Catholics in their vast majority). Their faith is viewed as an informal manifestation of popular devotion. A Vallecito priest interviewed for the 2011 documentary cited above respectfully interpreted prayers to the folk-saint within the Catholic practice of praying to the souls in

⁶⁸ The Archbishop of San Juan, in the preface of the story published in 1965, described the new version as a "balanced account" that would help to give to Correa's simple popular devotion its "true meaning" (see Chertudi and Newbery 1978:73-74).

⁶⁹ For Grazziano's *in situ* observations regarding the role of the Catholic Church at the shrine, see Grazziano 2007:182-183, 189-190.

Purgatory and cited the lack of documentary evidence as one reason why the “popular canonization” of Difunta Correa could not be recognized by the Catholic Church.

Our survey of the origin, development and characteristics of this modern folk-saint sheds light on a number of issues regarding Paul’s martyr cult and oral traditions of his death. It bears repeating that the stories of Paul’s martyrdom that have survived were written by a small minority of literary Christians. The religious thoughts, aspirations and piety of the rank and file Christians who venerated Paul’s martyr-sites in Rome and recounted stories of his death before the peace of Constantine are no longer accessible to us. Thus, the story of Difunta Correa and her devotees serves as a useful analogy to speculate about the inner workings of early popular Christianity, particularly its intense focus on the cult of martyrs, a practice that elite Christians only embraced slowly and after adapting it to their liking.⁷⁰ Two discoveries of the 19th century *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* validate our comparison.⁷¹ (a) Cult and ritual are the center of people’s religious experience (rather than the abstract theological concepts handled by the elite). Just as in the cult of Difunta Correa, the early devotees of Paul venerated him freely, compelled only by their personal religious instincts. There were no arbiters of martyr-cult orthodoxy till the 4th century. (b) Folklore and oral traditions are the instruments of the transmission of religious knowledge. Just as Correa’s devotees appreciate the story of her tragic suffering and death when delivered in a concise, relatable narrative format, so the non-elite 2nd-century Christians who honored Paul likely preferred simple, relatable stories of Paul’s martyrdom. They would no doubt have cherished a short tale with a hero (Paul), a villain (Nero), intense action and

⁷⁰ See MacMullen 2009:89, 104-106. Even in the late 4th century, very few Christians attended formal religious services. The extant evidence indicates that for the majority of Christians, a common expression of faith was a shared meal at martyr-sites located in modest cemeteries.

⁷¹ See Koester 2007:271.

characters with whom they could identify. They must have felt at home with vivid, folktale-like accounts of the apostle's final days such as the one preserved in the *Martyrdom of Paul*.⁷²

Apart from the two points discussed above, several aspects of Difunta Correa's cult and story can also contribute to our understanding of Paul's martyr-cult traditions and the traditional stories of his death. (1) Correa's devotees were able to hand down her story in oral form for eighty years until it was finally committed to writing (cf. our study in § 2.2). (2) Probably for over half a century they venerated just a simple cross (surrounded by other modest graves) located next to a road crossing the desert, until a rudimentary shrine was built and became a more visible marker of the cult (cf. the gradual development of Paul's martyr site on the Ostian Road). (3) Correa's early devotees were few in numbers, rural peasants nominally raised Catholic but with very basic catechetical instruction. They venerated the folk-saint as an act of private faith. The expression of their devotion took place with little involvement of ecclesiastical authorities (cf. our discussion in § 4.1).⁷³ (4) Some elements of Correa's cult tradition are based on verifiably historical persons (e.g. the story of Zeballos). The lesson here is that we should not automatically discard vestiges of historicity in early stories of Paul's death. (5) Although some devotees (for instance, the journalist Martos and the businessman Mercado) played important roles in popularizing Correa's story and cult, the growth of Correa as a folk-saint was the result of a grassroots movement. (6) Knowledge of the story of Correa's death expanded geographically when local devotees migrated elsewhere (this also likely happened with early

⁷² Canonical Acts' subtle insinuation that Paul's demise had been brought about by his Jewish enemies and its insistence that Paul had to suffer as a necessity of salvation history (cf. § 3.1) may have pleased Luke's more educated and discerning readers. Others may have found the story too allusive and indirect.

⁷³ Cf. MacMullen 2009:86 regarding the veneration of early Christian martyrs. "Piety born in a private setting could thus reach out and become established by word of mouth among the community and so generally accepted and assume grand dimensions."

traditions of Paul's death that originated in Rome). (7) Just as Paul's, Correa's iconography developed very late. (8) When members of the élite appropriated the story of Correa, they tried to place it in a historical context.⁷⁴ (9) When the Church and the local government became involved in the cult, although cultic practices became more formalized, devotees resisted changes.

This last trait of Correa's tradition is of special importance for our understanding of the non-élite early traditions about Paul's death, of which the *Martyrdom of Paul* is the only surviving witness. Correa's devotees are typically satisfied with stories presented as "minimal biographies" relatable to their own lives; they show little interest in knowing more about the historical circumstances surrounding Correa's life and death. Indeed, when Chertudi and Newbery did field work studies of devotees in the 1960s they noticed that devotees not only had limited knowledge about the details of Correa's biography but also had trouble placing it in a historical context, a phenomenon that has been also observed in the more recent studies of Grazziano and del Brutto.⁷⁵ In general, devotees are not interested in the history of Difunta Correa per se; rather, what they appreciate are the narrative elements that resonate with their own life experiences: their folk-saint was a humble, pious woman, faithful wife and self-abnegating mother. She suffered abuse from those who were in power. After her tragic death, she was

⁷⁴ Cf. Sulpicius Severus' handling of Paul's martyrdom in § 5.1.

⁷⁵ See Grazziano 2007:173. A female devotee interviewed by del Brutto (2007:122) acknowledged that "in general, people know very little about the *history* of Difunta Correa; they are confused as to whether she lived in the 19th or 20th century." This nebulous understanding of chronology was also certainly shared by Paul's early devotees in the 2nd century. Notice that even Tertullian, a member of the Christian intellectual elite, estimated (ca. 197) that the beginning of Christianity had taken place 250 or 300 years earlier (*Ad Nat.* 1.7.9 and 1.9 respectively). Probably Tertullian retrojected the origins of his religion on purpose to make it seem older and more acceptable. Still, we have to conclude that he took advantage of both pagans' and Christians' poor sense of chronology. A textual note is in order here. Borleffs, in the 1954 Latin edition of *Ad Nationes* changed both numbers to "200 years." Borleffs' Latin text was recently used by Quincy Howe to produce his English translation in "Tertullian of Africa" (2011). Yet the 9th century Codex Agobardinus, our single MS for the text of *Ad Nationes* (digitally available at the BNF website), clearly shows otherwise: it reads "CCL" (at *Ad Nat.* 1.7.9) and "trecenti" (at *Ad Nat.* 1.9), the numbers used in the old 19th century Latin editions.

found by cattle drivers, which reminds devotees of “the image of their own ancestors” in 19th-century San Juan.⁷⁶ It is helpful to bear in mind these characteristics of the Difunta Correa tradition as we embark on our analysis of the first extant written tradition of Paul’s death.

4. The “Martyrdom of Paul”

In the past three sections we have acquired useful methodological tools to better study the *Martyrdom of Paul (MPI)*, the subject of this last section. *MPI* is nowadays published as the last chapter of the broader narrative known as *Acts of Paul (API)*. Scholars continue to debate the original structure of *API*, a novelistic biography of the apostle that has reached us in fragmentary form. As it currently stands, *API* contains distinct literary units that in antiquity enjoyed a separate existence. These are the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, the *Ephesus Acts*, *3 Corinthians*, and finally *MPI*, which was used for liturgical purposes related to Paul’s *dies natalis*. Given this state of affairs it has been hypothesized that an author-compiler redacted and strung together written sources, oral traditions and episodes of his own invention to produce *API*. An alternative view is that what we have in *API*, rather than a coherent whole, is a collection of independent texts. The issue is complex and need not detain us.⁷⁷ Our text of interest is of course *MPI*,

⁷⁶ The quote about the ancestors is taken from one of the devotees interviewed by del Brutto (2007:122). It is worth noticing that the forced conscription of Correa’s husband is also found in the folktales of “Gauchito Gil”, another 19th Argentinian folk-saint who is also said to have been forcibly recruited for battles in which he did not wish to participate. The motif of ordinary people suffering at the hand of authorities is common among South American folk-saints. We see this also in some of the stories circulating about Sarita Colonia, a Peruvian folk saint who died in 1940. Her cult was recently studied by Grazziano (2007:141-166). Her shrine is administered by one of Sarita’s sisters, still alive in her eighties. Sarita’s extant death certificate states that she died of malaria, yet her family survivors, in what is considered the “official story”, say that she died of an overdose of castor oil. This is because her family remembers her as a pious young woman who used castor oil to purify her soul. Yet many devotees believe that her death happened differently and that she died resisting an attempt a rape attempt by soldiers (see *ibid.* 149-153).

⁷⁷ See discussion in Eastman 2015:121-137, Pervo 2014:303-326, Snyder 2013:23-65, 217-225, 254-259, Tajra 1994:118-133, Schneemelcher 1992:2.213-270, Rordorf 1997:1.1127-1177. Among recent scholars, Pervo views *API* as a literary unit of which *MPI* is the last section, whereas Snyder, whose thesis I find slightly more persuasive, thinks that *MPI* is an originally independent text that can be read separately. Note that *3rd Corinthians*, another section of *API*, has very likely an independent origin (see Koester 2000, 2:302-303). The same is probably true for

which in the form that has been transmitted to us is itself also clearly based on pre-existing sources and traditions. The agreement on that matter is broad. There are narrative infelicities that, since they seem to reveal literary seams created by the insertion of sub-stories, make manifest the patchwork nature of the account. In the words of Tajra, the constituent pieces were superimposed “in a rather unskillful manner”⁷⁸ Before discussing the underlying sources of *MPI*, I will briefly summarize the account, which is given in its entirety in Appendix 4.b.⁷⁹

The *Martyrdom of Paul* starts with the arrival of the apostle in Rome where Titus and Luke await him. Paul rents a barn outside the city and preaches successfully; he converts Patroclus, Nero’s cupbearer, whom he resuscitates after the young man falls off a window ledge. The narrative implies that Patroclus is Nero’s “sexual object”.⁸⁰ The Emperor learns through him about the Roman Christian community. Christians are summoned by the Emperor, and Paul is recognized as their leader. The apostle introduces himself as a soldier of Christ, who levies soldiers for Jesus’ kingdom after life and invites Nero to join him. The Emperor condemns Paul to be beheaded and the other Christians to be burned. He starts a local persecution against Christians, but stops it after a popular uprising forces him to issue a decree prohibiting the killing of Christians without trial. On the way to his execution, Paul converts the prefect Longinus and

the section in *API* known as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Tertullian referred to this unit of material in **De Bapt.** 17.5 and stated that its author was a presbyter in Asia Minor who had been deposed from his position. Whatever one may think about the veracity of Tertullian’s story, this presbyter probably had nothing to do with the composition of *MPI* (see Eastman 2015:123). Note that while *Acts of Paul and Thecla* is often thought (whether rightly or not) to have been conceived as “literature for Christian women”, there is not a single female character in *MPI*.

⁷⁸ See Schneemelcher 1992:1:231 and Tajra 1994:131. Pervo 2014:303-326, although he believes that the extant *MPI* is the product of the same author who wrote the rest of *API*, states that in *MPI* the writer welded various sources and traditions.

⁷⁹ Although *MPI* only survives in two papyrus fragments and three MSS (see Eastman 2015:123), the reconstruction of the original account is hindered by several textual problems. Thus, there are variations in the published Greek texts and English translations of Tajra (1994), Pervo (2014) and Eastman (2015). For my dissertation I have selected Eastman’s translation, which is based on Zwierlein’s 2010 edition of the Greek text.

⁸⁰ See Pervo 2014:314.

the centurion Cescus, two of Nero's henchmen who offer to free him. Paul explains that he is "not a deserter" and tells them to go to his tomb at dawn where they will meet Titus and Luke. Paul is decapitated and milk spurts out of his head; soon after, he appears to the Emperor and his courtiers. Nero, out of fear, releases all Christian prisoners (including Patroclus). The ending scene of the account depicts Longinus and Cescus being baptized by Titus and Luke at the tomb of Paul.

We shall analyze first the sections that seem to have been inserted into an earlier written form of the narrative; these are bracketed in Appendix 4.b. As Snyder has pointed out, if these sections are excised we are left with a story that centers on Paul's conversion of Nero's soldiers Longinus and Cescus and flows much better.⁸¹ (1) The sub-story of Nero's killing of Christians, the popular uprising against him and his edict guaranteeing Christians legal rights comes out of the blue. This rather lengthy interpolated passage seems to have been clumsily inserted right after Longinus and Cescus are introduced as characters and we are told that Paul was preaching to them. In the inserted passage, Nero oddly summons Paul again to reorder his decapitation. The scene also gives Paul an opportunity to predict his resurrection appearance. (2) The vignette with Parthenius and Pheretas (a pair of doubting Thomases), sent by Nero to check on Paul's status, appears out of place in the middle of Paul's conversion of Longinus and Cescus before his execution. (3) Paul's resurrection appearance before Nero (predicted in the first section of inserted material) similarly interrupts the narrative. (4) The brief mention of Paul's second post-mortem appearance at the tomb between Titus and Luke also seems to be a later

⁸¹ See discussion of these four inserted units of material in Snyder 2013:58-59 and 219. Note that Titus and Luke begin and finish the account, forming an *inclusio* similar to the one found in Acts (particularly in its Western version, cf. § 3.2).

interpolation. Paul's epiphany is only seen by Longinus and Cescus and is not essential to the story.

The inserted units of material (slightly more than 20% of *MPI*) can help us better pinpoint the date, provenance and evolving structure of *MPI*. I will return to these issues in due course, but first I will examine the core story into which they seem to have been inserted. In § 2.1, we saw that traditions about Paul's final days have essential identifiable features that can be summarized in one sentence. The main tradition preserved in *MPI* is "anti-Neronian": Paul was decapitated in Rome as ordered by his rival, the Emperor Nero. Yet, as discussed in § 3.6-7, *MPI*'s story of Paul's death is at odds with the anti-Judaic tradition of canonical Acts.⁸² Luke had taken great pains to depict Paul as a loyal Roman subject and Christians as harmless to the emperors. This attitude of submission to imperial authorities had already been preached by the historical Paul in Romans 13:1-6; we also find these sentiments expressed elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Peter 2:13-15, Titus 3:1-2 and 1 Tim. 2:1-2) and among the Apostolic Fathers (*I Clem.* 61, *Pol.* 12.3 and *Ign. Rom.* 4). Yet in *MPI*, at the first meeting of Paul and Nero, the apostle is identified as the leader of Jesus' army who levies soldiers from Nero's kingdom.⁸³ In addition to stressing the hostility of Nero towards Paul and the Christians, the account presents Christianity and the Roman Empire as opposite camps. In *MPI*, Christian animosity towards imperial authority is not as extreme as the one found in the apocalyptic literature of the early 2nd

⁸² In Acts, Paul, accused by Jews before Roman authorities, is arrested in Jerusalem and arrives at Rome in chains. In *MPI* he arrives in Rome as a free man, and neither Jews nor prior trials are ever mentioned. In *MPI*, Paul's sole enemy is Nero. In canonical Acts, Nero is never mentioned by name. In Act 25:21 Paul asked vehemently for Caesar's legal protection, and the Western variant of Acts 25:27 implies that Nero is a just ruler (see discussion in § 3.6-7).

⁸³ The use of military language (Christians as a *militia Christi*) is reminiscent of 1 Tim. 1:18, 2 Tim. 2:3, 4:7. See Eastman 2015:129. Yet the above cited verses do not show animosity towards Rome. On the hostility of *MPI* towards the Empire, see discussion in Tajra 1994:120-121, 127-130.

century (cf. § 1.1), yet the prevailing attitude is very different from the meekness proposed by the proto-orthodox Christian writers cited above.

Although church authorities never considered *MPI* a canonical work (as opposed to Acts), *MPI*'s anti-Neronian tradition of Paul's death was adopted by all later martyrdom accounts and, furthermore, accepted as factual by Christians from the 2nd century to our day. Albeit ultimately unverifiable, it is probable that elements of the anti-Neronian tradition preserve vestiges of historical truth. Scholars have observed for instance that in *MPI* Nero condemns the Christians in Rome to be burned and have related this part of the narrative to the persecution of 64.⁸⁴ It is also interesting that Nero is said to have "issued an edict (διάταγμα) to the effect that all those found to be Christians should be killed" (*MPI* 2). As Rordorf (1997:1173) has noted before, Tertullian (*Ad Nat.* 7.9) probably had this passage in mind when he stated that of all of Nero's edicts, the only *institutum Neronianum* that was still in effect was the one against Christians.⁸⁵ Notice also, in *MPI* 2, the use of the verb ζητεῖσθαι to indicate that Nero ordered Christians to be "sought out" (cf. § 3.5 for a discussion of the importance of this verb in legal proceedings against Christians).

⁸⁴ Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 15.44. See Rordorf 1997:1174, Eastman 2015:131 and Snyder 2013:40. Tajra 1994:133 thinks that the following information in *MPI* has a historical basis: (a) Paul was executed in Rome by Nero; (b) he was a Roman citizen and for that reason was decapitated at the end of some sort of legal proceeding; (c) Paul's arrest was due to his success in preaching; (d) Paul's ministry in Rome was unconnected to Peter's.

⁸⁵ The word διάταγμα as "edict" of a ruler is attested primarily in the 1st and 2nd century CE. See for instance Hebrews 11:23 (τὸ διάταγμα τοῦ βασιλέως). The word appears often in Philo's works, twice in the *Acta Alexandrinorum* and also in Plutarch, who talks of "Pompey's edicts" (*Pomp.* 13.5). Tertullian's *institutum Neronianum* has been seen as a reference to the *instituta* mentioned by Suetonius in his brief reference to punishment of Christians (Suet. *Nero* 16.2.2). Yet it is more likely that Tertullian was thinking of the *MPI* account with which he also shows familiarity in *Scorp.* 15.2-4. Note also that Tertullian's expression does not need to come from Suetonius (cf. for instance *instituta Augusti* in Tac. *Ann.* 2.59); moreover, *institutum* is a very common word in Tertullian's writings. Last, recall that Tertullian uses apocryphal writings elsewhere to formulate his views on 1st century imperial attitudes towards Christians. For instance, he draws from *Acts of Pilate* (see *Apol.* 21) to exonerate the governor of Judea who had condemned Jesus.

While the first encounter between Nero and Paul seems integral to the narrative and could very well preserve an oral tradition that originated in the 1st century, the second passage that features the Emperor — as noted above — appears to be an inserted story dating from the 2nd century. Note that it ends with Nero repeating his prior sentence against Paul and the apostle foretelling of his *post mortem* appearance; then the interrupted dialogue between the apostle, Longinus and Cescus resumes as if nothing had happened. Nero’s second edict protecting the legal rights of Christians (forced upon the Emperor by a popular uprising) is not only utterly fanciful but also anachronistic. This second “edict” echoes the language of Trajan’s and Hadrian’s rescripts, prohibiting executions of Christians without trial.⁸⁶ Thus, it seems as if the interpolated passage recasts the persecution of Paul’s fellow Christians within the socio-historical circumstances of its readers, retrojecting the legal situation of 2nd century Asian Christians to Nero’s times. Based on this anachronism and the account’s lack of familiarity with the city of Rome, it seems quite reasonable that our extant *MPI* was composed in western Asia Minor ca. 150, as scholars have suggested.⁸⁷

If we remove the account of Paul’s second encounter with Nero, along with the shorter vignettes of Parthenius and Pheretas and of Paul’s post-mortem appearance before Nero, we are left with what Snyder (2013:219) calls “the penultimate form of the text”, an earlier written form

⁸⁶ For the rescripts, see Plin. *Ep.* 10.97 and Justin *Apol.* 1.68 respectively. See Tajra 1994:124 for similarities in language between Hadrian’s rescript and this substory in *MPI*. Nero is depicted as slaying Christians “without a trial” (ἀκρίτως) and then reversing course under public pressure and commanding that nobody might lay hands on any Christian until he should decide about their case (μηδένα ἄπτεσθαι Χριστιανοῦ, μέχρις ἂν διαγνοῖ). The call for a regular legal procedure is a recurring feature in the works of the Christian apologists of the 2nd century.

⁸⁷ See Rordorf 1997:1.1122. 150 CE is his date for *Acts of Paul* as a whole. For his part, Pervo 2014:304, in reference to *MPI*, states that the text, which shows familiarity with the Pauline corpus and other New Testament writings, “suggests a date not earlier than 150 CE”.

of *MPI* that he thinks was composed during the reign of Trajan (98-117).⁸⁸ This earlier text, roughly contemporary with canonical Acts (cf. § 3.1), would have included the story of Patroclus followed by the apostle's confrontation with Nero, Paul's conversion of Longinus and Cescus and their baptism at the tomb of the executed apostle. Yet it seems as if even these stories initially had no inherent connection with each other. Indeed, scholars have proposed that they were brought together (possibly by the author of our extant *MPI*).⁸⁹ All in all, it is very difficult to describe how these independent stories originated and evolved. Probably they had already been committed to writing and had undergone several redactional stages before they merged into our extant narrative. In my opinion, the story of Patroclus can shed light on this matter. As I intend to show, in its embryonic state, the story seems to have originated in Rome soon after Paul's martyrdom but in its current form was likely written in Asia Minor in the period 130-150 along with the rest of *MPI*, as I argued above.

In § 4.2-3, I have already suggested that early oral traditions about Paul's death were likely transmitted in the format of popular folktales. The seminal work on this subject was done

⁸⁸ Probably we should view the story of Parthenius and Pheretas as a free-floating tradition about Paul's final days that ended up inserted in *MPI*; note that in the late martyrdom account known as Pseudo-Linus — see § 5.4 — these two characters interact with a Christian matron named Plautilla at the city gate. Cf. the Pericope of the Adulteress in John 7:53-8:11 that is also found in the family of MSS *f*¹³ inserted after Luke 21:38. As to Paul's *post-mortem* appearance, apart from the obvious parallel with Jesus, the story is also reminiscent of post-mortem appearances in *On Marvels*, a book written by Phlegon of Tralles, a freedman of Hadrian. Interestingly, this pagan freedman from Asia Minor was familiar with stories about Jesus and Peter (see Or. *C. Cels.* 2.14).

⁸⁹ See discussion in Schneemelcher 1992:2.231 and Tajra 1994:131. Snyder 2013:59 has hypothesized that the story of Longinus and Cescus may have evolved from the account of a grave visit to which the *post mortem* appearance was added at one point. Cf. the evolution of the ending of Jesus' passion, which started in the gospel of Mark as a tomb visit; decades later the gospels of Luke and Matthew (which are based on Mark) added Jesus' resurrection appearances, which in turn influenced Mark's longer ending (Mark 16:9-20). Snyder (*ibid.*) also suggests that *MPI* may have been used for the baptism of Roman soldiers (such as Longinus and Cescus). While intriguing, there is no evidence to buttress the use of *MPI* as a "charter myth". To my knowledge we have no evidence of Christian imperial soldiers until Marcus Aurelius (if one gives credit to Tert. *Apol.* 5.6). On the other hand, Christian soldiers abound among the martyrs of the Diocletianic persecution, and Constantine is said to have visited the tomb of Lucian, his mother's favorite martyr, before his baptism (see Eus. *Vita Constantini* 61-62). It is also interesting that in the story of the Argentinean folk-saint Gauchito Gil, his executioner (like Longinus and Cescus) was the first to venerate him at his burial site.

by Dennis MacDonald, who proposed in 1983 that at least some of the underlying stories in *Acts of Paul* derived from early Christian folktales. For instance, evidence for the oral origin of the material in *MPI* is observed in its use of “the law of twins”. Despite *MPI*’s brevity, it contains six characters that always appear as sets of pairs (Luke—Titus, Parthenion—Pheretas and Longus—Cestus). The reader who peruses *MPI* in Appendix 4. Shall notice that these three sets of characters lack individuality, and always move, act and speak in unison.⁹⁰ Another tell-tale indication that the martyrdom account in *MPI* preserves early oral traditions is that some of the characters appear to be based on historical persons. That real people, although in a very nebulous way, lie behind characters of the apocryphal Acts has been previously discussed by other scholars. For instance, the Queen Tryphanea (ca. 10 BCE- 55 CE) who appears in *Acts of Paul and Thecla* was a real queen connected by blood to client rulers in Asia Minor and a distant relative of the Emperor Claudius (in both real life and Christian fiction). Similarly, the “senator Marcellus” featured in *Acts of Peter* is clearly based on Granius Marcellus, praetor of Bithynia under Tiberius (Tac. *Ann.* 1.74).⁹¹ Within *MPI*, Barsabbas Justus, a soldier of Nero converted to

⁹⁰ See MacDonald 1983:17-33. MacDonald borrowed these “laws” from a study by Alex Olrik that helps distinguish between the conventions of oral and written narratives. According to MacDonald, in addition to the “law of twins” *MPI* obeys two others. (a) The law of opening: the story begins by moving from calm to excitement. Paul first preaches successfully and then when he revives Patroclus he has to face Nero. (b) The law of contrast: polarization of characters. Everyone appears aligned with one of the two opposing camps (Neronians versus Christians). While I find MacDonald’s argument persuasive, note that there are exceptions to the rule. The Gospel of Matthew uses profusely the “law of twins”, but as a convention of literary refinement, often turning one character of its Markan source into two (see Matt. 4:18-22, 8:28-34, 9:27-31, 20:29-34, 21:1-7 and 26:60).

⁹¹ This process of rooting traditional stories in the times of known historical figures is also observed in the 1921 reports about Difunta Correa (see previous section) that situate her death during the lifetimes of the Argentinean local caudillos Quiroga and Lamadrid. On Tryphaena see MacDonald 1983:20-21. The historical Marcellus was accused by an informer of striking off the head of Augustus from a statue. Tiberius acquitted him of this charge but apparently not of embezzlement. In *Acts of Peter*, “senator Marcellus” becomes a disciple of the apostle. With the guidance and help of Peter, Marcellus miraculously restores a statue of the Emperor that had been broken into pieces. In another scene the Emperor tells Marcellus: “I am keeping you out of every office lest you rob the provinces and give the money to the Christians.” How and why Marcellus became connected to Peter is impossible to determine, yet the tradition must have originated in the 1st century. See discussion in Thomas 2003:48-50.

Christianity, is also likely based on a minor figure of first century Christianity.⁹² It is improbable that these stories were invented out of nothing by 2nd-century writers; the traditions must have started as 1st-century legendary stories of apostolic times that already contained Tryphaena, Marcellus and Barsabbas Justus as characters.

I will argue that the story of Patroclus, Nero's cupbearer, is another unit of material in *MPI* that likely derives from an early oral tradition. Recall that in his first appearance Patroclus falls down from a window and is resurrected by Paul. This detail of the story has intrigued scholars because of its obvious similarities with a scene depicted in Acts 20:7-12 in which a young man named Eutychus ("Good Luck") is also miraculously saved by Paul after a fall from a window. The origin of this evident intertextuality is still much debated but the issue need not detain us.⁹³ Notice that in terms of the plot, Patroclus' function in *MPI* can be summarized as follows: he is a secret Christian within Nero's household, and it is through him that Nero learns about the Christians and decides to punish them. Patroclus' fall from the window is a detail that could have been added later to the story. Could the character Patroclus have been loosely based

⁹² Luke mentions Barsabbas Justus as one of the two candidates to replace Judas (Acts 1:23). Lots were taken and Barsabbas lost against Matthias. In Christian tradition, he was remembered as the first bishop of Eleutheropolis and was listed as one of the "seventy disciples" (Eus. *HE* 1.12.3). We are told that the daughters of Philip (cf. Chapter 2.4) reported to Papias that Barsabbas had been forced to drink poison and was miraculously saved from its effects (Eus. *HE* 3.39.9). See Pervo 2014:316. The Barsabbas Justus of *MPI* is first arrested and then released. MacDonald 1983:24 conjectured that in the traditional story of Paul's death, Barsabbas was forced to drink poison but was unaffected (cf. Mark 16:18 for a description of this ability promised by Jesus to his followers). All in all, I find the identification of the Barsabbas Justus of *MPI* with the person known to Acts and Philip's daughters probable. However, there is no evidence to substantiate MacDonald's hypothesis regarding Barsabbas' drinking of poison in traditions about Paul's death.

⁹³ The characters and settings are very different. Plotwise, Patroclus does significantly more work in *MPI* than Eutychus in Acts (a minor character in a digressive passage). Several solutions have been proposed. See Snyder 2013:58-60. (a) Neither story is clearly dependent on the other literarily; both are "written variations on a common oral tradition." (b) Either the author of the "we passages" or Luke modified the Patroclus story and used it in a different context so as to not offend imperial sensibilities. Another hypothesis, which I find unconvincing, is that the story is literarily dependent on the character Elpenor of *Odyssey* 10-12 (MacDonald 1994). Interestingly, the Western Text of Codex Bezae (cf. Chapter 3.2) changes the name of the character Tychicus (one of the collection bearers from Ephesus) to Eutychus. It is difficult to determine the purpose of this change. Is it to introduce Eutychus earlier? See discussion in Heimerdinger, Josep Rius-Camps 2009:4.91-95.

on an obscure early Christian somewhat related to Paul and Nero? Unlike Barsabbas Justus, no records of a Christian Patroclus have survived. We do, however, have records of a certain Patrobas.

Before discussing how this Patrobas could have evolved into the Patroclus in *MPL*, we need to say something more about the historical person. As 19th-century scholars had already observed, the Patrobas (Πατρόβαζ) saluted by Paul in Rom. 16:14 as one of leading Christians in one of Rome's house-churches was probably a peripheral member of the imperial household. Patrobas (a short form of Patrobios) was very likely a dependent of Patrobios, a wealthy freedman of Nero.⁹⁴ This connection has prosopographic support; of all the people listed in Romans 16, Patrobas seems to have had the least common name. While many of the other names listed were quite common (for instance we have records for 640 men named Rufus in 1st-century Rome), the extant epigraphic evidence confirms the existence of only four people with the name Patrobas in that period.⁹⁵ Of the Christian whom Paul knew and saluted we know nothing else. Yet we know quite a bit about his likely namesake and master, a freedman who became a powerful figure in Nero's court and was put to death by Galba after Nero's fall. This Patrobios is attested by multiple 1st and 2nd-century writers (Plin. *Nat.* 35.13.47; Suet. *Galb.* 20; Tac. *Hist.* 1.49, 2.95; Plut. *Galb.* 17.2, 28.2; Dio 63.3, 64.3). Martial (*Ep.* 2.32), who moved to

⁹⁴ See the entry for Patrobas in the online version of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Ibid, the only "biblical Patroclus" is the father of the Syrian general Nicanor (2 Macc. 8:9). On the possible historical connection between Patrobas of Rom. 16:14 and Nero's freedman Patrobios, see Cook 1881: 28, 234, Lightfoot 1881:179 and more recently Bruce 1985:261.

⁹⁵ See Lampe 2003:164-83 for prosopographic analysis. Two surviving inscriptions (*CIL* 6.11095 and *CIL* 10.8043, 72) probably refer to Nero's freedman and his own dependents outside of Rome. Note that Patrobios is the Latinized form of Patrobas. Interestingly, Restituta, the freedwoman, has a typical slave name found in early Christian inscriptions. TLG and LLT online searches also corroborate the relative rarity of the name Patrobios/Patrobas. Epigraphically, in Italy Patrobios and its shortened forms Patrobas and Patrobulus are only attested either in connection to Nero's freedman or the person greeted by Paul in Rom. 16:14. Outside Italy, there is a wrestler, a victor at Olympia, named Ti. Claudius Patrobios, but his identification with Nero's freedman is improbable (see Crowther 1992:35-42).

Rome ca. 64, jokingly talks about a Patrobas (a likely allusion to Nero's freedman) who keeps damaging his neighbor's field; his neighbor, for obvious reasons, is afraid to complain.⁹⁶ When the Armenian king Tiridates came to visit Rome in 66 CE, a memorable and very costly gladiatorial exhibition in his honor was celebrated at Puteoli under the direction of Patrobius (Dio 63.3).

Interestingly, the bishop-lists of Pseudo-Dorotheus (3rd century) and Pseudo-Hippolytus name a certain Patrobulus (note the diminutive) as a 1st-century bishop of Puteoli. In the 4th century, Epiphanius' *Index discipulorum* identifies this Patrobulus with the Patrobas greeted by Paul in Romans 16:14.⁹⁷ According to Tertullian, churches had records of their bishops going back to apostolic times (*De Praesc.* 32). Although we must view his assertion — along with the aforementioned bishop-lists — with skepticism, it is worthy of notice that our sources connect both the Christian Patrobulus and his master Patrobius to Puteoli, where Paul (according to the “we passage” in Acts 28:13-14) had stayed a week with local Christians.

In summary, let us recapitulate our evidence. (1) The Patrobas greeted by Paul at the end of Romans has an unusual name as verified by epigraphical data. (2) He can be linked to the well-known freedman of Nero named Patrobius, of whom he was very likely a dependent. (3) Paul was proud of his connections with the imperial household in Rome (Phil. 4:22). (4) According to Acts 28:13-14 there were Christians in Puteoli in the early 60s CE where Paul stayed a week. (5) Our pagan sources inform us that Nero's freedman Patrobius had been active

⁹⁶ *Vexat saepe meum Patrobas confinis agellum, contra libertum Caesaris ire times.* Patrobas here represents a generic powerful freedman of the court (*libertus Caesaris*) whom freeborn Romans would not dare to cross.

⁹⁷ More precisely, Epiphanius makes Patrobas bishop of Naples, which is less than seven miles away from Puteoli. The author of the *Chronicon Pascale* (early 7th century) also has a list of early bishops that features Patrobulus. Possibly this information reaches back to the chronologies of Sextus Julius Africanus (ca. 160 – 240).

in Puteoli.⁹⁸ Needless to say, none of this proves the historicity of the Patroclus story.

However, it does suggest that the writer of our extant *MPI* did not invent the story *ex nihilo*; his creative license was likely bound by a received 1st-century tradition that in some way established a connection between the martyrdom of Paul and an obscure figure of Nero's household. As Green 2010:44 remarked, the author's presentation of Paul's martyrdom had to be embroidered onto "some substance of universally known truth".

Now, how could Patrobas/Patrobulus have developed into Patroclus? Note that the sexual innuendo in the story is patent.⁹⁹ Could the Patroclus of *MPI* be a composite of the freedman Patrobius and another male figure of the Neronian court? The historical Nero is said to have had two male consorts: the unfortunate young boy Sporus, whom the Emperor castrated, and his cupbearer Pythagoras. Yet these two would have been long forgotten by 2nd-century Christians.¹⁰⁰ In my opinion, the author of *MPI* has bestowed on Patroclus the characteristics of Antinous, a historical personage who would have been more immediately recognizable to Christians in the period 130-150. Antinous was the young lover of the Emperor Hadrian. When he died ca. 130, we are told that Hadrian grieved for him deeply; soon after, he deified Antinous and established a cult for him. Antinous' ubiquitous statues made him known to all inhabitants

⁹⁸ To these five points we may add that later sources identify this Patrobas with an early bishop of Puteoli named Patrobulus.

⁹⁹ See discussion in Pervo 2014:314. The Pseudo-Linus (see Chapter 5.4), a later martyrdom account based on *MPI*, makes the sexual relationship explicit and calls Patroclus a *deliciosus*, a favorite, of the Emperor.

¹⁰⁰ After Nero's death in June 68, Sporus committed suicide and Pythagoras and Patrobius were both killed (Dio 64.3.4, Tac. *Hist.* 1.49 and Suet. *Galba* 17.2, 20.2). The extant *MPI* was certainly composed more than half a century after these events. Recall that the inserted sub-story about Nero's "second edict" protecting the legal rights of Christians contains a likely allusion to Hadrian's edict of 122/123.

of the Empire, including Christians who disapproved of both his relationship with Hadrian and the cult.¹⁰¹

If my hypothesis is correct, then it sheds light on the evolution of early oral traditions about Paul's death. Although the earliest tradition of Patroclus was likely of Roman origin, just like the anti-Neronian tradition that constitutes the core of *MPI*, it was no doubt reformulated when it reached western Asia Minor where our narrative was likely composed. The historical Patrobas of Rom. 16:14 must have been a marginal figure, known only to Christians in Rome and probably those of Puteoli, where he was later remembered as the "first bishop" of the city. Given that he was probably a dependent of Patrobius, Nero's freedman, we cannot discard the possibility that he was minimally connected with the Emperor and that this connection triggered the initial story. Still, decades after his death, his name must have been meaningless to the Christian or Christians in Asia Minor who wrote *MPI*.¹⁰² It is possible, at least in theory, that Patrobas (Patrobulus in Latin) became Patroclus by a misreading. Indeed, we have evidence that the letters beta and kappa caused confusion; apart from that, the names of other *MPI* characters exhibit several alterations in the manuscript tradition.¹⁰³ However, it is much more likely that

¹⁰¹ On Sporus and Pythagoras, see Champlin 2003:45-46. On the parallels between Nero/Patroclus and Hadrian/Antinous see Pervo 2014:314. For Hadrian's reaction to Antinous' death see *Vita Hadr.* 14.5. As to Christian references to Antinous, notice that Hegesippus (fl. mid-2nd century) mentions the cenotaphs and temples of Antinoos' cult (Eus. *HE* 4.8.2). Tertullian (ca. 197) views the deification of Antinous as something disgraceful (*Ad Nat.* 2.10). When *MPI* was being composed, depictions of Antinous were likely omnipresent. Even in our day, Antinous' surviving statues rank him among the most frequently portrayed persons of antiquity.

¹⁰² Cf. Mark 15:21, a verse that identifies Simon of Cyrene as "the father of Alexander and Rufus". Both Matthew 27:32 and Luke 23:26 dropped this information, which was likely meaningless to their own audiences.

¹⁰³ Variations in the names and spellings of characters found in the surviving MSS of *MPI* were likely already present in the oral tradition. For instance, the character Cescus is also found as Cestus, Acescus and Egestius; the Syriac text alters Patroclus to Patricius; see Pervo 2014:317 and Eastman 2015:131. Cf. the variations in the first name of Difunta Correa (see previous section). As to a possible misreading we know that in Hellenistic cursive script (just as in minuscule Byzantine script) sloppily written kappas and betas could be misidentified. Even when dealing with Greek inscriptions in capitals, modern scholars have found these two letters confusing. See examples in Mitford 1947:230 and Ramsay 1918:160.

Patrobas/Patrobulus was changed to Patroclus (Achilles' famous *eromenos*) to make his function in the story more recognizable and his indirect association with Antinous more easily identifiable. Just as Hadrian had reacted with sorrow to Antinous' passing, *MPI* 2 describes Nero as deeply grieved after he hears of Patroclus' death. Then, when he is informed that his cupbearer has been resurrected and summons him to the court, Nero becomes angry at Patroclus when he learns that the young man is now a Christian. The scene is similar to other episodes found elsewhere in both *Acts of Paul* and *Acts of Peter* in which Christian sexual abstinence enrages the powerful.

For our purposes, the main importance of Patroclus' story is that it shows how a story that likely began as a 1st-century oral tradition about the final days of Paul could have been transformed in the mid-2nd century into the initial episode of *MPI*, the first surviving written account of the apostle's death. Patroclus' story also corroborates what we have suggested in sections 2-3 of this chapter: the original stories of Paul's martyrdom were likely transmitted in oral form and in the traditional format of folktales. Like the earliest stories told by devotees of Difunta Correa, the earliest stories about Paul were told by lower-class devotees who remembered his noble death, among them Christians at Rome who possibly were already visiting the apostle's martyr-site on the Ostian Road (cf. the story of Longinus and Cescus). As the stories were retold in different communities, they evolved into more or less established traditions about Paul's final days. As far as we can tell, our extant *MPI* combines several of these traditions into a somewhat coherent whole.¹⁰⁴ Of all the early oral traditions of Paul's martyrdom, and probably there were many (cf. § 2.3), only those in *MPI* have reached us.

¹⁰⁴ These traditions would be: the story of Patroclus, Paul's encounter with Nero and the Emperor's persecution of Christians, the story of the conversion of Longinus and Cescus and their visit to the apostle's tomb, the story of Parthenius and Pheretas and possibly Paul's post-mortem appearance before the Emperor.

Given its composite nature, it is very difficult to pinpoint the genre of *MPI*. In its final form, it glorifies Paul as a martyr and foundational figure of the Roman Christian community. Yet it certainly does not fit into the formal Greco-Roman genre of *teleute* used by literary men to immortalize the noble death of an important figure; instead it reads like a literary harbinger of future Christian martyrologies.¹⁰⁵ Despite its artistic limitations, the influence of this account was enormous. All subsequent martyrdom accounts openly adopted the anti-Neronian tradition (as opposed to the anti-Judaic tradition of canonical Acts). Moreover, the essential identifiable features of the story (that Paul personally met Nero and was beheaded in Rome during his reign) were unanimously accepted and became the official view of Paul's death. As Snyder puts it, despite its non-canonicity, since its composition *MPI* in one form or another has been used for historical and liturgical purposes by various kinds of Christians, orthodox and otherwise.¹⁰⁶

In relation to our discussion in § 2.3, this study of *MPI* provides some confirmation of my suggestion that even in the first decades after Paul's death there was never a single record of his martyrdom. *MPI* is an amalgamation of earlier traditions. In later centuries, probably because the account of *MPI* was never canonized, traditions of Paul's final days in Rome continued to enjoy a remarkable narrative fluidity. New stories continued to be composed, formed by the combination of prior written sources and fresh legends that were conceived from scratch. As we shall see in the next chapter (particularly sections 5.1 and 5.4), the later martyrdom accounts of Paul of the patristic period exhibit a rich intertextuality. Their study is in itself rewarding

¹⁰⁵ Compare for instance *MPI* with Tacitus' account of Seneca's death (*Ann.* 15.60-65) discussed in § 2.3. Literarily, *MPI* is a work of a rather low register. On the other hand, the author of *MPI* was perhaps a pioneer in his field and his account probably inspired later writers of martyrdom accounts.

¹⁰⁶ See Snyder 2013:258. Presumably, by the end of the 2nd century, after the number of Christians literary sophisticates had grown to a sizeable number (cf. § 2.3), new stories about Paul's martyrdom began to be influenced by "secondary orality" (the type of orality that arises in a more literary culture).

because it is often free of the problems that we encountered with the material in *MPI*. Indeed, in stories of Paul's final days written in the patristic period we can often identify with great certainty entire sections that have been borrowed from earlier written sources.¹⁰⁷ There is no reason not to retroject this phenomenon to the mid-2nd century, at least to some extent. This makes us suspect, once again, that in some sections of his narrative the author of *MPI* probably proceeded in similar fashion when he handled his own (unknown to us) earlier sources.

¹⁰⁷ In the three accounts that we shall study in detail — the Ps. Linus, Ps. Marcellus and Ps. Abdias — the use of prior written sources is very transparent. At the macro-level of analysis we find recasting of scenes, excisions or abridgments from longer texts, expansions from shorter texts.

CHAPTER 5: THE ENDURING TRADITIONS OF LATE ANTIQUITY

As seen in previous chapters, around the time of Constantine's so-called "edict of Milan" there was more than one tradition regarding the martyrdom of Paul. On the one hand, his martyrdom was remembered separately from that of Peter, as attested in two distinct literary forms by the anti-Judaic tradition of the book of Acts and the anti-Neronian tradition of the *Martyrdom of Paul (MPl)*.¹ On the other hand, there was a "catholic" tradition that remembered the missions and deaths of Paul and Peter in Rome as having occurred simultaneously.² In terms of cult sites, the apostles were honored at three different locations. Peter was venerated on his own in the Vatican, Paul on the Ostian Road and both apostles jointly, starting in 258 CE, at the *trichlia* of San Sebastiano on the Appian Road (cf. Appendix 4.a). During late antiquity (defined *ad hoc* as encompassing the years 350-600 CE) several new accounts of the apostles' martyrdom were written, among them "catholic" narratives that freely mingled elements found in the previously independent Petrine and Pauline traditions.³

In this chapter I study the proliferation of novel traditions about the death of Paul and the growing supremacy of the "catholic" tradition, which, although already attested ca. 110, became

¹ *MPl* nowadays appears as the last episode of *Acts of Paul*, just as the *Martyrdom of Peter* appears as the last episode of *Acts of Peter*. Yet, from an early date both martyrdom accounts circulated independently and were read on commemorative days. See Schneemelcher 1992:2.230-231 and 2.278.

² See § 2.4 of this dissertation for several 1st and 2nd century examples. The apocalyptic Christian poet Commodian (ca. 250) also twins the death of Peter and Paul together under Nero (*Apol.* 828). The term "catholic traditions" in reference to joint "Petro-Pauline" accounts was probably started by R.A. Lipsius in his *Acta Apocrypha* of 1891. Theologically, catholic traditions would support the doctrinal proposition known as the *Concordia Apostolorum* (see § 5.5).

³ For instance, Peter's famous confrontation with Simon Magus, discussed in § 5.1.

much more prominent after the consolidation of the papacy and was used to bolster the authority of the Roman church in relation to other churches. Secondly, I examine how church leaders manipulated newly formed traditions for their own purposes: thus Jerome lent his authority to the forged correspondence between Seneca and Paul and Ambrose of Milan “discovered” and promoted the worship of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius, (believed to be disciples of Paul). Thirdly, I analyze how the martyrdom accounts written in late antiquity blended various existing traditions and furnished the Middle Ages with a rich source of stories about Paul’s stay in Rome, the people who interacted with him and detailed “information” about his martyrdom.

1. *Historia Sacra*: Paul and Peter in Rome

In this section we will focus our attention on two texts of the late 4th century that exemplify the increasing dominance of the “catholic tradition”. Although very different in origin and nature, they are alike in grafting depictions of Nero’s killing of the apostles into works of a much larger historical scope. Thematically, these works can be classified within the subgenre of *historia sacra*, i.e. historiography that focuses on God’s people and is written for their benefit.⁴

The first work of interest is the so-called Pseudo-Hegesippus (Ps-Hgp), a free Latin adaptation in five books of Josephus’ *Bellum Judaicum*. Both the author and the original title of this late 4th-century work are unknown but its manuscript tradition in medieval times was rich and varied.⁵ Needless to say, the account of the apostles’ martyrdom in the Ps-Hgp was not part

⁴ See Press 1982 for an analysis of how Christian historiography evolved. I find the term *historia sacra* useful for discussing the writings in this section, since the passages dealing with the deaths of the apostles were included as important episodes in the story of God’s people (see *ibid.* 116-117). What is more, the first printed edition of Sulpicius Severus’ *Chronica*, one of the two authors to be studied, was entitled *Historia Sacra*, and Sulpicius himself in the preface refers to the historical events transmitted in the New Testament as *historia sacra*.

⁵ In the MSS, the titles found are *De excidio urbis Hierosolymitanae*, *De Bello Iudaico*, *Historia* or *Historiae*; the last one was chosen in the modern CSEL edition. About twenty MSS state that the work is a translation done by

of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*. The author of the Ps-Hgp built his report of the martyrdom mostly from a Latin translation of the *Acts of Peter*, selecting the famous showdown of Peter and Simon Magus and the *Quo Vadis* scene (in which Jesus appears to Peter as he tries to escape from Rome and asks him whither he is going). Paul was added to this Petrine account, but plays a very accessory role as Peter's companion and is mentioned only three times. Paul's manner of death is apparently taken from the Pauline tradition, since the apostle is said to have been "killed by the sword". In the Ps-Hgp, the martyrdom of Peter and Paul occupies a central place in the work's five books. It appears in section 3.2 at a pivotal moment when power switches from Nero, the histrionic emperor, to Vespasian, the competent ruler, an opposition mirrored by that between the charlatan Simon Magus and Peter, the virtuous miracle worker.⁶ In the historical and religious context of Ps-Hgp, the apostles' deaths coincide with the destruction of Jerusalem and the emergence of Rome as the new sacred capital of God's people.

Another work of *historia sacra* that incorporates an account of Paul's and Peter's deaths into a larger historical framework, and one that for our purposes is much more important than the Pseudo-Hegesippus, is the *Chronica* of Sulpicius Severus.⁷ Sulpicius was born ca. 355 into the Gallo-Roman nobility at Bordeaux in Aquitaine, a place that produced other famous 4th-century

Ambrose; yet because of the book's association with the Jewish historian Josephus, Carolingian scribes — through a process still debated by scholars (probably the Latinization of the author's name) — attributed the work to the second century Christian writer Hegesippus. Ps-Hgp was not the only 4th century Christian writer interested in Josephus' works. The Jewish historian was also used as a source in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which was translated into Latin by Rufinus' ca. 395. There is also an anonymous Latin translation of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* unrelated to the Ps-Hgp. See Lanéry 2008:127-130 and 465-483.

⁶ See Lanéry 2008: 478.

⁷ Sulpicius' *Chronica* seems to have survived the Middle Ages via a single 11th-century manuscript. Yet after its 1556 *editio princeps* under the title *Historia Sacra*, it became a popular school textbook (see Beck 1862:22 and de Senneville-Grave 1999:60). As we shall see in § 5.5, among ancient accounts of the Neronian persecution, Sulpicius' version is probably the one that most resembles the modern Christian mental picture of the events; indeed, its basic framework has much in common with the one found in the novel *Quo Vadis*, by 1905 Nobel Prize winner H. Sienkiewicz, and its cinematographical adaptations (see § 5.5). See de Senneville-Grave 1999:7-68 for background on Sulpicius Severus and the characteristics of his *Chronica* discussed in this paragraph.

Christian writers such as Hilary of Poitiers and the rhetoricians Nazarius and Pacatus. In 397, Sulpicius wrote the *Vita Martini*, his biography of Martin of Tours, and about 403 he finished the *Chronica*, in which he narrated important world events from the creation of the world to his own days in strict chronological order. For Christian authors, chronography served different purposes: in the late 2nd century, apologists used it to show the antiquity of Judaism and therefore Christianity (cf. Clement's *Stromata* and Theophilus' *Ad Autolyicum*); additionally, since Christians writers believed in a created world, they found chronography useful for knowing when the world would end. Based on an idea first postulated in the *Epistle of Barnabas*, many Christians believed that the world would last 6,000 years.⁸ Sulpicius Severus, operating under this millenarian mindset, thought that he was writing his *Chronica* in the year 5888, not far from the culmination of human history. Since his generation was close to the end of times, he intended to use the history of the past to prepare Christians — God's present chosen people (*Chronica* 1.7.1) — for the immediate future. The *Chronica* is written in two books. The first book covers the times from Genesis till the Babylonian exile, drawing from the Old Testament. The second book continues the narrative up to the author's lifetime; for it, Sulpicius drew from pagan sources (as he informs the reader in the preface), including the works of Tacitus. His use of the Roman historian was part of the renewed interest in Tacitus among late 4th-century writers after a long period of neglect.⁹ In the *Chronica*, Tacitus serves as a source for the first period of "Christian times", (sections 2.27 to 2.34, covering the years between Jesus and Constantine).

⁸ See Ehrman 2012:447.

⁹ Apart from Tertullian (*Apol.* 16.1-3; see also 5.3), there are no indisputable references to Tacitus' works until the late 4th century. Ca. 390, Ammianus Marcellinus began his monumental *Res Gestae* where Tacitus had left off, with the accession of Nerva in 96. As to Sulpicius Severus, he quotes a total of eleven passages from the extant Tacitean corpus, five from the *Annals* and six from the *Histories*. For an exhaustive list of Tacitus' reception in antiquity, see Mendell 1957:225-234. The matter is further discussed later in this section.

This account is surprisingly short relative to the rest of the *Chronica*, occupying only 7% of the whole work.¹⁰

Having discussed the historical background of the *Chronica*, I will now focus on the passage in which Sulpicius talks about the missionary activity of Paul and Peter, the fire in Rome, Nero's persecution, the apostles' martyrdoms and Nero's return at the end of times (2.28-29). The sentences borrowed from Tacitus' *Ann.* 15.37-44 appear in italics.

28.1 Luke covered the acts of the apostles up to the time when Paul was escorted to Rome, during the rule of Nero. I will not call Nero a king, but he was quite rightly deemed the foulest of all men and even monstrous beasts; he was the first to start a persecution. I do not know whether he will also be the last, coming as the antichrist, as is thought by many. The nature of his crimes would have demanded that I cover these matters thoroughly, but it is not possible to enter into such a lengthy undertaking in a work of this kind. I am content to have only noted that this man, in all of his deeds, showed himself to have gone so far in the most foul and cruel deeds as to kill his own mother, *and later to make a mock marriage to a certain Pythagoras in the manner of a solemn wedding. The emperor wore a bridal veil; a dowry, conjugal bed, wedding torches, and everything else that accompanies a wedding were displayed; even among women, these items are not displayed without modesty* (“post etiam Pythagorae cuidam in modum sollemnium coniugiorum denuberet; inditumque imperatori flammeum; dos et genialis torus et faces nuptiales, cuncta denique, quae vel in feminis non sine verecundia conspiciuntur”, cf. Tac. *Ann.* 15.37.9).... He was the first to attempt to abolish the name Christian. Clearly, vices are always the enemies of virtues, and all the best people are perceived as hypercritical by the wicked.

28.2 The divine religion had grown stronger in the city at that time; Peter held the bishopric there, and Paul, after he had appealed to Caesar from the unjust judgment of the governor, was taken to Rome. Many people assembled in order to hear him; these people had understood the truth and were motivated to join in the worship of God by the virtues that the apostles had then strongly displayed. Peter and Paul held their famous meeting against Simon at this time. Simon, using his magical arts in an attempt to prove that he was a god, had flown into the air, supported up by two demons. When, by the prayers of the apostles, the demons were put to flight, Simon fell to the earth and was shattered, with the people looking on.

29.1 Meanwhile, with the number of Christians already expanding, it happened that Rome was burned up in a fire. At this time, Nero was at Antium (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 15.39.1). The universal

¹⁰ This is how Sulpicius describes the Christian period. In 2.27, the author succinctly situates Jesus' birth and execution within its historical context. Yet as Sulpicius himself explains, he abstains from relating specific events narrated in the Gospels and Acts out of reverence for these books of the New Testament. Sulpicius then resumes the narrative at the point at which Luke leaves Paul in Rome (Acts 28:30-31), recounting the Neronian persecution in sections 2.28-29. Next, in 2.30, he narrates the siege of Jerusalem (seemingly using a lost passage of Tacitus). Last, sections 2.31-32 list the other emperors who persecuted Christians and lead to sections 2.33-34 that deal with the beginning of the Christian Empire under Constantine. For the sake of comparison, Sulpicius' treatment of the Arian and Priscillian heresies (2.35-51) — relevant to his contemporaries but less crucial to Christian history — occupy twice as much space.

opinion of the people laid the blame for the fire on the emperor as it was believed that the emperor wanted the glory of renovating the city. Nero was unable to devise any strategy to convince people that he had not ordered the fire. Consequently, he turned prejudice against the Christians, and the crudest tortures were carried out against the innocent. As a matter of fact, *new forms of death were devised; some were covered with skins of animals and died after being ripped apart by dogs; many were nailed to crosses or burned in the flames; a few were held back so that on the appointed day, they might be burned to serve as a source of light at night* (“quin et novae mortes excogitatae, ut ferarum tergis contacti laniatu canum interirent, multi crucibus affixi aut flamma usti, plerique in id reservati, ut cum defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur”, cf. Tac. *Ann.* 15.44.4).

29.2 The desire to practice brutality against the Christians sprang from this beginning. For afterward, the religion was forbidden by published laws, and edicts were openly displayed that stated that it was not permitted to be a Christian. Then Paul and Peter were condemned to death; Paul had his neck cut by a sword, while Peter suffered crucifixion. While these events were unfolding in Rome, the Jews, chafing under the injustices of their governor, Festus Floras, began to rebel. Nero sent Vespasian against them with the power of a proconsul, and after many hard-fought battles, he compelled the defeated people to seek refuge within the walls of Jerusalem.

29.3 Meanwhile, Nero, who now had grown hateful even to himself because of his awareness of his wicked acts, was removed from human affairs. It is not certain if he killed himself, for his body was never found. From this it is believed that, even if he had run himself through with a sword, he was preserved by the healing of his wound, according to what was written about him. The death blow was healed (cf. Rev. 13:3), and he was sent away until the end of the age, so that he might carry out the mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7).¹¹

Now let us examine the most relevant sentences of the cited passage. In 2.28.1 Sulpicius informs us that his narrative starts where Luke-Acts had left its own readers, with Paul being brought to Rome while Nero was Emperor.¹² Sulpicius describes the Emperor as a monstrous ruler, in the anti-Neronian tradition of previous Christian writers.¹³ The author also states that since Nero was the first persecutor, many think that he will come back at the end of times preceding the Antichrist (cf. Commodianus’ *Apol.* 933 and our discussion in § 1.3). Next

¹¹ This translation of *Chronica* 2.28-29 is taken from Goodrich 2015:155-156. The Latin text for the passages that Sulpicius borrowed from Tacitus are taken from the 1999 edition of de Senneville-Grave.

¹² Notice however that Sulpicius discards the anti-Judaic motifs that pervade Acts. In 2.28.2, he attributes Paul’s appeal to Caesar to the unjust judgment of the governor (Festus). Yet in Acts 25-26, Festus shows himself quite sympathetic to Paul’s cause whereas the Jerusalem Jews are his enemies, even more so in the Western Text of Acts. Cf. § 3.7.

¹³ Cf. Tert. *Apol.* 5.3-5 and Lact. *de Mort. Pers.* 2.25.

Sulpicius relates Nero’s deeds that most likely would have shocked his readers, namely the murder of Agrippina and, using Tac. *Ann.* 15.37 as his source, his marriage to his freedman Pythagoras.¹⁴ Note that, unlike the imagined Nero of *MPI*, this passage lists the Emperor’s actual crimes, thus helping Sulpicius root his narrative of the Neronian persecution in its proper historical context. Next the author describes the situation of Christians at Rome before the persecution (2.28.2); favoring the catholic tradition, he places Peter and Paul together in the city, with the former holding the office of bishop and the latter preaching to the urban crowd and converting large numbers of Romans. Sulpicius also relates their joint victory over Simon Magus, made to fall from his demonic flight by the apostles’ prayers.¹⁵ Next follows his brief account of the Great Fire at Rome (2.29.1), which is said to have taken place while the Emperor was at Antium (cf. *Ann.* 15.39.1). When Nero came back to the city he found himself the object of popular discontent and decided to deflect the people’s ill-will to the local Christian community — at that time already an “abundant *multitudo*” — blaming them for setting Rome in fire. Not surprisingly, Sulpicius skips Tacitus’ scornful observations about the Christian movement; yet he borrows the historian’s description of how Christians were first tortured in the context of judicial investigations (*quaestiones*), and later killed in the cruel charades that we have discussed in § 1.2, torn by dogs and burned to death to provide nocturnal illumination (cf. *Ann.* 15.44.4).¹⁶ Next we are told that Nero’s persecution was followed by the official

¹⁴ Cf. the character Patroclus in the apocryphal *Martyrdom of Paul* (see § 4.4).

¹⁵ The same tradition appears in the Pseudo-Marcellus (see § 5.4). According to Gregory of Tours (*de Gloria beatorum Martyrum*, 28), ruts were formed in the pavement by the impression of the two Apostles’ knees. The rainwater collected there had healing properties. By popular demand, Pope Paul I (757-767) had a Church built on the Via Sacra at the specific site in honor of the apostles’ victory.

¹⁶ For *quaestiones*, see discussion of its use in the Latin translation of Acts 28:29 in § 3.6. Cf. *Chronica* 2.31.1, in which the same word is used to describe Trajan’s persecution: *Qui cum tormentis et quaestionibus nihil in Christianis morte aut poena dignum reperisset, saeuiri in eos ultra uetuit*. This must come from Tert. *Apol.* 2.10 or its ultimate source, namely Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.8. Before Sulpicius’ borrowing from Tacitus’ *in usum nocturni luminis*

prohibition of the Christian religion (2.29.2); Sulpicius' unhistorical claim was likely taken from earlier Christian sources (cf. Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.7.9 and *MPI* 2 in § 4.4). Sulpicius then briefly describes the martyrdoms of Paul and Peter following accepted traditions; i.e. Paul was beheaded and Peter crucified.

Sulpicius ends his report of the Neronian persecution with an *inclusio*, taking up the theme of Nero's return at the end of times (2.29.3) with which he had started his account of the Emperor in 2.28.1. His insistence on this matter must be examined in its proper historical context. The late 1st-century legend of *Nero Redivivus* that we discussed in § 1.3 did not entirely fade away in the following centuries. What is more, in late antiquity the renown of Nero as a powerful figure of the distant past appears to have been at its peak when Sulpicius was writing the *Chronica*.¹⁷ There was a common belief among the author's contemporaries that Nero was hiding and would return as the Antichrist.¹⁸ Sulpicius Severus himself recounted that Saint Martin of Tours that Martin — frequently visited by Peter and Paul, the two most famous victims of the Neronian persecution — had revealed to him that Nero would come back at the ends of times as an ally of the Antichrist and carry out persecutions (*Dialogi* 2.13-4).

urerentur, references to fire as part of Nero's punishment of Christians are already found in the so-called *Passio Pauli Brevior*, the Latin translation of the 2nd century Greek *MPI*, in which one reads that [Nero] *iussit omnes milites christi exuri* (see Lipsius 1891:1.113). The anonymous writer of the *Pseudo-Linus*, probably a contemporary of Sulpicius, makes the connection between the charge of arson and the punishment even more apparent: *Haec audiens Nero et ira succensus, quia mundi figuram per ignem Paulus dixerat resolvendam iussit omnes milites christi cremari* (see Eastman 2015:152 for the Latin text). I return to this matter in § 5.4.

¹⁷ For centuries, Nero survived in popular artistic productions. Many busts and cameos of Nero have been found reworked into the features of other emperors (from Vespasian down to 4th century emperors). Likewise, in medallions made ca. 395-410, portraying great Romans of the past, Nero was the most popular of all (see Champlin 2003:30-32). Champlin speculates that he might have been remembered as a great giver of games and builder of buildings.

¹⁸ Nero had been unambiguously identified as the Beast of Revelation by Bishop Victorinus of Pettau ca 270. For popular belief in Nero as the Antichrist at the time of Sulpicius' composition of the *Chronica*, see Jerome (*Commentarium in Daniele* II.28-30) and Augustine (*Civ. Dei* 20.19.3).

To sum up, this section has presented new literary developments in the treatment of Paul's martyrdom among the literary elite of the 4th century. Writers of historical works favored the so-called "catholic" tradition that, unlike the *Martyrdom of Paul* studied in Chapter 4, deliberately linked the missions and martyrdoms of Peter and Paul at Rome. Thus the anonymous author known as Pseudo-Hegesippus ca. 350-390 wrote about the deaths of Peter and Paul, not in the style of hagiographies or *Acta* but as a pivotal episode within the events of the Jewish War. Ca. 403, his innovative approach was taken up by Sulpicius Severus, the author of a *historia sacra* from the creation of the world to his own times that included an account of the joint mission and martyrdom of Peter and Paul. Since he was writing about the Neronian persecution within a broader historiographical framework, Sulpicius must have felt the need to root Paul's martyrdom in history by presenting a coherent "cause and effect" sequence of events that would mesh well with the rest of his *Chronica*. He found what he needed in Tacitus' *Ann.* 15.37-44, a section of the *Annals* that remained unused by other 4th-century Christian writers known to have been familiar with the work of the Roman historian.¹⁹

For modern historians interested in the persecution, as seen in § 1.2, the modest information preserved in *Annals* 15.44 constitutes the most reliable source. Still, reading the *Chronica*, one notices that Sulpicius surrounded his Tacitean borrowings with denser material

¹⁹ *Ann.* 15.37-44 deals with Nero's marriage to Pythagoras, the Great Fire and the Neronian persecution. Among Christian authors of Sulpicius' generation who wrote about Paul's final days, we know of four others who had familiarity with Tacitus. Yet none of them utilized the information given in *Ann.* 15.44. (1) Pseudo-Hegesippus, mentioned above, was familiar with Tacitus (cf. for instance Ps-Hgp 4.6 with Tac. *Hist.* 5.6), but based his account of the Neronian persecution (Ps-Hgp 3.2) exclusively on Christian sources. (2) Jerome, in his *Commentary on Zacchariah* 14.1, 2 refers to Tacitus as the author of "a historical work in 30 volumes going from the death of Augustus to the death of Domitian". Whether he had actually read the *Annals* we do not know; at any rate he did not use *Ann.* 15.44 in his notice about Paul's death (see next section in this chapter). (3) In Orosius' *Adversus Paganos* (ca. 418), we find six citations from the lost parts of Tacitus' *Historiae*. Still, in his brief description of Paul's martyrdom in *Adv. Pag.* 7.7.65 there are no traces of Tacitean material. (4) For his part, the forger of the correspondence between Seneca and Paul, as we shall see in the next section, was probably familiar with Tacitus' *Annals*, but drew his description of the Great Fire and the Neronian persecution primarily from other sources.

taken primarily from Christian sources. Likely, to the readers of the *Chronica* who like the author operated under a millenarian mindset, the most appealing aspect of Sulpicius' account, apart from the mission and martyrdom of Paul and Peter in Rome, must have been the portrayal of Nero as a supernatural figure who would return at the end of times. The originality of Sulpicius, in comparison to other Christians authors who had previously written about Paul's martyrdom, resides in his being the first who explicitly merged the "catholic" traditions of the two apostles' deaths with Tacitus' report of the Great Fire and the Neronian persecution; previously, these traditions had been circulating mostly independently for about three centuries.²⁰

Notice also that as a historian, Sulpicius did not intend to write about Paul's *passio* with an eye to creating a liturgical text for the apostle's martyr cult. Unlike earlier writers, he had in mind a bigger (historical) picture of the events. Indeed, as he transitions from section 2.29 to 2.30 of the *Chronica*, Sulpicius deliberately narrows the time gaps so as to link together crucial events in 1st-century Christian history: Nero's crimes against Christians, his killing of the apostles, his suicide and the siege of Jerusalem.²¹ Another peculiarity of Sulpicius is that — in

²⁰ As was long ago noticed, Eusebius, in the early 4th century, still separates the fire from the persecution by a period of four years (see Canfield 1913: 54-55). In his *Chronicon*, under the 9th year of Nero, he says, "Conflagrations broke out in great numbers at Rome." Next, under the 13th year of Nero he gives the notice on the persecution. Jerome (ca. 380), having translated and expanded Eusebius' *Chronicon*, made some slight but not significant revisions to the information that he had received. Under the 10th year of Nero's reign he says: "Nero, in order to witness a likeness of the burning of Troy, burned a great part of the city of Rome." Later, however, under the year 68, Jerome speaks of the persecution without making any allusion to the fire. Only two late 4th century authors view the persecution of Christians as a consequence of the Great Fire: first and foremost, Sulpicius Severus, who practically transcribes the account of Tacitus (*Chronica* 2.29), and secondly the forger of the correspondence between Paul and Seneca, whom we shall study in the next section.

²¹ Nero's killing of Paul and Peter, the siege of Jerusalem and the emperor's suicide are not given specific dates but condensed into consecutive sections, implying temporal proximity (2.29.2-3). According to Sulpicius, Vespasian was proclaimed Emperor while besieging Jerusalem (2.30.1). In reality, Vespasian was in Caesarea at the time of his proclamation on July 1st 69, and the siege started seven months later. See de Senneville-Grave 1999: 427-428. Before Sulpicius, Hegesippus in the 2nd century (preserved in Eus. *HE* 2.23.18-20) had also purposely played loose with chronology and tied the martyrdom of James the Just (ca. 62) to Vespasian's siege of Jerusalem (February 70). Beginning in the 4th century, Christian writers start to claim that Paul and Peter had been martyred on June 29th but they disagreed about the year (see Eastman 2011:22-23). In the Armenian version of Eusebius' *Chronicon*, the apostles' death was placed in the year 67 while Jerome's Latin version the date is moved to June 29th 68. Note that

comparison to the accounts of Paul's death found in the *Acta* and *Passiones* of late antiquity — he tones down the more fantastic elements. True, Sulpicius mentions in passing the apostles' miracles and narrates their confrontation with Simon Magus, including his flight and fall onto the ground after the apostles' prayer, yet the outlandish details that are normally found in contemporary hagiographies are absent from his narrative.²² This gives Sulpicius' account an air of seriousness that was likely intended by the author. Not surprisingly, Sulpicius' version of Paul's death, told within the context of the Great Fire and Nero's persecution of the local Christian community, is quite congenial to the modern mental picture of these events.

2. Seneca: Paul's Literary Friend and Victim of Nero

Large-scale historiography, however, was not the only genre in which we can trace the development of new traditions about the death of Paul. In this section we will examine a very different literary genre, epistolography. We will also consider a very clear-cut example of the impact that ecclesiastical politics and doctrinal disputes could have on the spread of newly minted traditions about the final days of Paul in Rome.

Right after Tacitus describes the Great Fire and Nero's punishment of the Roman Christians (*Ann.* 15.38-44), he begins his account of the downfall of Seneca (*Ann.* 15.45), who, after losing favor with the Emperor, committed suicide in April 65. Although Tacitus could not have known it, the Stoic moralist shared interesting historical ties with Paul. His brother Gallio

Nero died on June 11th, so the date does not make sense. See Cook 2010:99. Most likely Jerome, like Sulpicius, viewed Nero's fall as a direct consequence of his killing of the apostles.

²² Some of the late *Acta* and *Passiones* on Paul's martyrdom are discussed in § 5.4. Probably because Sulpicius conceived the *Chronica* as a historiographical work, he showed restraint when retelling miraculous events (see de Senneville-Grave 1999:22). By contrast, Sulpicius' biography of Saint Martin, a hagiographical work written about six years earlier, abounds in descriptions of miraculous feats. Indeed, Barnes 2010: 199-234 states that Sulpicius' *Vita Mart.* is largely fictitious and compares it to the stories found in its contemporary *Historia Augusta*.

had been the proconsul of Achaea in 51 C.E. when Paul was brought to trial by the Corinthian Jews (Acts 18:12-17). Recall also from § 1.1 that when Paul arrived in Rome, he was delivered to the *stratopedarch* before it was decided that he would live under military custody (Acts 28:16). Some scholars have interpreted this passage as a reference to Afranius Burrus, the Praetorian Prefect at that time, although in Sherwin-White's view, the *stratopedarch* should be identified with the *princeps castrorum* who was a subordinate of Burrus. So at least in theory we cannot discard the possibility that Burrus, who had regular contact with Seneca as co-advisor to Nero, was minimally acquainted with the apostle Paul *qua* prisoner.²³ One can assume that some educated Christians may have been aware of these loose connections between Seneca and Paul. For instance, Jerome in his *Chronicon* has a notice on Gallio in which he calls him "a brother of Seneca". In any event, several Christian writers of the period 200-400 CE regarded Seneca as an important author whose Stoic ideas often overlapped with Christian doctrine. At the beginning of the third century, Tertullian (*An.* 20.1) had called him *Seneca saepe noster* and Lactantius, ca. 324, praised Seneca's theological insight, lamenting that "he could have become a true worshipper of God, if someone had shown him how" (*Inst.* 6.24).

In the late 4th century, an anonymous Christian writer made Lactantius' wish come true. Picking up the existing thin points of contact between Paul and Seneca, he forged a correspondence between the two men, imagining that they had become acquainted and established a literary friendship. The spurious epistolary exchange became a successful *leggenda erudita*; for over a thousand years, medieval writers believed that the famous Seneca, one of the greatest minds of the first century and tutor of Nero, had been a friend of Paul during the apostle's final days in Rome and that Paul had turned him into a Christian sympathizer. The

²³ See discussion in Taira 1994:42-43 and his source Sherwin-White 1963:110. See also Barlow 1938:2-3. In this section, I shall use Barlow's critical edition for the Latin text of the correspondence.

famous *Roman de la Rose* (ca. 1275) explicitly calls Seneca a martyr in the Christian sense (lines 6481-6484). In this poem, Nero, having decided to kill Seneca, forces the moralist to choose his manner of death. Seneca replies: “Let me die in hot water so that my cheerful soul might return to God his maker” (lines 6487-6494). Similarly, in the early 15th century, the Italian humanist Gasparino Barzizza wrote a commentary on the forged correspondence as if it were authentic, concluding that Seneca was one of the secret disciples of Paul who kept his conversion hidden from the Emperor out of fear for his safety and that, when forced to commit suicide by Nero, Seneca was baptized “with blood and water.”²⁴

How can we explain the long-lasting appeal of the forged correspondence? There are two main reasons for its success. First, unlike many other forgeries that Christianized historical persons, the epistolary fiction between Paul and Seneca was conceived on plausible historical grounds.²⁵ The chronological overlap in their lives, the documented fact that Paul met Seneca’s brother, the possibility that he also met Burrus and the similarities in moral sentiments expressed in their extant works rendered the historicity of their alleged friendship quite credible. The second reason for the success of Seneca’s legend has to do with Jerome’s role in its transmission; I will return to this matter later in this section.

²⁴ See a discussion on Barzizza’s *Commentary* in Escapa 1991:265-266. For a discussion on the reception of Seneca among his Italian admirers in the 14th and 15th centuries see Ker 2009:203-206. Ibid:204, a medieval wooden engraving is shown depicting Seneca and his wife in their bath. Before Barzizza, Giovanni Colonna (ca. 1330-1338) declared in his *Vita Senecae* that he had always believed that Seneca was a Christian and Alberto Mussato (early 14th century) in *Ecerinis* made Seneca a silent activist for the Christians (*Christianorum fautor tacitus*).

²⁵ Cf. for instance the highly fanciful *Acts of Pilate* that immediately strikes the modern reader as historically implausible. For points of contact between Paul and Seneca see Sevenster 1961:14-15. All in all, we cannot say with any certainty that the two men ever met; all we can say is that they lived in the same era, inhabited the same world, participated in the same *Zeitgeist* and were influenced by the popular moral philosophy of their times. At any rate, the forged correspondence helped to cement the literary reputation of the Stoic moralist among Christian readers and contributed to the survival of many of his works through the Middle Ages (see Conte 1994:422-423).

Let us first discuss the internal structure of the epistolary exchange and its references to Nero's dealings with Christians. The correspondence was widely copied in the Middle Ages; in his 1938 critical edition Barlow counted over 300 MSS. It consists of fourteen letters (eight from Seneca to Paul and six from Paul to Seneca) purportedly written while the apostle was residing in Rome.²⁶ As many scholars throughout the centuries have pointed out, a major characteristic of the letters — written in Latin, a language that the historical Paul probably did not know — is their insipidness. On the other hand, one must concede that the forger was competent at creating a feeling of verisimilitude; the reader senses that much remains unsaid, that “Seneca” and “Paul” know more than they write and for that reason they do not explain details familiar to them.²⁷ A running theme is the moralist's appreciation for Paul's teachings mixed with his worries about the apostle's deficient rhetorical skills, all wrapped in mellifluous politeness.

For our purposes, the most interesting aspect of the correspondence is that it allows us to see how a 4th-century forger imagined Paul's final years within the context of the Neronian persecution. What follows is a summary of the most relevant parts. In letter 1, Seneca informs Paul that he has been reading his epistles and is impressed with the quality of the apostle's moral sentiments. Paul replies (letter 2) that he is happy to know that a man of Seneca's stature, the teacher of such a great prince (*magister tanti principis*), holds his own writings in high regard.

²⁶ The textual transmission of the correspondence is not without problems; see discussion in the editions of Barlow 1938 and Bocciolini Palagi 1985.

²⁷ See analysis in Pervo 2010:110-116. Partly based on this repeated stylistic topos, Barlow (1938) believed that the forgery started as an exercise in a rhetorical school (an idea advanced previously by Liénard 1932). In my opinion, scholars have overlooked an ancient epistolary exchange analogous to the forged correspondence of Paul and Seneca. There are extant letters purportedly written between the holy man Apollonius of Tyana and the Roman philosopher Musonius Rufus (see Penella 1979 for a critical edition). These letters between a 1st-century religious man and a Stoic philosopher (while the latter was confined in a dungeon by Nero) form an interesting parallel with our correspondence. On examples of pagan classical pseudepigrapha see Peirano 2012.

In letter 5 Seneca shows his concern about Paul's social withdrawal (*tuo secessu*), presumably from members of Nero's court. The Stoic philosopher inquires: is it because of Poppaea's anger (*indignatio dominae*) at Paul's abandonment of the Jewish religion and his conversion of others to Christianity? Seneca then offers his services to plead the case of the apostle before Nero's philo-Judaic Empress, should the occasion arise.²⁸ In letter 7, Seneca informs Paul that he has read the apostles' epistles to the Emperor and that Nero, positively moved, wondered how someone without education could have such lofty ideas. Seneca gave this explanation to the Emperor: "The gods speak through the mouths of the innocent".²⁹ In letter 8, Paul warns Seneca: it is not a good idea to read his epistles to Nero (*Puto enim te graviter fecisse*). He knows that the philosopher acted out of affection for him, but Seneca should have considered that the subject matter of the epistles conflicts with Nero's religion and educational training (*ritui et disciplinae eius ... contrarium*). He begs Seneca not to do it again. Moreover, Seneca should be very careful not to offend Poppaea out of love for him. "As a queen, she will not be angry: as a woman, she will be offended" (*si est regina, non indignabitur, si mulier est, offendetur*). In letter 9, the moralist acknowledges his carelessness in reading the apostle's letter to Nero and agrees with Paul's plan to act with caution in the future.

²⁸ On Poppaea's philo-Judaism and her portrayal as a Jewish proselyte, see p. 12 in Chapter 1. Asterius of Amasea, ca. 400, in his eighth Homily on Peter and Paul, draws an interesting parallel between Herod and Nero. Herod imprisoned John the Baptist whereas Nero imprisoned the apostles. Herodias, Herod's wife, desired the head of John the Baptist, while Nero's wife, "another in the likeness of Herodias," desired the deaths of Peter and Paul. Presumably Asterius is talking about Poppaea, unless he has in mind Nero's male consorts Sporus or Pythagoras (see Eastman 2015:419).

²⁹ The contrast between the nobility of the Christian message in the New Testament and the coarseness of its literary style is a common theme among Church Fathers in the late 4th century (cf. Aug. *Conf.* 3.5.9, and see Auerbach 1993:51). That the correspondence presents Nero as initially well-disposed towards Christians is surprising but not without precedent (cf. our discussion of Acts 25:24 in § 3.1). Even in late antiquity, among Jews and Christians, Nero's religious victims, we find unexpected positive literary portrayals of Nero (see Champlin 2003:27-28).

Letter 11, from Seneca to Paul, describes the events after the Great Fire in Rome and makes the fire the cause of the Neronian persecution just as Sulpicius Severus does in *Chronica* 2.28-29.³⁰ Although several references in this and other letters of the correspondence strongly point towards familiarity with Tacitus' account in *Ann.* 15.38-44, letter 11 also draws from an unknown source to give information about the date of the fire, its duration and the extent of the destruction it caused.³¹ At the beginning of the letter, Seneca conveys his solidarity with Paul while Nero's persecution of the local Christians is taking place. The philosopher is sad because the inhabitants of Rome think that the Christians, despite their manifest innocence, are crime-prone and have accused them of having contrived the fire. While Christians and Jews are being executed as if they were arsonists (*quasi machinatores incendii*), the real criminal (Nero, whom "Seneca" does not name) veils himself with lies (*mendacium velamentum*); yet, he predicts, Nero's time will also come, and he will also be burned with fire (*igni cremabitur*).³² Not long

³⁰ Several scholars think that letter 11 was inserted by a different forger, who was also responsible for the dates appended to the closing letters 10-14. At any rate, the order of those five letters has clearly been jumbled, as letter 11 was meant to be the last one. See Bocciolini Palagi 1985:40-45, Pervo 2010:110-116 and Ehrman 2013:522.

³¹ The date of the letter is given as *V Kal. Apr., Frugi et Basso coss.*; this and other consular dates in the correspondence are correct, except for errors introduced in the transmission of the text. Yet according to Tacitus (cf. § 1.2) the fire started on July 19th. Letter 11 also adds that "a hundred and thirty-two houses and four thousand apartment blocks" burned in six days and that the fire stopped in the seventh day. Tacitus gives the length as nine days and describes the damage caused by the fire differently. Beaujeu 1960:19-20 suggested that whoever wrote the letter used Pliny the Elder as an alternative source. The fire ending in the "seventh day" might have biblical connotations. Although the correspondence differs from Tacitus regarding the details of the fire, acquaintance with Tacitus is quite probable. See discussion in Barlow 1938:83-84. *Ann.* 13.47 states that Nero *flagitiis et sceleribus velamenta quae sivit* (cf. *mendacium velamentum* in letter 11), almost immediately one finds *diverso itinere Sallustianos in hortos remeaverit* (cf. Seneca stating in letter 1 of the correspondence, *in hortos Sallustianos secesseramus*). It is also interesting to note that *Ann.* 15.40 describes the return of the fire after five days as *rursum grassatus ignis* and that letter 11 describes Nero as a *grassator* (highway robber or murderer). However, dependence on Tacitus in this sentence is uncertain, since *grassator* is used by 4th century Christians in reference to the Antichrist: see Bocciolini Palagi 1985:129.

³² The *Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (written ca. 366-384) can shed light on the strange joint mention of Christians and Jews executed together. Its anonymous author, conventionally named Ambrosiaster, believed that the first Christians in Rome to whom Paul addressed his letter were Jews of devout but flawed faith. In the prologue Ambrosiaster writes: *Constat itaque temporibus apostolorum Iudaeos... Romae habitasse: ex quibus hi qui crediderant, tradiderunt Romanis ut Christum profitentes, legem servarent. Hi ergo ex Iudaeis, ut datur intellegi, credentes Christo, non accipiebant Deum esse Deo.* As to Nero's future punishment by being burned by fire (*igni*

after the events described in this letter, the historical Seneca was forced to commit suicide by Nero.³³ As to Paul's execution, the reader of the correspondence is left to imagine that it took place sometime after Nero killed the rank-and-file Christians mentioned in letter 11 (cf. the similar sequence of events in Sulpicius Severus' *Chronica* 2.29, written ca. 400).

Many scholars have speculated about the forger's reasons for inventing this exchange of letters, but the matter need not detain us here.³⁴ Whatever his intentions, interested in history as he was, the forger would certainly have been pleased with the impressive *Nachleben* of the correspondence. Ca. 420 Augustine (*De Civ. Dei* 6.11) wondered why the moralist had not talked in his other works about Christians and concluded that his silence could be explained on grounds of caution. Seneca did not dare to speak about Christians so that he might not praise them against Rome's old customs or disavow them, perhaps, against his own will (*contra propriam forsitan voluntatem*). After Augustine, several renowned medieval writers gave credit to the forgery. Alcuin, the leading scholar of Charlemagne's court, wrote ca. 795 a short dedicatory poem for his edition of the letters; in the 12th century, John of Salisbury referred to them, and Peter of Cluny and Peter Abelard quoted letter 7; ca. 1359, Petrarch alluded to letter 11 in *Fam.* 24.5.25.³⁵ It was not until the Renaissance that scholars began to question the

cremabitur) cf. the Pseudo-Linus in section 5 of this chapter. In that *Passio*, Nero, enraged because Paul had announced the end of the world by fire, ordered the Christians to be burned (*iussit omnes milites Christi cremari*).

³³ Seneca's death probably took place in April 65 (see Ker 2009:25).

³⁴ See discussion in Ehrman 2013:520-527. In general the personal motivations of forgers remain obscure to us. We rarely have access to the minds of the writers of these pious fabrications. There is, however, one interesting exception: the priest Salvian of Marseilles who wrote a letter in 440 CE under the name of "Timothy, least of the servants of God", was caught in the act by a bishop and had to explain himself (see *ibid.* 94-96). Forged letters in late antiquity were not only written in the name of persons who had lived in the distant past. Ehrman (*ibid.* 530-531) relates two separate incidents in which Athanasius and Jerome found fake letters allegedly written by themselves that brought them political problems.

³⁵ The most relevant *testimonia* of the correspondence in Antiquity and the Middle Ages are printed both in Barlow 1938:110-112 and in Fürst, Fuhrer, Siegert and Walter 2006: 68-79.

authenticity of the correspondence, among whom were Valla (ca. 1440), Vives (ca. 1520), Erasmus, who dismissed it as an inept counterfeit (*Epist.* 2092), and Curione (1557), the editor of Seneca's genuine letters.³⁶ Although these humanists greatly turned the tide against acceptance of the correspondence, belief in its authenticity did not fade away entirely; Lefèvre d'Étaples, in the early 16th century, included the forgery in his commentary on the canonical epistles of Paul.

Without a doubt, the forger owes a great debt of gratitude for the widespread and long-lasting belief in his compositions's authenticity to Jerome. Indeed, the Church Father included Seneca in his list of ecclesiastical writers (*De Viris Illustribus*, henceforth, *DVI*) on the grounds that the Stoic moralist had exchanged letters with the apostle Paul and expressed his desire to have Paul's status *apud suos*. For our purposes, an examination of the crucial role that Jerome played in the transmission of the correspondence is of great importance. As we shall see in later sections, other traditions about Paul's final days in Rome that were formed in late antiquity were also passed down in the Middle Ages under the authority of a Church Father who vouched for their authenticity.³⁷ Interestingly, it was Erasmus, in his *coup de grâce* against the correspondence, who first challenged Jerome's authority and good faith regarding the letters. The humanist cast doubts on Jerome's intellectual honesty, saying that the Church Father knew that he was dealing with a literary scam but had abused the credulity of his readers so as to

³⁶ See discussion in Reynolds and Wilson 1991:142. Modern scholars reject the correspondence on both linguistic and historical grounds. Historically, the author imagined an anachronistic world in which 1st century Roman officers secretly embraced Christianity (as had actually happened in the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine). Linguistically, the epistolary fiction contains very rare words attested only in the 4th century, words that are exclusively Christian, post-classical words or usages and biblical echoes. See detailed discussion in the critical edition of Barlow (1938:70-79). See also Liénard 1932:5-23. It is worth mentioning that there are still a few Italian scholars who accept the authenticity of some parts of the correspondence: see Ramelli 1997:299-310.

³⁷ Moreover, mention of the correspondence among some medieval writers (Freculphus, Honorius of Autun, Otto of Freising and Vincent of Beauvais) appears to be derived solely from Jerome's notice in *DVI*. See Barlow 1938:112.

recommend the books of Seneca to Christians.³⁸ As I show in Appendix 5.a, Erasmus was on the right track. There, I discuss alternative explanations that have been given by other scholars over the past century and show that they are not persuasive; I also examine thoroughly Jerome's extensive dealing with authorship issues in *DVI* and conclude that he could not have been unaware that he was dealing with a forgery. Since elsewhere in *DVI* he is always keen to address problems arising from pseudepigraphy, his silence in Seneca's case gives us reason to think that, in adding Seneca to his list of ecclesiastical writers, Jerome acted deceptively and for personal motives.

In my analysis of Jerome's inclusion of Seneca in *DVI* I shall proceed as follows. First I examine the nature of *DVI* and the historical context in which he composed his *catalogus sanctorum*. Next, I dissect Jerome's notice on Seneca (c.12) and show how it can help us to pinpoint more accurately the date of composition of the forged correspondence. Last, I study his use of Seneca as an authoritative philo-Christian writer in his treatise *Ad Jovinianum* and suggest that this treatise provides the context for understanding why he was so willing to accept the authenticity of Seneca's exchange with Paul.

Jerome's *DVI* is a collection of one hundred and thirty-five short biographies of noteworthy Christian writers, among whom Jerome inserted himself in the last notice (c.135). Jerome wrote *DVI* in 393 when he was probably in his sixties; he had already completed his revision of the *Vetus Latina* versions of the gospels and was likely one of the most well-read

³⁸ *Divus Hieronymus non ignarus fuci, abusus est simplicium credulitate, ut Senecae libros, lectu cum primis dignos commendaret Christianis* (Erasmus, *Epist.* 2092).

persons in Christendom.³⁹ The same year, a council of bishops in the Synod of Hippo proclaimed for the first time an official canon of approved sacred scripture, and Emperor Theodosius ended the Olympic Games as a continuation of his decree in 391 that had suppressed the last remnant of subsidies for Greco-Roman cult and made Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire. In writing *DVI*, Jerome was offering future generations of Christians a canon of “approved” Christian authors.⁴⁰ Sadly, among the numerous letters that Jerome bequeathed us, we have none for the years 386 to 393, a primary source material which would have helped us better understand his manner of research. Yet we know that in 394 CE he was already promoting the *DVI* to his correspondents.⁴¹

Jerome’s notice on Seneca contains the first external reference to the forged correspondence between Paul and Seneca; it is also one of only four notices in *DVI* featuring a non-Christian author (the other three are the notices on the Jewish writers Philo, Josephus and Justus of Tiberias).⁴² Jerome’s notice on Seneca, often found as a preface to the forged correspondence in extant manuscripts, reads as follows:

³⁹ See Kelly 1975:174-178. Kelly discusses the actual date of composition of *DVI* (probably the second half of 393) and places Jerome’s birth at 331 CE based on the testimony of Prosper of Aquitaine (see discussion in the Appendix of Kelly’s book).

⁴⁰ The prologue of this work gives us a very useful clue about Jerome’s impulse to write this book. Dexter, the High Chamberlain of Emperor Theodosius, had asked Jerome to write a catalog of Christian authors just as Suetonius and Apollonius had done for the pagan writers. Jerome obliged. He wanted to show pagan enemies who mocked the simplicity of the Christians that the Church had philosophers, orators and men of learning. *DVI* became very popular as a dictionary of Christian authors. A certain Sophronius translated it into Greek. A disciple of Jerome, Paterius, wrote a continuation and so did Gennadius of Marseille a century later, adding short biographies of Christian writers active after Jerome’s publication of the original *DVI* up to 495 C.E. Interestingly, the priest Salvian, whose forgery we mentioned in footnote 12 [check cross-reference], is listed as an ecclesiastical writer in Gennadius’ work.

⁴¹ See *Epist.* 47, in which Jerome informs Desiderius about the recent publication of *DVI* and tells him that, if needed, he can ask his secretaries to copy the book for him.

⁴² All four non-Christian authors appear chronologically and consecutively (c.11-14 in *DVI*). Jerome justifies his addition of Josephus (c. 12) on account of his laudatory mention of John the Baptist and the famous *Testimonium Flavianum* (*AJ* 18.3.3) on Jesus. Philo is added *inter scriptores ecclesiasticos* on the grounds that “writing a book

*Lucius Annaeus Seneca Cordubensis, Sotionis Stoici discipulus, et patruus Lucani poetae, continentissimae vitae fuit, quem non ponerem in catalogo Sanctorum, nisi me illae Epistolae provocarent, quae leguntur a plurimis, Pauli ad Senecam, et Senecae ad Paulum. In quibus cum esset Neronis magister, et illius temporis potentissimus, optare se dicit, eius esse loci apud suos, cuius sit Paulus apud Christianos. Hic ante biennium quam Petrus et Paulus coronarentur martyrio, a Nerone interfectus est.*⁴³

Prior to analyzing Jerome's notice, we shall use it to date the forged correspondence.

Before mentioning it in *DVI*, Jerome had passed over it in silence in his *Chronicon*, a chronology of universal history that he had adapted and expanded from Eusebius'. Written ca. 380, Jerome's *Chronicon* includes information about Seneca, his brother Gallio (who had met Paul, cf. Acts 18:12-17), and his nephew Lucan (cf. *DVI* above), but says nothing about the correspondence. Jerome's silence about Seneca's alleged letters to Paul gives us good reason to believe that he had not heard of their existence before 380. There is additional evidence to buttress our suspicion: although the entries about the three Jewish authors who made it in the *DVI* are almost the same in the *Chronicon* and *DVI*, the way in which Jerome described Seneca's death in his *Chronicon* is very different from the description found in *DVI*. In the *Chronicon*, Seneca perishes (*perit*) by cutting his veins and swallowing poison (*incisione venarum et veneni haustu*). In other words, Seneca commits suicide as a true Stoic but in a very unchristian manner. Yet Seneca dies differently in *DVI*; here he is said to have been killed by Nero (*interfectus est*). The change in the way Jerome portrays Seneca's death leads one to suspect that between 380 and 393 the Church Father had learned something new. Given the rapidity with

regarding the first church of Mark at Alexandria, he writes to our praise". Justus of Tiberias was added because "he wrote short commentaries on scripture".

⁴³ "Lucius Annæus Seneca of Cordova, a disciple of the Stoic Sotion and paternal uncle of the poet Lucan, was a man of very temperate life, whom I would not place in a catalogue of saints, were it not that I was prompted to do so by those letters *from Paul to Seneca* and *from Seneca to Paul* which are widely read. In these, when Seneca was Nero's teacher and the most influential person of the period, he said that he wished to have the same position among his own [i.e. the pagans] which Paul had among the Christians. Two years before Peter and Paul were crowned with martyrdom, he was put to death by Nero." See translation in Halton 1999:26-27. Other translations in this section regarding notices in *DVI* are also taken from Halton's work.

which books circulated at the end of the 4th century and the appeal that a correspondence between Seneca and Paul would have had among erudite Christians such as Jerome, I would venture that the letters were written no earlier than ten years before the publication of Jerome's *Chronicon*. This would place their date of composition between 370 and 393 CE.⁴⁴

Rhetorically, Jerome's notice on Seneca in *DVI* is carefully crafted. Notice first how Jerome combines in a sentence a feigned reluctance to list Seneca among the *DVI* writers (*quem non ponerem*) with his justification for the inclusion based on letters that are read – passive voice – by many (believers). The conditional clause *nisi me illae Epistolae provocarent* is particularly interesting. The verb *provocare* implies that the letters caused in Jerome an emotional response, inciting him to include Seneca in his *catalogus Sanctorum*.⁴⁵ Jerome's word choice reveals again ulterior motives; we find *catalogus Sanctorum* only here (not in the notices of the three Jewish writers - Philo, Justus and Josephus – and not in the notices of all the Christian writers). For Jerome's contemporaries, the word *sanctus* denoted two concepts that sometimes overlap: either men of the past who were supposed to be in heaven or men of unimpeachable moral conduct.⁴⁶ Jerome probably meant to imply the second meaning, which would explain his statement about

⁴⁴ Mastandrea 1988:56-58 had already noticed that the forged correspondence was left unmentioned in the *Chronicon*. Note additionally that Jerome, while writing the *Chronicon*, sometimes used it as a repository for his current battles. In 356, Athanasius wrote his immensely popular *Life of Antony*. To outdo him, Jerome (ca. 375) invented "Paul", a hermit saint who had lived to be 112 years and whom Antony had visited in his cave. In Jerome's story, Antony is informed in a dream that there is a greater monk than he. When Jerome composed the *Chronicon* in 380, he wrote in his notice about Antony that Athanasius' saint was in the habit of talking to his visitors "about one Paul of Thebes, a man of remarkable blessedness whose death I have narrated in a pamphlet". See discussion in Barnes 2010:170-198. By contrast, Jerome's hagiography of Hilarion, which he wrote some time after the *Chronicon*, is not mentioned in the *Chronicon*, just as Seneca's notice in the same work remained unrevised.

⁴⁵ Cf. the preface of *DVI*, where Jerome uses *provocare* to indicate that Dexter wants to "incite" him to write this collection of biographies. The preface and the notice on Seneca are the only two instances in *DVI* in which *provocare* is used.

⁴⁶ A good way to understand the range of meanings of *sanctus* among Jerome's contemporary is to examine its frequent usage in the *Itinerarium* of Egeria, who wrote an account of her pilgrimage in the Holy Land a few years before the publication of *DVI*.

Seneca's frugal life (*continentissimae vitae fuit*). In the next sentence (*In quibus cum esset Neronis magister, et illius temporis potentissimus*) Jerome paraphrases a sentence found in letter 12 of the correspondence. In English translations the *cum* clause is usually translated as if it were temporal but note that one should not discard an alternative translation as a concessive "although". Indeed, Jerome seems to highlight that although Seneca was, as Nero's advisor, the most powerful statesman of his times, his desire was to have *apud suos* the rank that Paul had among Christians.⁴⁷ The last sentence of the notice must have helped to Christianize Seneca in the minds of Jerome's contemporaries. To achieve maximum effect, he sandwiched the subject, the agent and passive verb (*Hic ... a Nerone interfectus est*) between a clause that reminded readers that just as Nero had killed Seneca, so he was responsible for the martyrdom of Paul and Peter (*Petrus et Paulus coronarentur martyrio*).⁴⁸

The reason that Jerome put so much care into crafting his notice on Seneca, and indeed the reason that he included him in *DVI* at all, I would argue, was that he wanted to co-opt the moralist's works for the intellectual defense of Christian doctrine. Roughly at the same time that he published *DVI*, Jerome wrote *Ad Jovinianum* — his longest treatise — in response to the thesis of a certain Jovinian, an opponent of ascetism who had argued that virgins and wives were

⁴⁷ Both Halton (1999:26-27) and Ker (2009:183) translate *cum* as "when". Backus et Gounelle (2009:97-100) translate *cum* (in French) as a concessive "although." The meaning of *apud suos* is problematic. Halton translates it literally as "among his own" whereas Ker translates it as "countrymen"; yet it is unlikely that Jerome means Seneca's fellow Romans since Paul, just as "Seneca" himself declares in letter 12, was a Roman citizen. Moreover, Seneca as an advisor of Nero already had a leading role among Romans just as Paul had among Christians. One would be inclined to think that *apud suos* should be equated to "among the Stoics", but the meaning is ultimately ambiguous. Whether this was purposely planned by Jerome or not is hard to tell.

⁴⁸ Shortly after *DVI*'s publication Augustine received an untitled copy of Jerome's collection of short biographies. He asked Jerome (*Epist.* 40.2) about the real title of the book while informing him that the book had his approval. Jerome replied (*Epist.* 112) that his work should be called "Concerning Ecclesiastical Writers". Augustine mentions the forged correspondence in *Epist.* 153.14, written ca. 413. Subsequent writers use reverent terms in reference to the authors of Jerome's *DVI*; Cassiodorus calls them *patres* (*Institutiones* 1.17) and Sophronius in his Greek translation of *DVI* calls them ἄγιοι. While those words do not necessarily make Seneca a *bona fide* Christian, they turn him into something much more important than a pagan author who had a famous Christian friend. After the publication of *DVI*, in the minds of Jerome's contemporaries and of future generations of Christians, Seneca becomes a philosopher with a strong degree of proximity to Christianity.

of equal merit. Two synods had condemned Jovinian's views in 390; thus, we can safely assume that Jerome already knew about the Jovinian controversy before 393. Possibly, he had already been asked by his friends at Rome to write a response to Jovinian's ideas not long after the latter was condemned by ecclesiastical authorities. Glorification of sexual abstinence had a special place in Jerome's heart, and a request to defend virginity was not something that he would have taken lightly. He must have done research on the subject that led him to discover valuable material for the defense of *pudicitia* in Seneca's *De Matrimonio*. And, I would argue, it was the importance of Seneca's work to him in writing his treatise against Jovinian that provided the motivation for including Seneca in *DVI*.

Before 393, we find here and there a few echoes of the moralist's writings in Jerome's works, yet they pale in comparison to his extensive borrowings in *Ad Iovin*.⁴⁹ In the treatise, after dealing with scriptural passages, Jerome turns to the classical authors to demonstrate the timeless superiority of *pudicitia*; he draws examples from the Greek and Roman world in which the virtues of virgins were extolled and chaste matrons who did not remarry after their husbands' death were admired. In *Adv. Iovin.* 1.46-49 there are thirty passages taken from Seneca's lost work *De Matrimonio* that provide Jerome with literary ammunition to defend the preeminence of *pudicitia*.⁵⁰ More importantly, it is in *Adv. Iovin.* that Jerome, for the first time in his literary career, names Seneca as a source; once as *Lucani poetae patruus* (1.46), once as *doctissimus vir*

⁴⁹ The confluence of Christian and Stoic thought in several philosophical matters led many Church Fathers to actively borrow concepts and language from Stoic thinkers. Not surprisingly, Seneca's influence on the writings of Latin Church Fathers was not insignificant. Examples of Jerome's allusions and borrowings from Seneca before *DVI* are found in Jannaccone 1963:326-338.

⁵⁰ The supremacy of *pudicitia* among virtues that Jerome attributes to Seneca was a long-standing topic of the Stoic philosophical school that in turn influenced Christian thought about sexual abstinence. For the Stoics, flesh was somewhat suspicious because it belonged to the realm of passion. For a brief discussion of Jovinian's movement which Jerome attacks in this treatise, see Brown 1988:359-360. Jerome's borrowings from Seneca's lost *De Matrimonio* occupy thirty pages in Vottero's 1998 monumental collection of Seneca's *Fragmenta*.

(1.49) and thrice by name, including a sentence with the suggestive wording *Scripserunt Aristoteles et Plutarchus et noster Seneca de matrimonio libros* (1.49). Notice that the moralist appears in third place among a group of pagan philosophers but he is clearly distinguished from them as *noster Seneca*.⁵¹

The forged correspondence had depicted Seneca as Paul's literary friend and admirer, his advocate within the imperial court, his comforter during the Neronian persecution and perhaps a crypto-Christian. Jerome leaves that issue to the reader's imagination but makes it clear that for the defense of proper Christian doctrine, the moralist is definitely *noster Seneca*, in all probability a nod to Tertullian's *Seneca saepe noster* (cf. *De An.* 20.1). Notice how with a brilliant toggle of adjective and noun and the suppression of *saepe*, Jerome magically co-opted Seneca for the cause of Christian *pudicitia*.

To sum up, a Christian writer ca. 370-393 forged a correspondence between Paul and Seneca, Nero's advisor, imagining a series of events in Paul's life during his stay in Rome. The correspondence was one of several pious fabrications of late antiquity that supplied information about the final years of Paul, a topic that the author of canonical Acts had passed over in silence. In the forged letters, Paul's writings are said to have made a good impression on Seneca and his friends in the imperial court. The moralist even read Paul's epistles to Nero, who responded favorably. Paul advised caution, aware of Poppaea's sympathies for the Jewish religion. After the Great Fire of 64, Nero turned against the Christians, who were blamed for having started the fire by the inhabitants of Rome. Seneca comforted his friend and predicted that Nero would be

⁵¹ *Noster* in reference to a writer often means that the author wrote in Latin (note that the other two authors mentioned, *Aristoteles et Plutarchus*, wrote in Greek). Yet in this case Jerome's use of *noster* likely has an additional meaning. Jerome uses this possessive almost four hundred times in his corpus. Oftentimes it accompanies the words *Dominus* or *Deus* (*Dominus noster*, *Deus noster*); in many instances, it serves to qualify important historical figures of the Old Testament (such as in *Salomon noster*, *David noster*, etc.). More importantly, Jerome uses the possessive in talking about Christian writers with whom he has some sort of emotional connection based on intellectual respect (cf. his use of *Origenes noster* in *Apol.* 2.34 and recall that Origen wrote in Greek).

burned in fire at the end of times. The reader is left to believe that the correspondence ended not long before both the moralist and the apostle were put to death by Nero. Among medieval writers, the story of Seneca's friendship became a *leggenda erudita* about Paul's final days in Rome as attested by several *testimonia* and the hundreds of MSS that transmitted the forgery.

Undoubtedly, it was the commendation of Jerome that endowed the correspondence with such great authority. In 393, Jerome cited the forged letters to justify his inclusion of Seneca in *De Viris Illustribus (DVI)*, a list of ecclesiastical writers up to his time. Although in the *DVI* Jerome discusses with relish issues of doubtful authorship whenever the occasion arises, he remains suspiciously silent as to the authenticity of the epistolary exchange between Paul and Seneca. I have argued that he is likely to have done so because he had in mind an immediate literary task for the newly Christianized Seneca. Roughly at the same time that *DVI* was published, he wrote the treatise *Ad Jovinianum*, in which he called the moralist *Seneca noster* and borrowed heavily from Seneca's *De Matrimonio* to defend the doctrine of *pudicitia*. Jerome's stamp of approval for Seneca as an ecclesiastical writer had enormous consequences that the Church Father could not have foreseen, greatly contributing to the moralist's status in later Christian legend as a crypto-Christian who had befriended Paul while the apostle was in Rome, a story that became one of the standard elements in the developing traditions of Paul's last years and death.⁵²

⁵² Cf. Jerome's unplanned (and unwanted) role in the survival of the vulgar piece known as *Testamentum Porcelli*, which "derived much of its standing from the prestige of the Church doctor who had deigned to acknowledge its existence"; see discussion in Aubert 2005:107-141. Reverence for Jerome's authority among medieval writers was effectively exploited by the author of *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (ca. 600-625), who not only forged an account of the birth of the Virgin Mary and the nativity and infancy of Jesus in Matthew's name, but also forged for its preface an exchange of letters between Jerome and the bishops Cromatius and Heliodorus. In the first letter the bishops entreat Jerome to translate the book ("written by the very own hand of Matthew") from Hebrew into Latin to ward off heretics who tell lies about the nativity of Jesus. "Jerome" in his reply accepts reluctantly, only to satisfy the request of the pious bishops. He explains, however, that Matthew wrote the book secretly and not for publication, and that it is now in the hands of very religious men to whom it was handed down through successive

3. Gervasius and Protasius: Disciples of Paul, Victims of Nero

Although the forged exchange between Paul and Seneca had at least some historical basis, in that Seneca was a historical person who lived in Rome at the same time as Paul, other "Roman Christians" who popped up in the late 4th century and were believed to have lived during Nero's reign were entirely fictitious.⁵³ Probably because no other victims of the Neronian persecution were known by name apart from Paul and Peter, the need to fill this void led to the invention of various saints who served to historicize the stay of the apostles in Rome. For instance, the *Passio Sanctorum Processi et Martiniani* relates the conversion and martyrdom of the two jailers of Paul and Peter (along with forty-seven other Christian martyrs) during the apostles' legendary stay in the Mamertime prison.⁵⁴ Other pious fabrications of saints of the Neronian era served etiological purposes. Thus, to explain the origin of the *tituli* of Praxedes and Pudentiana, two ancient titular churches, a local tradition arose according to which Paul and Peter were hosted in Rome at the house of the Roman senator Pudens.⁵⁵ This senator had two daughters, named Praxedes and Pudentiana, who were said to have sold their property so as to care for the poor and bury the martyrs with dignity. They also held Christian services in their

generations. In an alternative forged reply, Jerome expresses reservation about the authenticity of the book but states that it can be read without damage to the reader's faith.

⁵³ Contrary to early martyrdom accounts of the 2nd and 3rd centuries that deal with real persons (Polycarp, Perpetua, etc.), the *Vitae* and *Passiones* of late antiquity included many martyrs, saints and even monks who never existed. See discussion in Barnes 2010:151-198. An interesting martyr of Nero, commemorated by the Orthodox Church, is Photina, the Samaritan woman of John 4:5-42. She is believed to have traveled to Rome and have been martyred under Nero along with her sisters and sons.

⁵⁴ For this legend, see Tajra 1994:98-102. The Mamertime prison is a very old jail, perhaps built during the regal period of Rome. It is located next to the Roman forum and is still a very popular destination for tourists interested in the apostles Peter and Paul.

⁵⁵ See Lampe 2003:20. A certain Pudens, presumably a Roman Christian, is mentioned in 2 Tim. 4:21. In the late 4th century, "titular churches" were thought to have served as house-churches in previous centuries. They were given the name of their (legendary) founder and/or owner of the house.

respective houses, from which supposedly originated the titular churches. Another alleged Christian of Neronian times was Nazarius, a pupil of Peter, baptized by Linus (considered in late antiquity to have been the second bishop of Rome and, as we shall see later, the alleged author of one of the most popular accounts of Paul's martyrdom). During the Neronian persecution, Nazarius escaped from Rome and traveled to various places. He went to Gaul, adopted a young boy named Celsus and brought him up in the Christian faith.⁵⁶ While in Milan, he visited the Christian brothers Gervasius and Protasius who were in jail. All four (collectively known as the "Four Martyrs of Milan") were said to have ended their lives as martyrs of Emperor Nero. There is, however, no reference to them in the historical record until the end of the 4th century, when St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, claimed to have miraculously found their corpses.

For our purposes, it is the twins Gervasius and Protasius that matter most. Their hagiography intimately associates them with Paul and again illustrates how invented stories of Neronian times — transmitted into the Middle Ages — gained the status of historical fact. More importantly, their popularity is representative of another phenomenon discussed in the previous section: namely, the impact that the support of a Church Father could have on the acceptance of these invented traditions. As we shall see, Ambrose's discovery of the unknown saints Gervasius and Protasius validated their historicity up to the 16th century, just as Jerome's approval of the forged correspondence had validated Seneca's friendship with Paul. Neither Ambrose nor Jerome could have anticipated that their pronouncements on matters that were not crucial to Christian theology would continue to shape — more than 1,000 years after their own deaths — traditions and beliefs concerning people whom Paul had supposedly befriended in Rome before his martyrdom.

⁵⁶ See relevant entry in the *Acta Sanctorum*: Actus Nazarii et Celsi, AA SS, 28, July 6 (1868) 530D, 533D.

The circumstances under which the bodies of Gervasius and Protasius were discovered in the year 386 are very well documented; the events are closely linked to Ambrose's feud with the imperial family in Milan, dominated at that time by Justina, the mother of the adolescent Emperor Valentinian II.⁵⁷ The queen favored the Arians, the religious rivals of Ambrose's pro-Nicene party.⁵⁸ According to Augustine, the Milanese people sided with Ambrose while their bishop was being antagonized by Justina; the discovery of the forgotten saints took place at a very opportune moment to check "a woman's wrath – a woman indeed, but also a queen!"⁵⁹

Ambrose himself recounts how he found Gervasius and Protasius in *Ep. 77*, a letter written around Easter 386, nominally to his sister Marcellina but likely intended for a larger audience.⁶⁰ At the dedication of a recently built basilica, the people of Milan had asked him to consecrate it. Ambrose replied that he would do it, as long as he found relics. In 77.2, Ambrose, very succinctly and without detail, announces that "we found bodies of large stature, as those of ancient days, the bones were intact and there was much blood" (*ossa omnia integra, sanguinis plurimum*). Next he transferred the corpses to the Ambrosian basilica.⁶¹ The rest of the letter

⁵⁷ The primary sources are Aug. *Conf.* 9.7 and *Civ. Dei* 22. 8, and Paulinus, *Vit. Ambr.* 5.

⁵⁸ The Arians had demanded a basilica for themselves and the people rose up in opposition. Liebeschuetz 2005:3-4 states that the sectarian opponents whom Ambrose called "Arians" were actually "homoians"; a third party that differed from both the pro-Niceans and Arians, believing that God and the Christ were "of similar nature".

⁵⁹ *Corpora Protasii et Gervasii, quae per tot annos incorrupta in thesauro secreti tui recondas, unde opportune promeres ad coerendam rabiem femineam sed regiam* (Aug. *Conf.* 10.7.16). As is usual in Augustine's *Confessions*, he relates events of his life in conversation with God (the subject of the quoted passage). Recall from the previous section that letter 8 of the forged epistolary between Seneca and Paul describes in similar terms the anger of Poppaea Sabina, the philo-Judaic consort of Nero (*si est regina, non indignabitur, si mulier est, offendetur*).

⁶⁰ The letter is numbered 77 in Liebeschuetz's 2005 edition of Ambrose's letters. See Lanéry 2008:27-40 for an analysis of it. For a general introduction to letter writing in late Antiquity and Ambrose's correspondence see Liebeschuetz 2005:3-46.

⁶¹ Ambrose seems purposely laconic in this passage, using *Quid multa* twice to hastily go over the discovery as he moves his narrative to the events that followed his finding of the martyrs. What drove Ambrose to look for these martyrs? Althoff, Fried and Geary 2002:333-334 provide the following reconstruction based on Paulinus' brief

(77.3-23) deals with Ambrose's two sermons on the subject, describing the joy of his congregation at the announcement of the discovery and their pious wonder at the miraculous healing of a blind man. Ambrose also recalls the skeptical reaction of the "Arians" whose stubborn disbelief he equates to that of Jews in Jesus' times; for Ambrose, their suspicion about the authenticity of the miraculous power of the newly found saints amounted to denying Christ (*hoc est Christo non credere*).⁶² What mostly strikes the modern reader in Ambrose's letter is the absence of any biographical information about the saints. In fact, the bishop only once mentions Gervasius and Protasius by name (*Ep.* 77.7) as he presents them to his congregation as the Catholic champions of Milan.⁶³

Despite the obscurity of the saints at the time of their finding, the impact of Ambrose's discovery was long-lasting and far-reaching. Eustochius, the bishop of Tours from 443 till 460, dedicated churches to the saints' relics (a decision interpreted as a political move against the expanding power of the Arian Visigoths). By the end the 5th century, the saints' fame had filled

description of the events in his biography of the bishop (*Vita Ambr.* 5). After his vision, Ambrose ordered excavations to be made outside the city, in the cemetery of the "folk-saints" (cf. § 4.3) Felix and Nabor who were at that time the primary patrons of Milan. The tomb of these martyrs of the Diocletianic persecution had been constructed by a matron named Savina; their *memoria* received many visits but remained outside the direct control of the Church. Ambrose "dug under the Felix and Nabor site in order to neutralize their site and to identify Gervasius and Protasius as the true workers of miracles that had taken place in that place." All in all, Ambrose's personal beliefs regarding the new martyrs are beyond our reach. Yet it is worth noting that he asked that his mortal remains be placed by their side, and it is thus that his corpse is nowadays found at the crypt of the Sant' Ambrogio Basilica.

⁶² Ambrose, *Ep.* 77.17-19. Ambrose's pronouncements must have had considerable force of authority even during his lifetime. Paulinus, his secretary and biographer, writing ca. 412, recounts that those who had dared to defame Ambrose after his death were struck by death (*Vit. Ambr.* 11). He then urges readers to shun Ambrose's critics unless they want to suffer the same punishments. One can assume that Paulinus' minatory tone struck a chord among those of his readers who had doubts about the historicity of Gervasius and Protasius.

⁶³ Later in the letter (*Ep.* 77.11), Ambrose comments that some old men were now saying that they had heard the names of the martyrs. The popular veneration of the graves or relics of unknown saints is not without precedence (see Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Mart.* 11 and Gregory of Tours, *de Gloria beatorum Martyrum* 83).

the churches of Italy and Gaul with their relics.⁶⁴ The hagiographical details of the saints' lives and martyrdom were produced a few decades after the discovery of the bodies in the form of a pseudonymous letter written under the name of Ambrose himself. The *Passio Gervasii et Protasii* (henceforth BHL 3514) appears to be the first of its kind among the forged hagiographical works attributed to Ambrose.⁶⁵ A genuine collection of the bishop's letters was already in circulation ca. 412 when Paulinus wrote — at the request of Augustine — Ambrose's biography.⁶⁶ Yet it is the fake letter transmitted in BHL 3514 that most contributed to make Ambrose “the patron of hagiographers” among Carolingian clerics. As we shall see next, Paul plays a major role in BHL 3514, and the apostle's relation with Gervasius and Protasius was later used to settle medieval theological disputes and depicted in remarkable artistic productions.

In the letter, addressed to “the brothers in all of Italy”, “Ambrose” relates the events of the discovery as follows:⁶⁷ During Lent, while he was fasting and praying, a half-asleep

⁶⁴ To explain why the relics of Gervasius and Protasius were so thickly distributed, Gregory of Tours, relates an anecdote that someone told him. When the bodies of the martyrs were being transferred into the Basilica, a board struck their heads, drawing so much blood that linen cloths, robes and even the curtains of the church were stained. The numerous relics so gathered were then sent throughout Italy and Gaul (*de Gloria beatorum Martyrum* 46). Ambrose's discovery of their bodies further sheds light us on the political usage of martyr-cults in the late 4th century. Considering the rapid growth of the martyr cult of previously unknown saints, one can only imagine the enormous prestige that Paul's relics and the venerated sarcophagus in the Basilica of San Paolo must have bestowed on the Roman Church of this period (cf. § 4.1).

⁶⁵ The letter is found in the *Acta Sanctorum* (AA SS 19. June 4 (1867) 683-4) and in Pseudo-Ambrosius, *Epistola segregata* 2.4 (PL 17.821-2). The attribution of BHL 3514 to Ambrose was never contested throughout the Middle Ages. It was first questioned by the humanists who were putting together the Ambrosian corpus. See detailed discussion of the letters' success and diffusion in Lanéry 2008:305-347. Lanéry was able to find over three hundred manuscripts from the 9th to the 15th century, broadly distributed geographically in over ten European countries.

⁶⁶ It is believed that towards the end of his life, Ambrose published a ten-book collection of his correspondence à la Pliny the Younger (i.e. consisting of nine books of religious letters and one of “political: letters). See Lanéry 2008: 38 and Liebeschuetz 2005:30-42.

⁶⁷ Lanéry 2008:312 states that a similar hagiographical work describing the discovery of Saint Stephen's corpse — written in 415 by a priest named Lucian — served as a major inspiration to the forger. In his view (ibid. 329), BHL 3514 was written in Rome between 415 and 450. As was often the fate of *Vitae, Acta, Passiones*, and similar works of Late Antiquity, in medieval times BHL 3514 was adapted, shortened, expanded and hybridized with other hagiographical narratives. One of these hybrids, BHL 6042, appears in some MSS with the title *Passio Gervasii et Protasii*, although in actuality it blends the passions of all four Milanese saints found by Ambrose, adding Nazarius

“Ambrose” saw with his open eyes two young men dressed in shining white standing next to him and stretching their hands in praying position. Due to his torpid state, he was unable to ask them questions. He requested help from God: he wanted the vision, if caused by demonic mockery, to be removed, but, if real, to become more apparent. He intensified his fasting and the vision came to him again. On the third night, the young men appeared once more, but this time accompanied by “a person like the blessed Paul”.⁶⁸ Ambrose was able to recognize the apostle thanks to a portrait that he had seen (*cuius vultum me pictura docuerat*).⁶⁹ While the young men remained silent, Paul spoke to Ambrose: “These two are those who, in accordance to my directives (*qui propter monita mea*), rejected lands and riches and followed the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ”. Paul explained to the bishop that after serving God for ten years, the young men became martyrs. Next, Paul gave Ambrose detailed instructions on where to find their corpses and commanded him to build a church for them. When the bishop asked Paul the names of the martyrs, the apostle told him that, next to their heads, he would find a little book containing the story of their lives. Ambrose summoned his deacons and the bishops of neighboring cities. He

and Celsus and depicting their successive martyrdoms under Nero (ibid. 338). An instance of this hybrid *Passio* is found in the 13th-century Codex Paris, BN lat. 5323, fol. 83-84. Interestingly, BHL 3514 and BHL 6042 can be found together in some codices, showing that some medieval copyists were ostensibly less interested in noticing the contradictions between these narratives than in amassing as many versions as possible.

⁶⁸ Thus, in BHL 3514, the Pseudo-Ambrosian forger describes an apparition of Paul flanked by the saints. Ambrose, when the events took place in 386, had simply talked, without much detail, about *ardor praesagii* (*Ep.* 77.1). Augustine first (ca. 400) referred to Ambrose’s experience as a *visum* (*Conf.* 9.7.16), whereas ca. 425 in *Civ. Dei* 22.8, he wrote that the location of the saints was revealed to Ambrose “in a dream” (*episcopo Ambrosio per somnium revelata reperta sunt*). Apart from discrepancies with the genuine Ambrosian letter of the discovery, BHL 3514 presents Gervasius and Protrasius as twin brothers, although in the early Milanese tradition they are shown as having different ages (see Lanéry 2008: 315-320).

⁶⁹ In the anonymous *Acts of Pope Silvester*, Emperor Constantine is depicted venerating Peter and Paul. Eusebius (*HE* 7.18.4) also mentions old pictorial representations of Jesus, Paul and Peter. He attributes them to early Christians, who “in the manner of the pagans” were accustomed to paint portraits of those seen as their deliverers. In the 4th century, Paul was depicted bald with a pointy beard à la Socrates (cf. the discussion in § 4.3). Vatican archaeologists recently uncovered arguably the oldest fresco of Saint Paul in the Catacomb of Saint Thecla. Also from this period, there is a fresco at Catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter. See also Davis 2013:395-424 for other references to ancient and medieval Pauline iconography.

disclosed the vision that he had had to them and started digging following Paul's instructions. The bier was found just as Saint Paul had promised and, on opening it, they discovered the bodies of the two young men, smelling very pleasantly, along with the little book that narrated their lives.⁷⁰

It is in great part due to the joint authority of Paul and Ambrose that the popularity of Gervasius and Protasius lasted over one thousand years, a remarkable *Nachleben* illustrated in medieval Christian art and theological disputes.⁷¹ The 11th century monk Peter Damian provides us with a very interesting example of the latter. Indeed, Damian made skillful political use of the Pseudo-Ambrosian *Passio Gervasii et Protasii* in 1059 while acting as papal legate in Milan. The main purpose of this embassy was to reestablish the subordinate position of Milan relative to the Roman Church, which the Milanese clergy, reluctant to accept proposed reforms against simony, were resisting. Damian's own account of this visit, at the command of Pope Nicholas II, is preserved in a letter written to his friend Archdeacon Hildebrand.⁷² At its arrival the papal delegation was confronted by riots, and the crowd had to be quieted when Damian went up to the altar at the Cathedral of Milan to give a speech. Damian started with a conciliatory introduction (*Ep.* 65.5). He had not come to promote the standing of the Roman Church, he said, but to seek the glory of the Milanese, their salvation, and the help that is in Christ. It was not Damian, "an

⁷⁰ In the little book, the father of the twin brothers was said to be Saint Vitalis, who himself was martyred at Ravenna and to whom several churches were consecrated. Nowadays, the Basilica of San Vitale at Ravenna is probably the most famous one.

⁷¹ This *Nachleben* is exemplified by the woven tapestries donated to the Cathedral of Antwerp in 1509 that depict parts of the lives of Gervasius and Protasius (among which is one that shows the scene in which Paul visits Ambrose and indicates to him the location of the bodies). See discussion in Weiger 2004:58. It is also worth noticing that during the iconoclastic controversy (8th-9th century), the fact that Ambrose was able to recognize Paul during the apparition because of a visible *pictura* was used by theologians who were both for and against iconography. Thus, Ca. 730 John of Damascus used a Greek translation of BHL 3514 to argue in favor of the cult of images, whereas Agobard of Lyon ca. 825 used the Latin version to argue against it. See Lanéry 2008:332-333.

⁷² The letter, entitled "On the Privilege of the Roman Church", is given the number 65 in the modern edition of Damian's correspondence (Blum 1989-2005:2.24-39). Hildebrand would later become Pope Gregory VII.

insignificant man”, but Christ himself who had given praise and honor to the Roman Church, building it on the Petrine “rock of faith” (Matt. 16:18). For that reason, those who acted against the Roman Church fell into heresy. Next, Damian gave evidence for the historical authority of the Roman Church over the Milanese Church (*Ep.* 65.6). He reminded the Milanese that “Peter and Paul had consecrated the Roman Church by their blood”. So also, “at the very beginning of the newborn faith, they had won for Christ this Church of Milan through their disciples”.

Nazarius, the Milanese martyr and tutor of Celsus, “as the sources attest”, had been a pupil of Peter. Also, “the holy martyrs Protasius and Gervasius were known to have had the blessed Apostle Paul as their master and teacher”, as Ambrose himself had confirmed when he reported what Paul had communicated to him in his vision before the discovery of the saints’ bodies.⁷³

Damian then made an analogy between Jesus’ authority over his disciples and Peter’s and Paul’s over their Christian converts in Neronian times. Just as Jesus had sent disciples two by two to precede him (Luke 10:1-24), so Peter and Paul sent “twin preachers of the holy faith whom they had taught”.⁷⁴ Thus, since the agents of Milan’s salvation came from Rome (*Ep.* 65.7), it followed that “the Roman Church was the mother and the Ambrosian Church was the daughter”.

According to Damian, after he finished his presentation of the primacy of Rome the people became “thoroughly well disposed” (*Ep.* 65.8). His mention of Paul’s authority over his disciples Gervasius and Protasius had done the trick. Evidently, the subordinate relationship of the Milanese Neronian martyrs Gervasius and Protasius *vis à vis* the apostle Paul, not only their teacher but also the joint founder of the Roman Church with Peter, was for Damian’s Milanese

⁷³ See Blum 1989-2005:2.24-39 for the English translation of the discussed passages in Damian’s letter.

⁷⁴ Peter’s disciples are Nazarius and Celsus. Recall that Gervasius and Protasius were literally twins according to the account given in their *Passio* (BHL 3514).

audience a patent historical reality.⁷⁵ In similar fashion, Damian himself likely believed that Seneca had truly been a friend of Paul (sympathetic to Christianity, or more so) and that the Stoic philosopher had expressed his solidarity to the apostle during the Neronian persecution.⁷⁶

To sum up, for medieval Christians, the colorful stories created in late antiquity had added content to the final years of Paul's life spent in Rome, a period of the apostle's life that Acts had passed over in silence and that the by-now superseded *Martyrdom of Paul* (cf. § 4.4) had transmitted in a very succinct manner. Ironically, thanks to the pious fabrications of late antiquity, medieval Christians had more "information" about Paul's missionary activities, personal relations and martyrdom in Rome than pre-Constantinian writers.⁷⁷ For instance, the English chronicler Orderic Vitalis (1075 – ca. 1142) composed a rather lengthy and detailed "historical" account of Paul's and Peter's mission and martyrdom in Rome; in a feat of literary synthesis, he managed to blend elements from many of the various traditions that we have studied so far, including Seneca's reading of Paul's letters to Nero, the apostles' stay in the

⁷⁵ Notice also that when Damian quotes from the *Passio Gervasii et Protasii*, he seems to be giving Paul's testimony scriptural authority. This was not the only time that Damian made rhetorical use of the legend of Gervasius and Protasius. After a visit to Besançon, having been displeased at the sight of clerics and monks sitting during the recitation of the divine office, he wrote to them to recommend the practice of praying while standing. To do so, he quoted from BHL 3514, recalling Paul's instructions to Ambrose to stand and pray on the saints' tomb (*In quo stas et oras*). See letter 111 in the modern edition of Damian's correspondence (Blum 1989-2005:5.248-257)

⁷⁶ The 11th cent. MS Vat. Lat. 250, which contains the letters of Seneca-Paul, has a note on fol. 226^r that shows that it was one of the books purchased by Peter Damian while he was abbot at the Monastery of Avellana (see Barlow 1938:10).

⁷⁷ As discussed in § 2.4, ca. 300 Eusebius' very brief account of Paul's and Peter's martyrdoms (*HE* 2.25) was entirely based on earlier sources. By contrast, the memory of the apostles' presence in medieval Rome was very concrete. Recall that the imprints of the apostles' knees were believed to have been preserved on the Via Sacra where they had prayed together so that Simon Magus might fall from the sky (cf. Sulp. Sev. *Chronica* 2.29.2). Although that pious legend was already in circulation in the 4th century, it probably reached its peak of popularity after the writing of the Pseudo-Marcellus (see Tajra 1994:146-147), which we shall study in the next section.

Mamertime prison, the baptism of their jailers Processus et Martinianus and of course the martyrdom of Gervasius and Protasius at the hands of Nero.⁷⁸

4. Later Martyrdom Accounts and Their Popularity in the Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, chroniclers like Orderic Vitalis who wanted to incorporate an account of Paul's martyrdom into a book of "universal history" could draw information from the widely copied martyrologies that were ubiquitously found in monastic libraries. One representative codex of this type, produced in the same era as Orderic's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, is Vat. lat. 1193.⁷⁹ On fols. 93-100 of that codex one finds a rather unusual version of the *Vita* and *Martyrium* of Paul. For the modern reader familiar with the canonical Acts and acquainted with the apocryphal *Martyrdom of Paul (MPI)*, the account preserved in MS 1193 seems to be a bizarre amalgamation of both texts; indeed, fols. 93r-94v read like an abridgment of passages taken from Acts 9-28, and fols. 94v-100 read like an expansion of the 2nd century *MPI* studied in § 4.4. Yet this strange narrative is not what one might think at first. Knowledge of late martyrdom accounts permits us to identify the story presented in Vat. lat. 1193 as a combination of two different texts, namely the so-called Pseudo-Abdias and the Pseudo-Linus. In modern times, probably because their content is considered derivative in nature, these later stories have

⁷⁸ The account of Orderic Vitalis on *Mors Apostolorum Petri et Pauli* is found in Book 2 of his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (for the Latin text, see PL 188, cols 131A-138D). His account is emphatically "catholic" in its insistence of the union between the apostles. The melodramatic beginning reads as follows: *Audito quod Paulus Romam venisset, Petrus valde gavisus est, et statim exurgens, ad eum perrexit. Mutuo autem se videntes, prae gaudio fleverunt, et in amplexibus suis diutissime morati, invicem se lacrymis infuderunt.* While catholic in nature, Orderic's account also draws elements from purely Pauline traditions. His narrative features, among others, the characters of Patroclus and Justus (discussed in §.4.4) and also Plautilla, whom we will study in the next section.

⁷⁹ For a discussion of writings available to Orderic Vitalis and his contemporary chroniclers see Chibnall 1984:169-180. I examined the 11th/12th century MS 1193 (entitled *Passiones et Legendae Sanctorum*) in my visit to the Vatican Library in May 2015. Because of its amalgamation of late ancient accounts of Paul's death and its noteworthy textual variants, I shall refer to this MS at various points in this section. MS 1193 was originally bound in two volumes with MSS 1194 and 1191, of which the latter contains a *Vita* of Praxedis and Pudentiana, the fictitious saints mentioned in the previous section (see discussion in Schaefer 2013:366-368).

received little scholarly attention in comparison to the much discussed *Acts of Paul* and its last episode, *MPI*. However, in the Middle Ages, as attested by the number of their witnesses, the stories about Paul's death that had been written in late antiquity gained remarkable popularity, to the point of actually superseding the original *MPI*.⁸⁰ Their popularity is perhaps not too surprising, however, since the overriding goal of their authors, it seems, was to make their compositions attractive to readers by stressing passages of entertaining value and by interpolating additional legends to add local color.⁸¹

The process of reshaping the account of Paul's final days resulted in the emergence of several narratives often showing irreconcilable information. Although one might expect that these disparities would have made educated Christians of the patristic period uncomfortable, an analysis of the evidence indicates that this was not the case. As a matter of fact, variations on the account of Paul's death can be found among the Church Fathers themselves and, even more surprisingly, within the works of the same author. For instance, in the extant corpus of John Chrysostom one finds four references to the historical reasons underlying Paul's martyrdom. In one case, Paul is said to have enraged Nero after converting the Emperor's concubine, a second reference states that Paul escaped after standing before Nero but was then beheaded after converting the Emperor's cup-bearer, a third reference mentions both the concubine and cup-bearer and a fourth attributes the apostle's death to Christian rivals who took it upon themselves

⁸⁰ Lipsius' critical edition is a useful indicator of their comparative textual transmission. For the text of the Pseudo-Linus (Lipsius 1891:23-44), although he examined seventy-eight MSS (ibid. xxvi), he let his reader know that other witnesses certainly existed. Yet for the Latin version of the 2nd century *MPI*, the so-called *Passio Pauli Brevior* (ibid. 105-113), he could only count on fragments found in three Munich MSS.

⁸¹ See a discussion on the major characteristics of later martyrdom accounts in De Santos Otero 1992:2.426-429.

to preach the gospel with the intention of making Nero angry at Paul.⁸² The disparities that originated in the patristic period were not resolved during the Middle Ages. On the contrary, variations in the retelling of the apostle's final days continued to increase as the independent texts produced in late antiquity were reworked by medieval scribes into hybrid combinations, clumsily strung together with little regard for textual incongruities.

Eastman (2015) has recently published a book that usefully brings together for modern scholars all martyrdom accounts of Paul (and Peter) that have reached us. In the rest of this section, I will examine three of these late accounts, conventionally named after their putative authors, that are of especial importance for our study of the formation and transmission of traditions about Paul's final days in Rome: the Pseudo-Linus, the Pseudo-Marcellus, and the Pseudo-Abdias. These accounts not only preserve the very early traditions that we have previously discussed but also incorporate new legends that became popular in the Middle Ages.

The Pseudo-Linus (Ps-Ln) is a revision and expansion of the *Passio Pauli Brevior*, which is in turn a Latin version of the 2nd century Greek *MPL*. Tajra considers Ps-Ln “a significant milestone in the history of the development of the Paul-legend in that it marked a clear Romanization of the original story of Paul's death”.⁸³ In the manuscript tradition, the narrative is regularly found with the title *Martyrium Pauli apostoli a Lino conscriptum*, to which some MSS added *et ecclesiis orientalibus destinatum*. Pope Linus, the alleged 1st-century author, was

⁸² See Tajra 1994:183-187. Chrysostom's references discussed above – in sequential order – are taken from: (1) *Contra Oppugnatores Vitae Monasticae* 1.3.46 (written ca 378-385), (2) *Epistolam Secundam ad Timotheum*, Homily 10.2.47 (ca. 395), (3) *Acta Apostolorum*, Homily 46.48 (ca. 400) and (4) *De Laudibus S. Pauli Apostoli*, Homily 4.53 (beginning of the 5th century). Just as in previous centuries, writers in the patristic tradition normally mentioned Paul's martyrdom primarily for polemical or doctrinal purposes; the circumstances of his death and burial were given with the very few details and no regard for consistency (Tajra 1994:198-199). For differences in the account of Paul's final days in the works of four of Chrysostom's contemporaries, Jerome, Augustine, Orosius and Asterius of Amasea, see *ibid.* 187-193.

⁸³ See Tajra 1994:138-143. Eastman (2015:139-170) offers the most recent introductory study, text and commentary of Pseudo-Linus. I use Eastman's texts and translations for all the late martyrdoms treated in this section.

traditionally identified as the successor of Peter at Rome, yet nothing connects him to this late account, which was instead likely composed in Rome in the early years of the 5th century (see discussion in Appendix 5.b). The Pseudo-Linus enjoyed considerable success in western Church circles and in medieval times it supplanted its source, the 2nd century *MPI*, as the carrier of the exclusively Pauline tradition of the apostle's death.

The general outline of Ps-Ln features not only the same sequence of scenes found in the original *MPI* but also the same main characters (although the paraphraser modifies their names and functions slightly within the narrative). Compared to its 2nd-century model, the story told in the Pseudo-Linus impresses the reader as being both more florid and detailed. The focus of my analysis will be on the author's expansions within the narrative framework of his source, particularly the insertion of new characters taken from more recent legends. The first few sentences match almost verbatim the *Passio Pauli Brevior* (the earlier Latin version of the Greek *MPI*): the apostle arrives in the city, rents a grange, attracts numerous listeners and makes converts among members of Nero's household. At this point the author, drawing on the spurious correspondence discussed in § 5.3, introduces the "Emperor's tutor" as a new character. The Stoic philosopher holds Paul's teachings in admiration and develops a friendship with him; moreover, when unable to speak to Paul face to face, he exchanges letters full of kindness with the apostle (Ps-Ln 1).⁸⁴ The story of Patroclus appears next (Ps-Ln 2); the *Passio Pauli Brevior* had called Patroclus *pincerna Caesaris* whereas the Pseudo-Linus identifies him more explicitly

⁸⁴ The reference to the forged correspondence reads: *frequentibus datis et acceptis epistolis ipsius dulcedine et amicali colloquio atque consilio [atque cum filio] frueretur*. The expansion in bracket is found in MS 1193 and suggests that the scribe who added it conflated Seneca the Younger with the Elder (cf. Bocciolini Palagi 1986:140). The short passage in the Pseudo-Linus that deals with Seneca exhibits several other interpolations in the manuscript tradition (see Lipsius 1891:1.24). Some MSS spell out the name of the *institutor imperatoris*, adding *Seneca*, and one witness adds that Seneca refrained from meeting personally with Paul out of fear of Nero's reaction (*propter imperatorem non audebat*). Cf. Aug. *De Civ. Dei* 6.11 in which the Church Father attributes Seneca's restrained philo-Christianity on grounds of cautions (see previous section).

as *deliciosus et pincerna regis* (“the king’s cupbearer and favorite”), yet apart from that difference, Patroclus’ fall from the window and Paul’s resuscitation of him follows closely the original source.⁸⁵ As in the *Passio Pauli Brevior*, an account of the fire at Rome is missing, but the reader gets the impression that the author is acquainted with the Tacitean version also preserved by Sulpicius Severus (cf. § 5.1). In Paul’s verbal confrontation with Nero, the *Passio Pauli Brevior* had stated that “[Nero] ordered that all the soldiers of Christ be consumed by fire”, whereas the Pseudo-Linus makes the connection between the charge of arson and the punishment more apparent: “Hearing these things Nero was inflamed with anger. Because Paul had said that the form of the world must be destroyed through fire, [Nero] ordered that all the soldiers of Christ be consumed by fire” (Ps-Ln 7). Next, Paul is handed over to Nero’s prefects to be taken to his place of execution. On his way to the *locus passionis*, surrounded by a crowd, Paul delivers a lengthy theological speech that explains the essence of the Christian message and calls for repentance (Ps-Ln 9-12). The sermon, absent in the 2nd-century *MPI*, appears to be an expansion original to the Pseudo-Linus.

Arguably the most important new development is the introduction of the character Plautilla, a “most noble Roman matron and zealous lover of the apostles”, whom Paul encounters as he exits the city through one of its gates. We do not know exactly when this legendary character was invented, but the earliest artistic depiction of Plautilla is found on a scene that shows Paul’s arrest on the “Sarcophagus of the Travelers”, likely produced at Rome during

⁸⁵ In the Latin West, Paul’s resuscitation of Patroclus was probably known to medieval writers via the Pseudo-Linus. Alexander of Ashby (*fl.* 1220), reminiscing on episodes of the Neronian persecution, says the following about the scene of Patroclus: *O nigra nox mentis, o mens tenebrosa Neronis, in tot signorum lumine ceca manet! quem non Patrocli facies rediuiua moueret...* (*Liber Festivalis* 1.941-946). So does Stephen of Bourbon (ca. 1261) in *Tractatus de diversis materiis praedicabilibus* 3.7.8.

Theodosius' reign (379-395 CE).⁸⁶ In Ps-Ln 14, Paul meets Plautilla at the city gate, greets her warmly and asks her to give him the veil that she uses to cover her head; he declares that he will bind his eyes with it at the moment of his beheading, asking Plautilla to wait for him at the gate since he plans to repay her kindness after his death. A similar figure appears in other late accounts of the martyrdom of Paul. In the Pseudo-Dionysus, she is called Lemobia, "a handmaid in the service of the emperor". In the Pseudo-Marcellus (which we examine next), her name is Perpetua, "a pious woman" who has only one eye and whose sight is miraculously restored after Paul's death. Nero throws her into prison and she is martyred after being tortured.⁸⁷ Despite these differences, in all three accounts, the essential identifiable feature of this character is that she gives Paul the veil which he uses to blindfold himself at the time of his execution. The character would enjoy great popularity in the Middle Ages, as attested by literary witnesses and artistic productions that deal with Paul's martyrdom.⁸⁸

Having examined the Pseudo-Linus, which is part of the exclusively Pauline tradition, we now turn our attention to "catholic" accounts, i.e. stories that join the missionary activity and martyrdom of Paul at Rome with that of Peter. As we saw in § 5.1, one of the novelties of the Pseudo-Hegesippus, the anonymous translation and adaptation of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*,

⁸⁶ See discussion in Utro 2011:35. Ibid. 252, there is a picture of the sarcophagus that is now housed at the Basilica of Saint Victor in Marseille, France. The scene depicting the arrest of Paul shows the apostle, a soldier who ties his neck with a rope and a female figure (Plautilla) who observes the scene half hidden behind the neighboring bushes. Cf. the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (359 CE), which also depicts Paul's martyrdom as taking place outside Rome. The origin of the name "Plautilla" is unknown.

⁸⁷ For Lemobia see Eastman 2015:359-361; for Perpetua, see ibid. 307-315.

⁸⁸ Plautilla is listed in the *Martyrologium Romanum* on May 20th. Interestingly, two 13th century writers used the story of Plautilla "as found in Paul's *Passio*" (i.e. the Pseudo-Linus) as an illustration of how fear can affect even saints of Paul's caliber. According to them, the apostle requested Plautilla's veil to avoid seeing the sword at the moment of execution and thus face his martyrdom in a more serene state. See Humbert of Romans (*Tractatus de dono timoris* I) and Stephen of Bourbon (*Tractatus de diversis materiis praedicabilibus* 1.1.4). Both Plautilla and Patroclus (twice each) are featured on the beautiful window panels on the Cathedral of Chartres. Plautilla — just like Gervasius and Protasius — has also survived in tapestry artwork of the 15th/16th century (see for instance accession number 14.79 in the collection of Textiles and Fashion Arts at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts). Ca. 1637, Plautilla was featured in Rubens' painting *The Martyrdom of St. Paul*.

was that it grafted Paul's martyrdom onto an exclusively Petrine tradition of Peter's death. Many MSS of the Ps-Hgp highlight section 3.2, which relates the apostles' martyrdom under Nero, with a large initial and marginal notes or they give it a specific title. At some point the account was excised from its original source and incorporated into a separate narrative entitled *Passio Apostolorum Petri et Pauli*, of which there are about thirty witnesses (BHL 6648-6653). These witnesses differ from the original source (Ps-Hgp 3.2) as they independently inserted elements from other martyrdom accounts.⁸⁹ A frequent source for these inserted elements was the Pseudo-Marcellus, the most extensive and elaborate literary example of the "catholic" martyrdom accounts. This work was traditionally credited to Marcellus, an alleged follower of Peter (see § 4.4), because of a brief notation at the end of some of the Latin MSS that reads: "I, Marcellus, have written what I saw". There are two recensions of the Pseudo-Marcellus, one in Latin, commonly referred as *Passio*, and one in Greek referred to as *Acta*. Both were composed in Rome sometime after the Pseudo-Linus, either in the 5th or 6th century; although the Latin and Greek recensions differ from each other at certain places, in general they follow the same storyline.⁹⁰ For the modern scholar, the Pseudo-Marcellus reads like a vast repository of earlier traditions and irreconcilable stories that previous accounts had left unresolved.

All and all, the narrative's main objective is to emphasize the harmony between Peter and Paul, portraying the apostles working in tandem, addressing problems within the Christian

⁸⁹ See a summary of this *Passio* in Tajra 1994: 154-157. For a discussion of the manuscript tradition see Lanéry 2008:480-481. The influence of the Ps-Hgp also extended to other martyrdom accounts, as it features the first allusion in the *Quo Vadis* scene to a gate at which Peter, fleeing Rome, encounters Jesus (by contrast, the 2nd century *Martyrdom of Peter* lacks any topographical reference for that scene). The identity of the gate becomes clearer in subsequent narratives. The 5th century *Passio Petri* (also attributed to Linus) refers to the gate of the *Quo Vadis* scene as a *porta civitatis* (the same words found in the Pseudo-Linus' *Passio Pauli* that we discussed above). The 12th century *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, a popular guide for medieval pilgrims, mentions a church named *Domine Quo Vadis* near the gate, when discussing the modern Porta San Sebastiano on the *Via Appia*. Needless to say, the famous little *Quo Vadis* Church is still there.

⁹⁰ See Eastman 2015: 221-227. I have used his critical edition for the text and translation of the Pseudo-Marcellus.

community as a team, facing enemies together and being martyred on the same day.

Theologically, the catholic view championed by the Pseudo-Marcellus came to be known as the *concordia apostolorum*. It later became the approved tradition of the Catholic Church about the last days of Paul and Peter at Rome and was made an article of faith in the 6th century Gelasian Decree (see next section). Here, we shall examine topics within the Pseudo-Marcellus that concern two early traditions that we have already seen, namely, the anti-Judaic tradition conveyed by Acts (Chapter 3) and the slight insinuation in 1 *Clement* 5 (§ 2.4) that internal disputes within the Christian community at Rome had triggered Nero's attention to the young sect and thus caused the persecution. These two traditions had been somewhat neglected after the anti-Neronian tradition of the *Martyrdom of Paul* was widely adopted by Christians. Also noteworthy is the way in which the Pseudo-Marcellus explains the existence of four different cultic centers in Rome for the veneration of Peter and Paul.⁹¹

Elements of the 2nd-century anti-Judaic tradition appear twice in the Pseudo-Marcellus. The narrative starts with Paul's arrival in Italy to meet with the Emperor. The news comes to the attention of the Jews of Rome who fall in disarray. The Jews assemble and, "having discussed many things among themselves" (πολλὰ τρακταΐσαντες), decide to go to see Nero, "carrying many gifts."⁹² They meet with the Emperor and persuade him not to let Paul reach Rome. Nero complies but gets the wrong man, the ship captain Dioscorus, who, being bald, is mistakenly identified as the apostle. In a later section, when both Peter and Paul are in the city, the leaders

⁹¹ My analysis will be primarily based on the Greek recension of the Pseudo-Marcellus.

⁹² The verb used for "discussing" in the Greek recension is a Hellenized form of the Latin *tractare* (cf. Acts 28:29 in the Pseudo-Abdias). The theme of Jews carrying gifts to Nero as they plot against Christians is already found in Commodian's *Apol.* 847-853, written ca. 250 (cf. § 1.2). This apocalyptic writing recounts Nero's killing of Paul and Peter and his return at the end of times when he slaughters Christians, again with Jewish aid. When the prophet Elijah arrives in Rome, the Jews contrive false charges against him, calling him an enemy of Rome and hasten to see Nero with prayers and wicked gifts (*exorant Neronem precibus et donis iniquis*).

of the synagogues of Rome, in alliance with the pagan priests, stir up the crowds against the apostles. Nero intervenes and summons Peter and Paul. At one point the Emperor orders his men to read Pontius Pilate's letter to Emperor Tiberius. The letter is sympathetic to Jesus and warns Tiberius not to believe "the falsehoods of the Jews."⁹³

The Pseudo-Marcellus also delves into the early tradition that there were conflicts within the Christian community while the apostles were in Rome and that this strife indirectly led to their deaths during Nero's reign.⁹⁴ When Paul arrives in Rome, he is asked by the local Jewish Christians to fight Peter, who is preaching "against the Mosaic Law". A heated confrontation ensues between the Gentile and Jewish Christians whom the apostles try to calm down. Paul says to those fighting: "You should not take up these quarrels among yourselves... There is no favoritism with God". Peter, in response to those who were accusing him of renouncing their synagogues, recalls that "the leaders of the [Jewish] priests crucified [Jesus] out of envy". While the apostles managed to stop the quarrel, still "a few did not believe". The text then implies that this disagreement within the Christian provoked imperial intervention.⁹⁵

The last topic within the Pseudo-Marcellus that we need to consider is its handling of the traditions underlying the four cultic centers of Peter and Paul in Rome. Peter is crucified at the Vatican, but the two versions of the text differ with regard to Paul's place of death. The Latin

⁹³ See Latin text in Eastman 2015:238: "invidia contra eum ducti sunt principes sacerdotum et tenuerunt eum et mihi tradiderunt, et alia pro aliis mihi de eo mentientes dixerunt, Cf. § 3.7. Ca. 150, Justin Martyr (*Apol.* 1.35 and 1.48) had already used Pilate's forged letters for apologetic purposes. So did Tertullian in 197 (*Apol.* 21.24), adding that when Pilate reported to Tiberius what had happened to Jesus he was already a Christian in his conscience (*ipse iam pro sua conscientia Christianus*).

⁹⁴ Cf. 1 *Clem.* 5-6 and the detailed discussion in Eastman 2013:34-53, who thinks that the tradition has a historical basis. As discussed above, this tradition is also preserved in Chrysostom's *De Laudibus S. Pauli Apostoli*, Homily 4.

⁹⁵ See the translation of this passage in Eastman 2015:231-235 and analysis in Eastman 2013:51-53. It is interesting that the Pseudo-Marcellus portrays Peter, rather than Paul, as the apostle being accused by Jewish Christians to oppose the Mosaic Law. Is this an attempt to resolve the Pseudo-Clementine portrayal of Paul as an opponent of Peter?

recension places Paul's *locus passionis* on the Ostian Road (where Saint Paul's Basilica is now located). However, in the Greek recension Paul is executed at Aquae Salviae, about two miles south of the Ostian Road site. The Greek text is reflecting here a rival tradition concerning Paul's death. The new site at Aquae Salviae gained popularity, and a church was built in the 6th century at which pilgrims were shown three water springs said to have been miraculously produced when Paul's head bounced thrice after his decapitation (this is the story recounted at beginning of the dissertation in Chapter 1).⁹⁶ In the Greek recension, yet another legend is introduced. This one concerns the joint cultic center of Peter and Paul at the *Memoria Apostolorum* on the Appian Road (cf. § 4.4). According to the Pseudo-Marcellus, "people from the East" attempted to steal the apostles' bodies but were stopped at the Catacombs on the Appian Road. After that, the bodies were kept on the Appian Road for a year and a half until they were returned to their traditional sites, Peter to the Vatican and Paul to the Ostian Road. Obviously this story functioned as a charter myth to explain the existence of the *Memoria Apostolorum* at the Catacomb of San Sebastiano.⁹⁷

The last martyrdom account of the patristic period that we shall examine is the Pseudo-Abdias, a quite idiosyncratic depiction of Paul's life and death. This narrative is part of a collection called *Historiae Apostolicae*, attributed to "Abdias", an alleged first-century bishop of Babylon who personally knew the apostles. The collection depicts the deeds and deaths of twelve apostolic figures; within it, the accounts of Peter and Paul (BHL 6575) are always

⁹⁶ The legend's date of origin is very difficult to determine but it is certainly not earlier than the traditional martyr sites on the Ostian Road and the Appian Road (cf. § 4.1). According to Tajra 1994:151-154, the legend was invented in the 6th century by Cilician monks who resided in a monastery at Aquae Salviae. If this is correct, then the tradition must have been rapidly accepted since it was given pontifical approval by Gregory the Great (*Ep.* 14.14). The church at Aquae Salviae continues to stand as a traditional pilgrimage site to this day.

⁹⁷ Although the temporary presence of the bodies of Peter and Paul at the *Memoria Apostolorum* continues to be an accepted Catholic tradition, the story lacks archeological evidence. See Eastman 2011:71-114.

featured first and appear to have been composed as an independent subgroup. As the number of textual witnesses indicate, the Pseudo-Abdias, just like the Pseudo-Linus, must have been a popular account in the Middle Ages. In BHL 6575, scriptural references constitute as much as 72% of the whole text, appearing as clearly discernible sub-units, distributed in eight chapters and inelegantly patched up.⁹⁸ Indeed, the compiler of the material gauchely strung the excerpts together, generally reworking the first sentence of each episode in an attempt to smooth out transitions.

Like the other accounts in the collection, BHL 6575 has one part devoted to Paul's deeds and another one to his martyrdom. The first part consists of five chapters, mostly extracts from canonical Acts that concentrate on Paul's miracles while omitting Jewish plots to kill him and his legal troubles with governors Felix and Festus.⁹⁹ The narrator ends the first part of the narrative with Acts 28:30-31, informing the reader that Paul "remained in Rome for two years in his own rented lodging" and adding that the apostle was "free from chains", to emphasize — in opposition to Acts itself — that Paul arrived and remained in the city as a free person. The next section of the Pseudo-Abdias sets the beginning of Paul's martyrdom. We are told that "after the crucifixion of Peter and the elimination of Simon the sorcerer, Paul had been spared from the

⁹⁸ See discussion in Steinova 2014:69-84. The Pseudo-Abdias was probably produced in Gaul in the second half of the 6th century. I shall use the Latin text and quote from the translation found in Eastman 2015:171-187.

⁹⁹ This is a summary of the first five chapters. Ch. 1: Very brief biographical details of Paul, his conversion on the Damascus road and his baptism (Acts 9:1-19). Ch. 2: Paul begins his preaching ministry in Damascus and goes to Jerusalem (Acts 9:19-27). Ch. 3: While at Lystra, Paul cures a lame man (Acts 14:8-11). Ch. 4: Paul at Ephesus; he raises Eutychus from the dead (Acts 20:7-12). Ch. 5: Paul's stay in Malta; he miraculously survives a snake bite and heals Publius' father (Acts 28:1-10). This is followed by the apostle's arrival (by sailing) to Rome and his stay in Rome (Acts 28:30-31). As a rule, the excerpts from Acts are crudely linked with no regard to textual inconsistencies. For instance, although Eastman's edition has Paul arriving to Rome alone (*exinde nauigans uenit Romam*), in the Latin text of MS 1193 the out-of-place "we passages" were not removed. Thus one reads *exinde nauigantes uenimus Romam*. Likewise, the Eutychus's scene taken from Acts 20:7-12 also contains an improper "we".

crown of martyrdom on that same day by divine provision.”¹⁰⁰ Next the narrative reverts to Acts 28:17-29, in which Paul meets with the leading Jews of Rome. This is the passage that we have extensively studied in Chapter 3, where we concluded that the reader of the Western Text of Acts is led to infer that Paul fell victim of Jewish intrigues at Rome. For our purposes, the Pseudo-Abdias treatment of this episode is of great interest because the author clearly connects the Jews’ abrupt departure from Paul’s dwellings with Nero’s summoning of the apostle to the imperial court.

Although the narrator basically copies and pastes from what appears to be a *Vetus Latina* exemplar of Acts 28:17-29, his version of the passage contains very interesting textual variants.¹⁰¹ For instance, verse 28:24, which states that some Jews believed in Paul’s words, is missing. In the Vulgate, it is the fact that the Jews are about to leave (*discedebant*) in 28:25 that triggers Paul’s reprimand. Recall from our discussion in § 3.3 that scholars use 28:25 to explain Acts 28:29 as an innocuous western expansion in which Jews actually leave (*exierunt ab eo Iudæi, multam habentes inter se quaestionem*). In the Pseudo-Abdias, it is not the early attempt of the Jews to leave that incites Paul to admonish them; rather, it is a sentence not seen anywhere else in the manuscript tradition of this passage: “but since not all of them believed in Jesus” (*sed quum non omnes crederent in Iesum*). Next, after Paul rebukes the Jewish leadership (Acts 28:25-28), the Pseudo-Abdias contains a remarkably peculiar textual variant of Acts 28:29: *et*

¹⁰⁰ For whatever reason, the author of BHL 6575 does not want Paul to die in the same year as Peter. He comes back to this point at the end of the narrative, stating that Paul was martyred two years after Peter had been killed.

¹⁰¹ The Latin text found in the Pseudo-Abdias contributes significantly to our philological analysis of the anti-Judaic tradition of Paul’s martyrdom in Acts 28:17-29, examined in detail in Chapter 3. According to Steinova (2014:78), the Latin used in its scriptural excerpts belongs to “a contaminated Vulgate-type available in fifth century Italy”. Apart from the textual variants mentioned in the body of this section, it is worth mentioning that in the Pseudo-Abdias, Acts 28:18 reads that “the Romans had held an inquiry (*inquisitio*) concerning Paul”. The Vulgate has *interrogatio*. Recall that *inquisitio* is one of the textual variants that Wordsworth-White had listed for the word *quaestio* in Acts 28:29 (cf. § 3.6).

*quum haec dixisset, exierunt ab eo Iudaei, magnas inter se concertationes agitantes.*¹⁰² Then Chapter 7 starts with these words: “While the apostle was doing these things in Rome, it was reported (*defertur*) in the presence of the emperor Nero that not only was Paul bringing a new superstition, but in fact he was inciting rebellions against the Empire (*aduersus imperium seditiones excitaret*). The verb *defero* is regularly used in the sense of “legal accusation”, and *seditiones excitaret* is reminiscent of Jewish accusations against Paul at Felix’s court in Acts 24:5 (*invenimus hunc hominem pestiferum et concitantem seditiones*).

A close examination of the Pseudo-Abdias’ reworking of this passage thus reveals that, although it does not explicitly state that Paul’s *delatores* were the Jewish leaders who had abruptly left his dwelling, it brings out more clearly the implication of the Western Text of Acts, namely, that the Roman Jewish leadership at Rome was responsible for Paul’s legal downfall. There is little doubt that the Pseudo-Abdias was drawing from an extant anti-Judaic tradition, just as the Pseudo-Marcellus had done before it. From the latter, the Pseudo-Abdias draws verbatim Paul’s speech before Nero.¹⁰³ Moreover, notice how the Pseudo-Abdias arranges its material. First, the author copies and pastes virtually verbatim from Acts 9-20 to compose Chapters 1-5, purposefully omitting any mention of the various Jewish plots against Paul. Instead, he reserves his account of Jewish antagonism towards the apostle for Chapter 6, the beginning of the martyrdom part of the narrative. Here, the compiler copies and pastes Acts

¹⁰² This textual variant is absent among those listed in Wordsworth-White’s critical edition of the Vulgate (see § 3.6). The lexicon of Forcellini explains that *agitare secum* can function as *agitare in mente*, having the force of *reputare*, *considerare* or *animo tractare* (cf. Gellius 20.10.2). Thus, the Latin variant of Pseudo-Abdias — unseen elsewhere — was probably an unsuccessful attempt to capture the double entendre in the original Greek of Acts 28.29. Recall from our discussion in § 3.5 that ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς means not only “having among themselves” but also “having within themselves”. Although the idiom *inter se* does not have the same dual meaning of ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, the Latin *agitantes concertationes* captures the idea of “brewing great disputes” better than *habentes quaestiones*, the usual Latin translation of the verse.

¹⁰³ Recall that the Pseudo-Marcellus starts with a plot by the Jewish leaders at Rome who visit Nero and ask him to get rid of Paul. For the translation of Paul’s speech before Nero in the Pseudo-Abdias, taken from the Pseudo-Marcellus, see Eastman 2015:181-183.

28:17-29, reworking the passage to make the confrontation between Paul and the Jews more apparent. Right after the Jews leave Paul's dwelling, Nero is informed of Paul's seditious activities against the Roman Empire.¹⁰⁴

The last episode of the Pseudo-Abdias has several unique features. Nero sentences Paul to be beheaded and sends his guards Parthenius and Ferega to make sure that he is dead. The Pseudo-Abdias is unique in its portrayal of these two soldiers, who are unsympathetic characters in previous accounts. In this narrative, although they participate in Paul's execution, they are baptized by Luke and Titus the day after.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, the final sentences of the narrative provide the reader with details of his burial that are not found in prior accounts. We are told that the matron Lucina packed his body with spices and buried it at the second milestone from the city on the Ostian Road on her own estate (*secundo ab urbe milliario, uia Ostiensi, in proprio praedio*). In hagiographic accounts of the patristic period, Lucina makes frequent appearances. Extant texts locate her in Rome at different historical times, thrice in connection to the apostle Paul. Just as in the Pseudo-Abdias, in *Lib. Pontif.* 22.3, she transfers Paul's corpse to her estate, but this text dates that event to the middle of the 3rd century under Cornelius' papacy, a pope martyred in 253, whom Lucina also buries. She also buries Saint Sebastian, martyred in 288. In his *Passio*, Sebastian appears in a dream to Lucina and asks her to take his mortal remains to Paul's and Peter's *Memoria Apostolorum* on the Appian Road (cf. § 4.1). Lucina is also said to have buried saints in the 1st century. In the *Passio Processi et Martiniani* (BHL 6947), she

¹⁰⁴ The compiler's sloppy handling of his material is also observed at the end of Chapter 6, which finishes with Acts 28:30-31, the same verses that the author used to finish Chapter 5. This results in a very inept and nonsensical doublet, given that Paul will be immediately tried and executed by Nero.

¹⁰⁵ In the original *MPI*, Parthenius and Ferega (there called Feritas) play the role of a pair of doubting Thomases, telling the apostle that they will "believe in Paul's god after he dies and rises again" (cf. § 4.4). In the Pseudo-Linus they are also unsympathetic characters who treat Paul and Plautilla with scorn, as opposed to the believing soldiers. In the second century *MPI*, the "good soldier" are Longus and Cestus" in the Pseudo-Linus they are called Longinus, Megistus, and Acestus. These characters disappear in the Pseudo-Abdias' narrative.

recovers the corpses of these two martyrs who had been the jailers of Paul and Peter (cf. § 5.3). Despite the fact that the unhistorical Lucina appears in a half-dozen hagiographies relating to martyrs of various centuries, the Catholic Church still holds to the ancient tradition that she buried Paul.¹⁰⁶

In summary, in this section we have examined the Pseudo-Linus, the Pseudo-Marcellus and the Pseudo-Abdias, three late martyrdom accounts that, although popular in the Middle Ages, receive less scholarly attention than the 2nd-century *MPI*.¹⁰⁷ We have argued that these overlooked stories are in fact of great scholarly interest, since they preserve elements of traditions that have a much earlier origin, such as the anti-Judaic story of Paul's death (cf. Chapter 3) or the belief that internal strife in the Roman church during Nero's reign had contributed to the martyrdoms of Paul and Peter. These late accounts also introduce new characters from independent legends, such as Plautilla and Lucina, who gained historical status in medieval times and became enduring elements of the tradition, as attested in the latter's case by her appearance in Rubens' 1637 *Martyrdom of Paul*. The Pseudo-Linus and the Pseudo-Marcellus also contributed new places to the sacred topography of Rome, such as the Porta San Paolo on the Ostian Road and the Aquae Salviae site as the location of Paul's *locus passionis*. As the number of MSS attest, in the Middle Ages, scribes repeatedly copied these late accounts, reworking them, mixing them with each other or other written legends and thus producing a

¹⁰⁶ See the Vatican website: http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/san_paolo/en/basilica/tomba.htm. On Lucina see Cooper 1999:297-317, Tajra 1994:160-162 and Eastman 2015: 185-187. In the Catacomb of Saint Callixtus there is a crypt that bears her name. The famous 19th century archeologist de Rossi identified her with the Roman matron Pomponia Graecina († ca. 83), who had been accused of adhering to a foreign superstition (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 13.32). Modern scholars consider the evidence insufficient.

¹⁰⁷ Appendix 5.c presents in tabular forms the various legends present in these late accounts.

bewildering variety of texts that rendered the story of Paul's final days in Rome very rich in details.¹⁰⁸

5. The Force of the Tradition

As we shall see in this final section, many of the traditions formed in late antiquity that we studied in § 5.1-4 have survived to our day. Indeed, with support from ecclesiastical authorities they solidified during the Middle Ages into a quasi-official corpus of stories, places and characters and as such continue even in the 21st century to inform the curious faithful about the stay of Paul at Rome and his martyrdom under Nero. We can see the beginnings of this process already in the early 6th century, when a document known as the Gelasian decree gave official approval to the catholic tradition championed by the Pseudo-Marcellus. Following a list of canonical writings accepted by the Roman Church, the Gelasian decree affirms two crucial articles of faith in regard to the Roman papacy, namely the Petrine primacy (Matt. 16:18) and the *Concordia Apostolorum* according to which Peter and Paul in Rome had given preference to Rome over all the cities “by their presence and triumph”. After constituting the Roman Church on a double apostolate carried out in perfect harmony, they had been crowned in martyrdom on the same day (June 29th).¹⁰⁹ As the doctrine of *Concordia Apostolorum* gradually became the Catholic Church's official view on the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, new traditions arose that

¹⁰⁸ The 13th century Codex BN 5323 is a good example of codices containing a collection of legends. Scribes appear to not have been bothered by discrepancies in the accounts and had no qualms in combining and altering stories, even when the accounts contained recognizable scriptural excerpts. For instance, in Chapter 5 of the Pseudo-Abdias, one reads about the amazement of the inhabitants of Malta at Paul's miraculous survival after the viper's bite. This is taken verbatim from Acts 28:6. Eastman's edition reads *conuertentes se, dicebant eum esse deum*, the same words that one finds in the Vulgate for Acts 28:6. Yet MS Vat lat. 1193 changes the reading to *conuertentes se benedicebant deum*; presumably the scribe or his predecessor found offensive the deification of Paul by the pagan inhabitants of Malta (called “Miletus” in the Pseudo-Abdias).

¹⁰⁹ The Gelasian decree in section 3.2 explicitly rejects traditions that place Paul in opposition to Peter as something that “heresies blather” (*sicut heresei garrunt*).

associated particular places in Rome with the joint memory of the apostles. We have already discussed the church on the Via Sacra commemorating the place where they knelt and prayed against Simon Magus (cf. § 5.1), the Mamertime prison where they had been imprisoned (cf. § 5.3) and the *Memoria Apostolorum* at the catacomb of San Sebastiano where their bodies were believed to have been temporarily transferred. Another Roman tradition fixed the place of their final goodbye before their respective executions on the Ostian Road, just south of the Porta San Paolo, and a small church known as the Chapel of the Farewell was erected there.¹¹⁰ Yet another tradition designated a crypt, located under the current Church of Santa Maria in Via Lata, as the house of Luke, Peter's residence and the location of Paul's imprisonment while he stayed at Rome (Acts 28:30).¹¹¹ Catholic traditions also extended to the apostles' relics. As early as the 12th century the Basilica of St. John in Lateran was said to house the heads of Peter and Paul; likewise there is evidence that early 18th-century visitors to Rome were told that half of the bodies of Paul and Peter were under the altar of St. Peter's Basilica and the other halves under St. Paul's.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Literary evidence for this tradition is found in yet another martyrdom account known as the Pseudo-Dionysius, a letter purportedly written by Dionysius the Areopagite who had been converted by Paul in his visit to Athens (cf. Acts 17:34). In it, "Dionysius" describes the deaths of Paul and Peter to Timothy. After they are sentenced to die, they part company with these memorable greetings: "Then Paul said to Peter, 'Peace to you, founder of the churches and shepherd of the sheep and lambs of Christ'. Peter then said to Paul, 'Go in peace, preacher of good tidings, mediator and chief of the salvation of the just'." See translation and discussion in Eastman 2015:357.

¹¹¹ Note that this tradition is in conflict with the claims of the Church of San Paolo alla Regola that also purports to be built on the site where Paul lived while he was in Rome (see discussion in § 1.1). Likewise, visitors to the crypt under Santa Maria in Via Lata can see chains that allegedly belonged to Paul. Yet the Basilica of St. Paul also has on display a chain that according to tradition attached Paul to the soldier assigned to guard him.

¹¹² We know that when Philip Augustus of France and his retinue came back from Holy Land in 1191, Pope Celestine took them to see the heads of Peter and Paul at the Lateran Basilica. See Birch 1998:110. For the presence of half of the bodies of the apostles under the altar of St. Peter's Basilica see Wright 1730:208. Note that the traditional claims of the Basilica of St. John in Lateran are now in conflict with archeological discoveries of the last century: among the bones believed to be those of Peter, found during the excavations at the Vatican Necropolis in the 1940s, portions of his skull were listed. Likewise, Paul's mortal remains are now believed to be in the marble sarcophagus found in the 2000s, after excavations done at Saint Paul's Basilica. The latter claim is discussed further at the end of this section.

Throughout history, traditions such as those cited above, which associate the apostles (both in life and death) with specific places in Rome, have rendered the city a most important place of pilgrimage for the faithful. Already ca. 620-640, we have evidence of guides for pilgrims in the extant *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae*. Interestingly, this guide also shows visitors to Rome where to find the tombs and churches of fictional Christians of the 1st century that in late antiquity had been linked to Paul, such as Valeria, the mother of Paul's disciples Gervasius and Protasius, the apostles' jailers Processus and Martinianus and the sisters Potentiana and Praxides who had hosted the apostles (cf. § 5.2). Most of these sites were outside of the city; accordingly, popes in the 7th and 8th centuries lavished much of their patronage on the churches located outside the wall.¹¹³ Rome remained the unchallenged center of Christian pilgrimage until the 12th century, when a decline happened due to the emergence of rival cultic centers at Santiago de Compostela in Spain and particularly the recently conquered Jerusalem. The Roman Church reacted to changing conditions so as to preserve its traditional preeminent position and bring back the *Romipetae* ("Rome-seekers"). In the year 1300, Pope Boniface VIII declared a Jubilee; *Romipetae* visiting the Basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul would be granted a remission of sins. If we are to believe a contemporary account, the Jubilee proved monetarily successful: the writer of the report says that two clerics stood at the altar of St. Paul's Basilica day and night drawing in money with rakes.¹¹⁴

Rome's position as a privileged religious destination survived the Reformation, and apparently ecclesiastical authorities adjusted to the changed situation within Christendom. The

¹¹³ See Birch 1998:97.

¹¹⁴ See *ibid* 201 for a discussion on the report written by William of Ventura who visited Rome during the Jubilee. *Ibid.* 179, Birch notes that in the 14th-15th *Libri Indulgentiarum*, Rome's competition with Santiago de Compostela, its rival pilgrimage site, is made explicit. We are told that those who go to the Basilica of Saint Paul every Sunday of the year will receive as much remission as if they went on a pilgrimage to the shrine at Compostela.

Englishman Edward Wright, who visited Rome in the early 1721, found the locals practical-minded in their treatment of non-Catholics like himself; he observed that “they allow strangers more liberty in their churches . . . than in Flanders, and other Roman Catholic countries. They won't discourage those whose chief business in their country, generally speaking, is curiosity, which they well know brings a good deal of money among them.”¹¹⁵ In the 19th century, further changes took place that defied papal secular authority in Rome. Indeed, during the short-lived Roman Republic of 1849, Pope Pius IX (1846-1876) was temporarily forced to escape from the city. Soon after his return to his palace, he established the Pontifical Commission of Archeology with the purpose of unearthing evidence of early Christianity in the city. Politically, what Pius IX was trying to do was to reclaim symbolically for the Catholic Church — by means of archeological discoveries — the city that had been recently taken away from him.¹¹⁶ In the following decades, under the leadership of Giovanni de Rossi (†1894), Vatican scholars would meticulously catalogue Christian inscriptions and survey the catacombs. Although the data that was collected has enormous value; from a modern perspective, the early interpretation of this evidence is flawed. The “Roman school”, the term used for the archeologists trained by de Rossi, used epigraphical and archeological data in a rather dogmatic way to prove the validity of the literary tradition; in case of conflict the latter was preferred. In consequence, this

¹¹⁵ See Wright 1730:204.

¹¹⁶ In 1851, during the Commission's first session, the Pope remarked: “Christian Rome was admirable in its beginnings, as the founder of the true religion. As it was humble, hidden and restricted, it kept in the beginning to its caves and as it emerged into the light of the day it arranged that its cradle and place of its birth should become an object of admiration and respect for all men, not different than was and is the cave of Bethlehem. Thus it is that the heads and masters of the faith of Christ, namely the Roman Pontiffs, were always intent that these venerable places, which record the birth of the Christian faith in Rome, and the heroic virtues of the first faithful, should be preserved in their original state and should attest in their appearance the faith of Jesus Christ, which has always been maintained the same in the Roman Church.” This is the translation from the handwritten Italian document by Professor Steven Hughes (History Department at Loyola University). For his own research purposes, Dr. Hughes found this document on online archives and kindly shared it with me.

methodological approach sometimes produced overly optimistic findings, such as that of the alleged tomb of Ampliatus, a Roman Christian greeted by Paul in Rom. 16:8.¹¹⁷

Although the identification of some of de Rossi's data as belonging to 1st-century Roman Christianity is now viewed with skepticism, his contemporaries treated it with much greater confidence. The great French historian P. Allard, de Rossi's close acquaintance, wrote extensively on the Neronian persecution using, apart from recently collected epigraphical data, ancient literary sources such as Tacitus, Christian 4th century literature and early traditions preserved in apocryphal books.¹¹⁸ His depiction of the events reads like a much expanded, detailed and rationalized version of Sulpicius Severus' *Chronica* 2.29-30 (from which he quotes at times). Allard hypothesized that Nero's fall had occurred not long after his killings of Peter and Paul; he also conjectured that after the Great Fire of 64 the Jews of Rome came under the suspicion of the populace and thus used their contacts in the Neronian Court (the most powerful being Nero's philo-Judaic consort Sabina Poppaea) to bring the Christians to Nero's attention. E. Renan, another famous French historian of Allard's and de Rossi's generation, similarly wrote that the Roman Jews had instigated Nero's persecution against the Christians and referred to Acts' anti-Judaic tradition as evidence.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ For a discussion on de Rossi's legacy and methodology, see Snyder 2003:6-10. For Ampliatus' tomb see de Rossi 1881:57-74.

¹¹⁸ See Allard 1884. Chapter 1 of his book is devoted entirely to the Neronian persecution.

¹¹⁹ Renan founded his suspicion on "the incontestable fact that the Jews, before the destruction of Jerusalem, were the true persecutors of Christians and did not neglect any means to make them disappear." At this point, he added a footnote that reads «*Actes des Apôtres à chaque page* ». See Renan 1873:161.

Partly inspired by the scholarly works of Allard's and Renan's, in 1895 Henryk Sienkiewicz wrote *Quo Vadis*, a historical novel about the Neronian persecution.¹²⁰ His book became a massive international best-seller and he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1905. It is difficult to overstate the influence of his work on popular culture; in the past century four movies and one TV miniseries were made based on Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis*; for their viewers, these movies have shaped their mental picture of the events that transpired in Rome after the Great Fire of 64.¹²¹ Classicists R. Scodel and A. Bettenworth wrote in 2009 a study of Sienkiewicz's novel and its cinematographic adaptations. I shall briefly note here some of the early traditions — already studied in the dissertation — that are featured in Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis*. The portrayal of Peter and Paul in the novel is eminently "catholic". The apostles work in harmony within the Christian community as the acknowledged leaders. They are also martyred on the same evening; the scene of Paul's execution is based on the late martyrdom accounts seen in § 5.4. After Paul passes under the Porta San Paolo on his way to Aquae Salviae, he encounters Plautilla, who gives him her veil to bind his eyes at the moment of his decapitation.¹²² Throughout the novel, Nero is portrayed as a monstrous ruler in accordance to the anti-Neronian tradition that is first attested in the *Martyrdom of Paul* (§ 4.4). Yet the anti-Judaic tradition of Acts is also featured in *Quo Vadis*. The downfall of the Christian community

¹²⁰ The title of the book obviously makes reference to the famous *Quo Vadis* scene of *Acts of Peter* (see § 5.1). Today, the little church of *Quo Vadis* on the Appian Road commemorating the encounter of Jesus and Peter at the city gate has a portrait of Sienkiewicz as well as a marble slab containing footprints miraculously left by Jesus.

¹²¹ These movies (particularly the 1951 and 2001 versions) have introduced historical misperceptions such as the belief that Roman Christians persecuted by Nero were killed at the Colosseum. In actuality, this amphitheater was built a decade after Nero's death. This misconception was probably first promoted in the 18th century after Pope Benedict XIV declared the Colosseum a memorial for Christian martyrs of antiquity. See Scodel and Bettenworth 2009:39.

¹²² Sienkiewicz's novel features very many characters, some of whom originate from fictional hagiographical legends discussed in section 3 (the jailers Processus and Martinianus, a Christian aristocrat named Pudens and "Nazarius", a disciple of Peter).

starts as follows: two local rabbis introduce a Jew named Chilo to Nero, and Chilo, who has already met with Poppaea, slanders the Christians before Nero and offers to inform on them.¹²³

To sum up, in this section we have examined how the Roman Church promoted as an article of faith the tradition that Paul and Peter, after working in Rome in harmony, were executed by Nero on the same day. The authority of this tradition was reinforced both by linking it to specific places in the city of Rome, which as a result became popular pilgrimage destinations, and by employing modern archaeological research to provide historical verification. Several locations in Rome were consecrated to the joint memory of apostles: their shared dwelling, their prison, the place at which they said farewell to each other before their execution and the Lateran Basilica that preserved their heads. These traditional pilgrimage sites have made Rome up to our days a privileged destination for the faithful. After the intellectual revolution caused by the European Enlightenment, particularly from the 1850s on, these catholic traditions were buttressed by scholars who used archeological discoveries and epigraphical data that they assigned to 1st-century Christianity. The famous novel *Quo Vadis* and its cinematographic adaptations also helped to foster the traditional story that Peter and Paul, along with many fellow Christians, were martyred under Nero after the Great Fire of Rome. In more recent decades further attempts have been made to provide scientific confirmation for this tradition. Indeed, excavations under the Vatican in the 1940 led to the discovery of the alleged mortal remains of Peter. Likewise, excavations at Saint Paul's Basilica in 2006 led to the discovery of a white marble sarcophagus under the altar that contained bone fragments. On June 28th 2009, Pope Benedict XVI officially announced that carbon dating studies have shown that the bones belonged to a man who had lived in the 1st or 2nd century. He added: "This seems to confirm the

¹²³ As Scodel and Bettenworth 2009:19 point out, Sienkiewicz is most likely following Renan 1873:154-161, who — as discussed above — based his conjectures on Acts' anti-Judaic theme.

unanimous and undisputed tradition that these are the mortal remains of the Apostle Paul”. Just like Gaius ca. 200 (cf. § 2.4), and Pope Damasus in the 4th century (see § 4.1), Pope Benedict XVI was once again reaffirming the tradition that Paul — along with Peter — was the foremost Roman martyr and that this tradition was at the foundation of the authority of the Catholic Church.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ See discussion in Snyder 2013:34 and Harrill 2012:164.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the centuries, much ink has been spilt on the end of Paul's life in Rome and its remembrance among Christians. What is more, the subject has been examined in the past two decades from several different angles. Twenty years ago, Tajra (*The Martyrdom of Paul*, 1994) attempted to reconstruct the judicial and historical context of the apostle's death, and more recently Eastman (*Paul the Martyr*, 2011) focused on the developments of his martyr-cult. Other scholars have also dealt with the issue in studies of the state of Roman Christianity in its first centuries, for instance, Lampe (*From Paul to Valentinus*, 2003) and Green (*Christianity in Rome*, 2010). While in my dissertation I have often had recourse to the insights of these and other scholars, I have carried out my study of the remembrance of Paul's death from a very different perspective. My major concern has been the formation and transmission of traditions about the apostle's final days in Rome. By studying these traditions (which form one of the oldest collections of traditions in western history) I have shed light on how different social, religious and political contexts affected the way Christians interpreted and reimagined Paul's stay and death in Rome. Moreover, I have developed new methodological models necessary for my study, drawn attention to overlooked texts and attempted to locate them in more precise historical contexts, by, for example, narrowing down the date of composition of the Pseudo-Linus (a late martyrdom account) and the forged correspondence between Paul and Seneca.

Lastly, I have striven to place the earliest literary and martyr-cult traditions of Paul's final days within their contemporary Greco-Roman milieu.¹

Soon after I began my investigation of Pauline traditions in the first two centuries CE, I realized that I would be facing serious hurdles. Apart from the scarcity of evidence, I found that there was no existing quantitative conceptual framework to understand the historical conditions under which the earliest stories of Paul's death had survived. Compelled to develop new methodologies that would allow me to approach my subject matter, I created two quantitative models: (a) one for the demographics of Christianity in the first century (Appendix 1.a) and (b) one for the transmission and dissemination of traditions about Paul's martyrdom in the period 65-125 (§ 2.3). I conceived these models as research tools to frame quantitative discussions that involve the question "how many...?" In my opinion these novel interpretative frameworks fill a methodological gap. Although the numbers that emerge from these models are mere estimates, they are convenient heuristic devices that provide the researcher interested in overall trends with some sense of the potential parameters. It is my hope that other scholars will find these models useful in their own studies of historical processes that took place in the early period of Christianity.

Another obstacle that I encountered in studying early traditions of Paul's death was the absence of written records or physical evidence about the apostle's martyr cult in Rome (which is first attested ca. 200). For that reason, I decided to approach the subject by means of analogy; first by examining the available evidence for Peter's martyr cult (§ 4.1) in the 2nd century and then by analyzing the modest beginnings but subsequent growth of the cult of Difunta Correa, an

¹ The importance of understanding Pauline traditions within their contemporary social matrix cannot be stressed enough. The truism that a man cannot escape his own time is no less valid for religious groups. In many ways, non-Christians (pagans or Jews) living in the Roman Empire in the first three centuries would have been much better placed to understand the traditions of Paul's death than modern Christians.

Argentinean folk-saint whose death is dated ca. 1841 (§ 4.3).² To my knowledge, scholars have not previously realized the methodological advantages of using the cult of folk-saints in South America (which typically arise as grassroots phenomena) to gain insights on how rank-and-file Christians could have developed martyr cults before the elite members of the Church became involved in this religious practice.

My inquiry on the Neronian persecution and its probable influence on how the Roman Christian community handled traditions related to Paul's death (§ 1.2-3), if not an entirely novel contribution to the study of early Christianity, at least brings together the most recent insights on the subject. The same goes for my systematic analysis in § 2.4 of the eight earliest references to Paul's death (written in the period 96-200 and all of them chance remarks). I have also identified and described the two most important earliest traditions of the apostle's martyrdom that have survived. In Chapter 3, I have observed that the "anti-Judaic tradition" of canonical Acts (that slyly blames the Jews for Paul's demise) is further heightened in Acts' Western version. For its part, the "anti-Neronian tradition" favored by non-elite Christians and preserved in the 2nd-century *Martyrdom of Paul*, was likely formulated soon after Paul's death, as suggested by the story of Patroclus, the emperor's cupbearer and a character loosely based on a marginal Roman Christian of the 1st century (§ 4.4). Although the "anti-Neronian tradition" became by far the most popular, the "anti-Judaic tradition" never faded entirely and was incorporated into later martyrdom accounts (§ 5.4).

In Chapter 5, I studied the historization of Paul's stay and death in Rome by elite Christians of late antiquity and the formation of new popular legends that were handed down

² As discussed in § 4.3, I was inspired to use the latter approach by Castelli's work on Cassie Bernall, one the victims of the Columbine shootings in 1999. See Castelli 2004:172-196

with gusto by medieval scribes. I have drawn attention to Jerome's role in the transmission of the forged correspondence between Paul and Seneca. Likewise I have discussed Ambrose's discovery of the bodies of Gervasius and Protasius who would later be identified as Paul's disciples and fellow martyrs of the Neronian persecution. Although neither of the Church Fathers could have foreseen it, once these two traditions were set in motion, they acquired a life of their own and continued to run on autopilot throughout the Middle Ages.

Above all, a major finding of my dissertation is the amazing lasting power of traditions. The post-Constantinian Church presented itself as a permanent institution whose religious message to the faithful was eternal (outside the realm of time) but also historical. And as a religion rooted in human history, Christianity turned towards the past in order to find the origins of its doctrines and traditions. Within that ideological context, the traditions about Paul's final days in Rome that became consolidated in late antiquity survived more or less unchanged and unchallenged throughout the Middle Ages. As long as the Catholic Church was able to impose its traditions on European society, the history of the world had to conform to these traditions. Through the centuries, stories of Paul's martyrdom were faithfully copied by medieval scribes and pilgrims relived imagined scenes of Paul's life and death in Rome as they visited sacred locations associated with him in the eternal city. With little regard for consistency or modern standards of historical accuracy, "catholic traditions" (championed by the papacy) linking the missions and deaths of Peter and Paul in Rome were preserved along with exclusively Pauline traditions in which Peter was absent. Despite their sometimes irreconcilable differences, these disparate traditions of Paul's stay and death in Rome have been handed down to our day — in the terminology of Halbwachs — as a shared "collective memory" that contributed to shape

Europe's Christian identity.³ In that regard, this dissertation confirms, once again, that the group that owns the past has greater chances of controlling the present and influencing the future.

³ See Halbwachs 1952.

APPENDIX 1.a: CHRISTIAN DEMOGRAPHICS

Ancient societies do not lend themselves easily to quantitative evaluations; in particular, attempts to reconstruct Christian demographics are fraught with serious difficulties. Yet in order to assess how traditions about Paul's final days were passed down in the first several decades after his death, it is essential to possess a general idea about the demographic growth of the movement. For our purposes, the value of this information is twofold, as it allows us (1) to gauge the size of the communities in which traditions of Paul's death originated and were passed down (cf. § 2.3), and (2) to understand how demographic changes could have affected pilgrimage to Paul-related martyr sites (cf. § 4.1).

Almost two decades ago, the sociologist Rodney Stark published *The Rise of Christianity*, an influential book in which he used a comparative approach to estimate the demographic growth of Christianity from its birth down to the fourth century.¹ For a starting number, Stark noted that Acts 1:14-15 suggests that, several months after the Crucifixion, there were 120 Christians.² Thus, he assumed "conservatively" (in his own words), that there were 1,000 Christians in the year 40. For a second data point, Stark chose the beginning of the fourth century. He noted a general consensus among scholars that the number of Christians around 300 lay within the range

¹ See Stark 1996:1-23.

² According to Acts, after Peter's first public speech (Acts 2:41) 3,000 men were converted. The number later rises to 5,000 (Acts 4:4). When Paul arrives in Jerusalem from a missionary journey (Acts 21:20) he is told to notice "how many thousands of Jews have believed". Stark observes that these figures are too large in comparison to the population of Jerusalem in the first century. Moreover, Josephus in his *Vita* describes how as a young man in the Palestine of the 50s he spent years examining and studying the doctrines of the different sects of Judaism (Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes); yet he passes over in silence Christianity. As is normal in ancient historiography, Acts' numbers are rhetorical in nature and express the author's (correct but exaggerated) perception that, at the turn of the first century, the movement had grown significantly from its modest origins.

of 5-7.5 million.³ Setting the total population in the Roman Empire at 60 million, and by analogy with the expansion rate of Mormonism, Stark postulated that Christianity grew at a rate of 40% per decade (or 3.42 % per year) throughout the period 40-350. Based on his model, there were about 7,530 Christians in the year 100, about 220,000 Christians in 200 and over six million in 300.⁴

Stark's work has become an oft-cited reference when dealing with the size of the Christian population.⁵ Indeed, the model matches quite well our historical impressions. It partly explains Christianity's virtual invisibility during its first hundred years. Relative to the total population of the Empire, Christians were a tiny fraction for a very long time. It is only ca. 170, according to this model, that they became 0.1% of the inhabitants; they became 1% by 230 and 2% twenty years later. From 250 to 300, Christian growth as seen by outsiders must have been extraordinary; they quickly went from about one million to over six million by the end of the 4th century.⁶ These fifty years are marked by the first empire wide persecutions of Decius (250) and Valerian (257-260) and culminate in the "Great Persecution" of Diocletian and his colleagues

³ This consensus arises from the examination of the meager evidence that we have for quantifying Christian communities. This evidence comes mainly from three sources. (1) Literary references: Christian authors who made several impressionistic observations about the number of Christians. In the early 20th century, Harnack (1908:2.1-32) gathered an interesting collection of these references. (2) Papyrological evidence found in Egypt. (3) Archeological evidence, in particular that found in the Roman catacombs in the third and fourth century.

⁴ Stark's model probably overestimates Christian growth after the year 300. At least, this seems to be the case in the city of Rome. See MacMullen 2009. For the purposes of this dissertation, it only matters to know that Christianity continued to grow in the fourth century; more precise estimates in the period 300-400 are not essential.

⁵ See Hopkins 1998:185-226, Bodel 2008:183-84 and Bagnall 2009:18-19.

⁶ There are virtually no Christian inscriptions, sculptures, mosaics, or sarcophagi datable to the first two centuries (see Lampe 2003:140), but material culture ca. 250-300 (the catacombs in Rome and papyrological evidence in Egypt) suggests a phenomenal demographic growth. In the extant pagan literature, to about Christianity after 150 appear with increasing frequency (see Ferguson 1987:464-496). Stark 1996:73-94 explains the remarkable growth of Christianity in the period 150-300 by observing that the movement benefited from superior fertility and from an excess of females leading to high rates of exogamous marriage. Moreover, care for fellow Christians during the epidemics of the second and third centuries made possible a greater survival rate due to primary care. Similar Christian care for strangers (who were regularly abandoned by other pagans) made Christianity popular and respected.

(303-313). Stark's model also sheds light on Christian relations with the Jews. If we set the Jewish population of the Empire at about 4,500,000, it follows that for a very long time the number of Christians was tiny relative to that of Jews.⁷ On another note, Stark's model has recently been applied to the study of demographic changes in the Christian population of the city of Rome. Using a growth rate of 40%, Bodel estimated that the number of Roman Christians went from 7,000 in the year 200, to 37,000 in 250 and finally to 200,000 in 300.⁸

Although the overall usefulness of Stark's model is hard to dismiss, we should not be beholden to it. During the period 100-300, it does work well to model demographic changes in terms of order of magnitude, particularly over extended periods of time (50 years or so). Yet I would argue that the numbers for the years 100-125 probably underestimate the Christian population.⁹ With that caveat, in the absence of a better model I shall also use Stark's figures for the first quarter of the 2nd century. My primary point of contention with Stark's model concerns primarily the period 64-100, during which the earliest traditions of Paul's last days were formed and transmitted. Regarding this period, there are two relevant demographic questions Stark seems to have left unanswered. First, whom should we count as Christian in those decades, at a time when there were few of them? We may surmise that in that period Christian identity was particularly fluid. There must have been converts from polytheism with multiple religious allegiances, sympathetic Jews or pagan god-fearers who were however not full participants in the

⁷ The total Jewish population is disputed, most experts setting it at about 7-8% of the population of the Empire. See analysis in Hopkins 1998:213-216. Exact numbers are not important for the sake of our comparison with Christians.

⁸ Bodel 2005:183-184. There is a general agreement among scholars that there were about 5,000-10,000 Christians at Rome ca. 200. Stark 1996:4 settled for 7,000. The only concrete data available for demographic estimates is found in a letter written by Cornelius, bishop at Rome in 251-253, boasting about ecclesiastical personnel and the number of people in need reached by the Church's charity (see Eus. *HE* 6.43.11).

⁹ There seems to be a mismatch between Stark's estimates and our evidence for early decades of the 2nd century. Pliny's letter (*Ep.* 10.96) and the rescripts of Trajan and Hadrian are indicative of fairly significant Christian presence in Asia Minor ca. 110-124. Unless this was a very localized phenomenon, Stark's estimates for 110-124 (10,000-17,000 Christians) do not seem high enough to account for the evidence.

Christian community, slaves in nominally Christian households, etc.¹⁰ For our purposes, it is useful to take “first-century Christian” in its broadest sense and count all those associated with the movement. A second problem relates to Stark’s assumption that in the 1st century Christianity grew steadily at a 40% growth rate per decade. Steady growth probably reflects better the situation in later centuries when the movement had a solid baseline demographic that better resisted the inevitable bumps and lumps caused by conversions or desertions. Yet the situation would have been different in the first several decades. For what it is worth, comparison with self-reported data of the Church of Scientology from its foundation in 1950 till 1997 suggests a big jump for the first decade, followed by an irregular ebb and flow that does not match Stark’s predicted pattern of growth in the period 40-100.¹¹

In response to these objections, a critic may point out that, on the other hand, we have not proved that Stark’s estimates for the population of Christians in the first century are wrong. Fortunately for us, we can check the applicability of Stark’s proposed expansion rate for the city of Rome during the period 64-100. As seen above, Bodel showed that Stark’s 40% rate accounts well for the growth of Christianity at Rome from 200 to 300. Now, if we retrogress our numbers from 200 to 100 at the same 40% rate, we get first a very sensible estimate of 1,302 Christians at Rome for 150 but then a less credible of 242 for the year 100.¹² The extant epistle known as *I Clement* was written ca. 96; that its author wrote on behalf of a Christian community of less than

¹⁰ All of this was likely also true in later centuries, but by then the number of Christians was much larger and considerations of their religious fluidity would have had less weight in calculating their total number.

¹¹ The self-reported rate of expansion of Scientology can be found at their website: <http://www.scientology.org/expansion>.

¹² The extant evidence for developments in the Christian community at Rome in the middle third of the 2nd century is substantial. Apart from the local proto-orthodox faction, we know that there were several other groups such as the Valentinians. This is indicative of a community of significant size. An estimate of about 1,300 Christians ca. 150 matches the evidence quite well. Even a higher number would not be unreasonable.

250 is possible, but the number seems too small. What happens if we continue to retrogress? For the year 60 we end up with a tiny community of 63 members that barely covers half of the Christians greeted by Paul in Rom 16:3-23. On that account, we are led to suspect that Stark's model underestimates the number of Christians in a period of great importance to us: the mid 60s, when Paul was executed and the Neronian persecution took place.¹³

Before discarding Stark's estimate of the total number of Christians for the year 64, I shall test it against three pieces of demographic information found in the New Testament. (1) 1 Cor. 15:6-8 implies that Christians at Corinth ca. 55 considered it possible that the risen Jesus had appeared to over 500 witnesses more than twenty years earlier and that many of these people were alive (presumably not in Corinth).¹⁴ Such a large number suggests a mismatch between Stark's estimate of 1,656 in 55 and the Corinthians' demographic perception of Christianity empire-wide, considering that the entire Corinthian Christian community consisted of at most 200 people.¹⁵ (2) A tally of named Christians appearing in Paul's letters and Acts indicates that we know the names of around 120 Christians who were probably alive by the year 60, about 100 of them associates or acquaintances of Paul.¹⁶ Stark's estimate of 1,960 Christians for the year

¹³ Notice that an error in Stark's estimate for the year 64 can significantly affect our interpretation of the demographic environment in which Paul's death occurred. If we add or subtract 1,000 in Stark's estimate of all Christians for 150 CE, the error is less than 2.5%; if we do the same for the year 64, the error is 44%.

¹⁴ It is beyond the realm of our discussion here to determine the theological or historical meaning of 1 Cor. 15:6-8. What matters is that Paul's Corinthian readers likely did not find the figure 'over 500' highly implausible.

¹⁵ From Paul's letters and Acts, we know the names of sixteen Christians in Corinth, to whom we should add an indeterminate number of spouses and children. The entire households of Crispus and Stephanas were baptized; which means additional children, relatives, slaves, freedmen and business associates. Caragounis 2009:1.365-418, dismissing lower estimates, proposed a community of "several hundreds". For his part, Barrett (2011:225-227), based on an analysis of the groups mentioned in 1 and 2 Cor., conjectured 200 members. In my view, Barrett's more conservative estimate should be preferred. Much more than 200 Christians is unlikely, since Gaius (Rom. 16.23) could host in his house the entire congregation (presumably these were the "core believers", about 50 people). See Murphey-O'Connor 2002:182-184.

¹⁶ I owe this tally to Fr. Felix Just at the Loyola Institute for Spirituality. Fr. Just simply went to the trouble of counting the Christians known by name from the letters of Paul and Acts. See <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/>

60 would imply that we know the names of about one out of twenty Christians. This sounds too optimistic, given that we are not very well-informed about early Christianity. (3) Using Stark's model, Hopkins estimated the number of "literary sophisticates" among Christians in the first two centuries.¹⁷ Hopkins' estimate for the year 60 is unconvincing, since it comprises only twelve writers. This is a very low number considering that, based on the extant literature of the 1st century, we can tally more than twelve skilled Christian writers who were likely young adults by the year 60.

Last, we test Stark's data for the year 64 in the context of other modern demographic estimates. Early Christianity was an urban phenomenon as attested by the letters of Paul, Acts, and other New Testament writings. In the 1st century, the population of Rome is estimated at about one million and the total urban population in the Roman Empire at about 6,000,000. Thus, we can presume that about 10% of the 2,242 Christians estimated by Stark's model for the year 64 lived in Rome.¹⁸ This results in a Roman Christian community of 225 members, which can further be split into gender and age categories. Ancient populations were roughly made up of about 30% adult males, 30% adult females and 40% children.¹⁹ It follows that, using Stark's

¹⁷ Hopkins 1998:204. Assuming that males were 30% of the total Christian population, Hopkins concluded that only 2% of Christians were fluent and skilled literates in the early centuries. Next, drawing from Stark's data, he estimated the number of Christians able to write at a literary competent level. In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, Hopkins' analysis will prove useful as a heuristic device to estimate the number of Christians who could have written accounts of Paul's death while eyewitnesses of the events were still alive. See Chapter 1.4.

¹⁸ See Frier 2000:827–54 for estimates of the urban population in the Empire. Given the absence of any type of "Christian census" we are forced to make some assumptions. Obviously, urban Christians were not evenly distributed in all cities; in fact we only have sound evidence for thirty-one communities ca. 64; there were likely almost no Christians in places like Germany or Gaul. Apart from the political importance of the city, the 1/10 ratio of the population of Rome to total urban population yields a very reasonable estimate for the number of Christians at Rome.

¹⁹ See Hopkins 1998:204 for this breakdown of men, women and children. References to children in the gospels are always positive (Mark 9:33-37, Matt.18:1-14). According to Tit. 1:6-9, bishops must be good fathers and have believing children. To what extent children were involved in the religious life of the house churches is difficult to say. From Ephes. 6:1-4 and Col. 3:20 we can gather that at least some children attended service. Pliny, ca. 110-111,

data, during the Neronian persecution there were about 68 adult males in Rome and a similar number of adult females. These numbers look too small if compared to the situation described in Tacitus' *Ann.* 15.44 and *1 Clem.* 6.1-2., unless we are ready to think that almost all adult Christians were wiped out.²⁰ Granted, we obtained the number 68 by working with three independent modern population estimates, but even if we raise it to 100 adult males, assuming a 30% error, the number still appears too low.

I propose here a different way to compute the number of Roman Christians in 64 based on (1) extant information about the state of the Christian movement in Rome in the years preceding the Neronian persecution and (2) the use of Dunbar's theory of social networks. Throughout this discussion, we should always bear in mind that, given the inherent difficulty of defining who could have been counted as a "Christian" after the fire of 64, it is better to use the term in its most inclusive sense.²¹ Our first task will be to gauge the size of the Christian community at Rome ca. 57. Reading the greetings section in Rom. 16:3-23, one gets the impression that interactions among Christians in this city were more complex than in other communities. Paul writes to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1.1) and to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1.1-2) as single churches, although the latter congregation seems internally divided. Yet in Rom.

in his letter to Trajan expresses a moral dilemma as to what to do with the arrested Christians who are not yet adults (*Ep.* 10.96.2).

²⁰ See § 1.2 in this dissertation. Stark 1996:179-180 appears to endorse M. Sordi's estimate of a few hundred victims. Likewise, in his monograph on the Neronian persecution, Beaujeu 1960:23 postulated "200-300 or perhaps a few more". All in all, our own ancient sources speak against a number much smaller than 200. Tacitus states that some Christian were thrown to the dogs and crucified, and others used for nocturnal illumination (*Ann.* 15.44). Nero wanted a grandiose spectacle as he intermingled with the public. Slaughtering a couple of dozen Christians during the day and then at night, using a similar number of them as torches, does not sound very impressive. Cf. also *1 Clem.* 6.2 to gauge the number of female victims.

²¹ One may assume that Roman authorities made that identification of "Christians" without much scrutiny of the actual emotional attachment to Christianity of those arrested. As previously discussed, religious identity among 1st century Christians certainly exhibited the same degree of fluidity, if not more, attested in later centuries by evidence found in the Roman catacombs (see Bowes 2008:586). Furthermore, in the 60s CE Roman Christians lacked a central authority and belonged to various coexisting factions (cf. Rom. 16: 3-23 and Phil. 1:15-18).

16:3-23 he addresses between five and seven house churches that meet in separate places.²² Despite disagreements among them, probably arising from tensions about law observance, we must infer that all Roman Christians sometimes sit down and eat together (Rom. 14:1-15:3).²³ At the time of Paul's writing, these different groups still intermingle but the potential for them to become independent factions (cf. Phil. 1.15-18) is there. In Rom. 16:3-23, Paul lists twenty-eight men and women. Presumably, these are all adults, so we should add 40% of children to complete a "known group" of forty-seven Christians. In gauging the number of Roman believers we should also consider two groups of indeterminate size belonging to the households of Aristobulus and Narcissus (Rom. 16:10-11).²⁴ Besides, Paul is aware that there are other Christians who meet with his personal friends and acquaintances (Rom. 16:14-15). In view of these figures and considering that scholars put the size of the Corinthian community at 200 or above, it is sound to estimate the number of Roman Christians ca. 57 in the range of 250-300.²⁵

²² The definition of "house church" is problematic, as it relates to three other social entities: (1) the meeting place (οἶκος) offered by a host; (2) the church (ἐκκλησία), i.e. the group of Christians that usually gather together; and (3) membership in a particular household (referred by Paul as ἐκ τῶν + name of the patron). Unfortunately, since Rom. 16:3-23 allows for different readings, we cannot say with certainty how many house churches in the Roman community were known to Paul. See discussion in Lampe 2003:359 and Green 2010:32. It is very difficult to estimate the maximum occupancy of these house churches; there must have been a broad range. The grandest houses of Pompeii found so far could serve as gathering places for 360 or more (see Osiek and Balch 1997:202). As previously discussed, Gaius in Corinth (Rom. 16.23) owned a house big enough to host the entire congregation. Diotrephes's house (3 John 9-11) probably had a similar carrying capacity. The mid-3rd century house church found in Dura Europos, our earliest archeological evidence, could hold 65-75 people (see Hopkins 1998:203). Green 2010: 33 speculates that Prisca and Aquila, as part of their tent-making business, probably had a warehouse in Rome where about 60 people could meet. On the other end of the spectrum, other Christians might have met in small rooms that could hold no more than a dozen people. See Hultgren 2011:703. An average of 25-40 members per church for Roman Christians in 64 CE sounds reasonable.

²³ As Lampe suggests, the unusual way that Paul chooses to greet the Roman churches may partly reflect a strategy to build trust and recommend himself to a community he has never visited. See discussion in Lampe 2003:156 and Green 2010:28-39.

²⁴ Recall that Christian missionaries baptized the whole household. (Rom. 16:10-11). See 1 Cor. 1:14-17, Acts 16:29-32, 18:7-9 and *Acts of Paul* 3.4. In antiquity, the household included an indefinite number of people associated with the patron (his family, slaves, business associates and guests).

²⁵ Stark 1996:13 briefly refers to Paul's letters acknowledging that in Rom. 16 the audience can seem imposingly numerous. Yet he compares Paul's letters to those sent by Ms. Kim, a missionary of the Moon sect who came from

What happened after Paul's arrival in the city ca. 60-62? Internal evidence supports the traditional view that Paul wrote to the Philippians while imprisoned at Rome. Unfortunately, the only relevant information concerning the local Christian demographics in this letter is at Phil. 1:12-18, where he mentions an increase in the intensity and boldness of the missionary activity and states that a separate Christian group, hostile to him, is preaching the gospel independently.²⁶ We may surmise that Paul received many visitors from the churches that he had founded elsewhere and that the overall number of Christians continued to grow; still for 64, we lack more concrete demographic information like that found in Rom. 16:3-23 describing the situation ca. 57.

Fortunately, recent developments in evolutionary anthropology gives us a valuable tool to better estimate the number of Roman Christian at the time of the Great Fire. Notice that in assessing the size of Christian communities in Corinth and Rome, the estimates discussed were in the lower hundreds. This is not a fluke. It is a natural result of the way in which the human species forms stable social groups. Indeed, studies have shown that our neocortical capacity places an upper limit on the number of people to whom we can feel closely connected by feelings of mutual obligation and interwoven relationships. This number lies in the 100-230 range, but a commonly detected value is 150, which researchers call "Dunbar's number". Group sizes in the vicinity of 150 are observed throughout ancient and modern societies, among

Korea to America to recruit converts. Ms. Kim's letters in the 1960s, written to Moon communities in various American cities, give the false impression that she is addressing large audiences. In this instance, I do not find Stark's arguments persuasive. It is unreasonable to think that Paul listed almost every member of the Roman Christian community in his letter. Moreover, we cannot discard the existence of other Christian cells in Rome unknown to Paul. See Hultgren 2011:70, who refrains from estimating the size of the community.

²⁶ For a discussion on the Roman origin of Philippians, see § 1.2. Probably, among Paul's missionary rivals in Phil. 1:16-18, there were Judaizing Christians who were still returning to the city after Claudius' death. Cf. Suet. *Cl.* 25.4 and Acts 18:2.

religious communities and urban social networks.²⁷ *Ceteris paribus*, groups within the range 100-230 function better and remain together longer. For groups much larger than that, unless there is an overarching authority enforcing rules, personal bonds loosen and the community is better off if it splits apart.²⁸

In reading Paul's letters, one perceives a binding sense of fellowship, indicative of the close (albeit tumultuous) relationships expected by Dunbar's theory.²⁹ Interestingly, if we divide Stark's estimate for Christians in the year 100 (7,530) by 50, the estimated number of Christian communities ca. 100, the number we get is 151!³⁰ Thus, we can surmise that until the late 1st century membership in the majority of the Christian communities is likely to have fallen within the predicted range of 100-230. The obvious outliers would have been very small and very large cities, particularly Rome, since it was much bigger than the other Christian centers. Now if we

²⁷ See Hill and Dunbar 2003:53-72 and Hernando *et al.* 2101. Dunbar's number appears as the average size of hunting-gatherer societies, villages in England in the 18th century, contemporary Hutterite communities social networks in modern cities. The ubiquity of Dunbar's number and the predicted 100-230 range is observed even in serendipitous findings. In 1980, researchers found the skeletons of Herculaneans, who had been trapped by the volcanic eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79, hidden in boat chambers located on the seaside. The group consisted of 139 individuals. Dunbar's number also represents the optimal network size that the average person can successfully maintain (cf. Chapter 2.4).

²⁸ Gladwell 2000:179-181 provides a reader-friendly summary of Dunbar's theory.

²⁹ Group sizes in the range 100-230 also fit well with our understanding of how religious movements grow. For a religious group, recruiting through preexisting social networks, so that converts bring in their families and friends, works much better than the one-by-one conversion of social isolates. See Stark 1996:56. This also fits well with Paul's evangelizing strategies. The rapid geographical spread of Pauline Christianity was based on moving smaller cells led by Paul's associates from a preexisting community in a large urban area to the smaller surrounding cities. See Drane 1993: 577.

³⁰ Harnack estimated 50 communities ca. 100 (see Hopkins 1998:202) whereas Frend 1984:986 estimated 46. Frend's figure would give an average of 164 community members. I suspect that Stark's estimate of 7,530 ca. 100 might undercount the total number of Christians, but even if we raise it by 20% we would still get an average size of 181, still close to 150 and well within the expected 100-230 range. As Christian communities grew significantly beyond Dunbar's number, centralized authority must have become indispensable in order to hold members together. The gradual development of the monarchical episcopate that is already observed in the letters of Ignatius ca. 110 can be interpreted as part of this phenomenon. Note that Paul in Acts 20:17-28 addresses an assembly of Ephesian elders, whereas when Ignatius writes to the Ephesians they already have a bishop (Ign. *Eph.* 1). In Rome, local governance by monarchical bishops ("popes") seems to have gradually started after 150 CE (see Lampe 2003:397-412).

divide Stark's estimate for Christians in the year 64 (2,242) by 31, which is the estimated number of Christian communities ca. 64, we get an average size of 72, not even half Dunbar's number. Based on the above discussion, we should multiply our 31 communities by 150 to get a better estimate of the Christian population in 64. The number we get is 4,650. The new figure implies that after a rapid increase from ca. 33 to 64, the rate of growth of Christianity slowed down from 64 to 100, a phenomenon matched by the chronological appearance of Christian communities: about one community per year from 33 to 64 but only one every two years from 64 to 100.³¹

Now we are finally in a position to obtain a more sensible estimate for the number of Roman Christians in 64. With a total Christian population of 4,650, assuming as we did before that 10% of them were in Rome, we get a Roman community of 465 people (or using Dunbar's predicted range of 100-230, between 310 and 713 Christians). The size of this Christian community is still statistically insignificant in a city of 1,000,000, but it becomes a more realistic target for Nero's persecution. The Emperor's charges of arson (presumably a conspiracy to start fires in various points of Rome) and his selling of the threat represented by Christians would have been more believable to the Roman public if the group consisted of about 140 adult males rather than only a few dozen. Moreover, the new number resonates much better with the atmosphere described in Paul's letter to the Philippians and the ending of Acts.

In summary, the topic of this dissertation requires an understanding of Christian demographics. Stark's model of Christian population growth, introduced in 1996, has been well-received by other scholars, and Bodet has extended its use to estimate Christian growth at Rome.

³¹ Frend 1984:986 computed 31 communities before 70. Ehrman 2012:319 maps over 40 locations associated to Paul (see Appendix 2.b), but we should not assume that in all these places communities had arisen by 64. Needless to say, there could have been other communities unknown to us or incipient cells whose memory has not survived. For consistency, I adopt Frend's conservative estimate of 31 known communities in view of our estimate of 50 known communities ca. 100. Harnack's estimate of 100 communities for 180 C.E. implies that Christianity's rate of growth increased again at the turn of the first century after it slowed down from 64 to 100.

For our purposes I have chosen Stark’s model to ascertain Christian populations, both empire-wide and at Rome from 100 to 300, conceding that for 100-125, his estimates might not be high enough. Because Christian demographics for the last third of the first century is very obscure, Stark’s estimates cannot be falsified. However, I have shown that his estimates for 55-64 CE fail four tests against available data. Thus I have proposed a different estimate for the year 64 based on an analysis of Rom 16:3-23 and the use of Dunbar’s theory of social groups. Most Christian communities up to the late first century likely fell within the range 100-230 (with an average size of 150); this is a phenomenon observed by researchers studying group sizes throughout human history. Only the large metropolis could have exceeded this range significantly. By applying this theory we obtain new estimates for the total and Roman Christian population in the year 64 that better fit the information about the Neronian persecution found in our earliest sources. The resulting data is shown in the table below; I shall refer to it at various instances throughout the dissertation.

Year	Total Christian population	Christian population at Rome
64	4,650 ^a	465 ^a
100	7,500 ^b	240(?) ^b
150	40,000	1,300
200	220,000	7,000
250	1,200,000	37,000
300	6,300,000	200,000

Notes: a. Estimates for the year 64 are mine; if expressed as a range then we would have a community of 310-713 Christians in Rome). From 100 to 300 I use Stark’s model. b. Stark’s estimates for 100 probably undercount the number of Christians, particularly at Rome. At any rate, notice that in the case of Rome, even if we double the local Christian population around 100 CE, we would still get a community not much larger than the one that existed before the Great Fire of the year 64.

APPENDIX 1.b: THE RELIABILITY OF TACITUS' ACCOUNT

It is quite improbable that Tacitus never personally met a Christian; at the very least, he must have heard of them from his friends in the imperial administration. Although the date of the *Annals* is uncertain and disputed, there is general agreement that it postdates his consulship in Asia in 112/113.¹ Between 111 and 124, there are three extant historical records of judicial dealings between Roman provincial governors and Christians in this area of the empire. Pliny, Tacitus' friend, punished Christians (*Ep.* 10.96-97) when he was governor of neighboring Bithynia, ca. 110/111. Following this incident, Trajan's famous subsequent rescript regarding the legal treatment of Christians. Eight years after Tacitus left Asia, Granianus, the new proconsul of the province, wrote to Hadrian asking the emperor for advice on how to deal with accusations against Ephesian Christians brought up by *delatores*. Hadrian responded in 123/124 to Granianus' successor Fundanus, who like Tacitus was a friend of Pliny (*Ep.* 5.16), reiterating Trajan's principle that Christians should not be punished without due process.² The judicial hostility against Christians must have been strong enough to make Granianus think that it merited Hadrian's attention. Presumably, this animosity developed over time and was already tangible during Tacitus' year in office, at a time when Polycarp was active in Smyrna and Papias in Hieropolis and Christian presence in Asia was significant. Recall also that governor resided in Ephesus, a city that plays a very important role in the New Testament.³ Ignatius, ca. 110, sent

¹ Syme 1958:473-4, Beaujeu 1960:21 and Cook 2011:39 prefer later dates (119-123 CE). See also Birley 2000.

² Hadrian's rescript survives in Justin, *I Apol.* 69. About that time, Hadrian may have received the apologetic tracts of Aristides and Quadratus (Eus. *HE* 4.1-3).

³ Ephesus was likely the seat of one the largest Christian communities. It is mentioned sixteen times in the New Testament: it was Paul's place of residence for a couple of years, and it was from there that he wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:32 and 16:8). In Acts, Paul first visits the city in 18:19-21, Acts 19 in its entirety takes place in Ephesus and Paul gives his farewell speech to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:18-38). The city is mentioned thrice

his letter to the Ephesians calling them “a passageway for those slain for God” (*Eph.* 12.1-2) and on his way to be martyred in Rome traveled through Asia visiting several churches.

Roman governors spent much of their time traveling throughout their province hearing cases. Before the Decian persecution of 250, Christians’ legal troubles were sporadic, small in scale and generally arising from popular animosity to Christians during periods of stress. Yet, given the high density of Christians in Tacitus’ province and the prevalence of the emperor’s worship there, the odds are in favor of him having dealt with at least one judicial case in which a discontented pagan brought charges against his Christian neighbors.⁴ If this actually happened, he probably operated within the legal framework of Trajan’s rescript. Acts 20:38-40 furnishes some evidence for this hypothesis.⁵ Trajan’s rescript prohibited magistrates from using inquisitorial procedures, i.e., from actively searching out Christians in their provinces. Moreover, to discourage the use of anonymous pamphlets and mob executions, it was up to the accusers (*delatores*) to bring Christians to the provincial tribunals so that they undergo a proper trial. Although scholars still debate about what went on these trials, it is generally agreed that

in the Pastoral Epistles, it is one of the seven Asian churches of Revelation (Rev. 2:1-7) and traditionally viewed as the center of the Johannine community. According to Pervo 2009:5-6, Ephesus was the most important Pauline community, “the navel of the Deutero-Pauline universe” and the likely place of composition of Acts. Cf. the account of Polycrates of Ephesus about the historical importance of the Tacitus’ Roman province of Asia in early Christianity (Eus. *HE* 5.24).

⁴ Cook 2010:81, with good reason, wonders “if Tacitus ever dispatched Christians himself.” One may add that one of his friends who held a governorship in the region certainly did (Pliny in 110/111) and others such as Dasumius, Tacitus’ benefactor and proconsul of Asia in 106/107, may have had (Mendell 1957:16). For the legal dimension of persecutions against Christians see Barnes 1968:32-50, Rives 2011:199-217 and Cook 2010:138-280.

⁵ The riot scene in Ephesus (Acts 20:23-41) is better understood in the context of the unrest addressed by Trajan’s and Hadrian’s rescripts. According to Luke, the craftsmen of Artemis gather in an assembly ready to do violence against Paul and his companions until the city clerk calms them down. “If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, **the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges.** If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today” (Acts 20:38-40). This type of large anti-Christian turmoil and the speech of the city clerk appear more realistic ca. 100-120 (the period in which Tacitus was proconsul), when the Christian community in Ephesus was likely much larger than during Paul’s times. That is also the opinion of Koester (2007:257), who thinks that it is a reflection of the situation in Luke’s time, ca. 100.

Roman magistrates equated a confession of the Christian *nomen* with an admission of guilt. At least this describes quite well Pliny's behavior in 110/111 (*Ep.*10.96.3). Interestingly, the key verb *fateri* that Tacitus uses to describe the legal proceedings in *Ann.* 15.44.4 also appears in Pliny's letter.⁶ Tacitus' elliptic *qui fatebantur* in reference to those arrested is often taken by scholars to imply that in 64 being a Christian was equated to being an arsonist.⁷ In my view, it is also partly an anachronistic retrojection of second-century legal measures. Tacitus' familiarity with the matter can be inferred elsewhere in that passage. He knows that Christians were called scornfully *Chrestiani* ("the useful ones"). Moreover, when Tacitus approves of the punishment of Christians for the purposes of "public utility" but firmly denounces Nero's unnecessary savagery against them (*Ann.* 15.44.7), he is, in some way, asserting the appropriate course of action to be taken by responsible Roman magistrates in similar situations.

In conclusion, although no evidence has survived that Tacitus was present in Christian trials, historical circumstances clearly point in that direction. For our purposes, this could explain why he decided to write a brief account of the Neronian persecution, which from the perspective of the Roman elite must have been a marginal historical event. It also serves to buttress the overall reliability of what he wrote in *Ann.* 15.44. Whatever his sources, Tacitus was likely in a position to sift through the evidence competently and bring to bear his own experience. Ultimately, along with 1 *Clem.* 5-6, his succinct notice on the persecution provides

⁶ Note also that both Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.44.2) and Pliny (*Ep.* 10.96.2) use the term *flagitia* to describe the Christians' criminal offenses. Moreover, the words *per flagitia* in this precise form, meaning "because of" or "for their shameful/ disgusting acts", are used only by Pliny and Tacitus in the whole corpus of Roman prose authors.

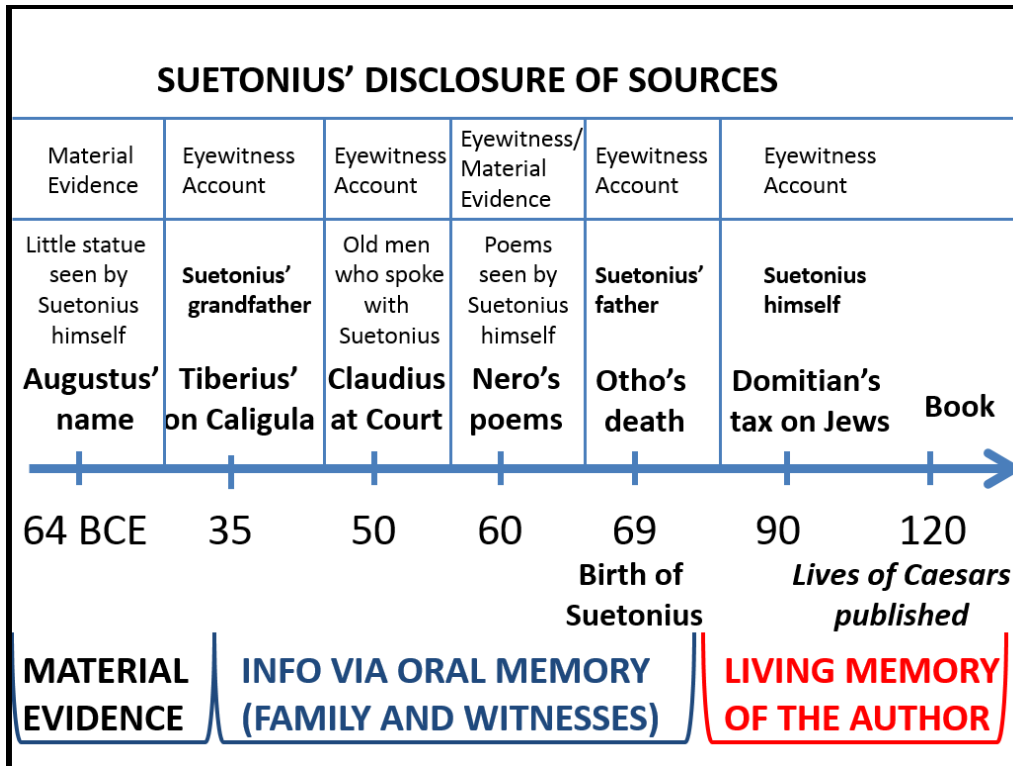
⁷ See discussion in Beaujeu 1960:26-27 and Cook 2010:57-59. In my opinion, a detailed reconstruction of the legal procedure used in 64 and an identification of the magistrates who carried it out is a rather fruitless task, given Tacitus' laconic treatment of that aspect of the Neronian persecution.

us with the only means to reconstruct the life experiences of the Roman Christians who lived through the 60s.

APPENDIX 2.a: SUETONIUS AND THE THREE-GENERATION REACHBACK

The use of the three-generation reachback is literally exemplified by the Roman historian Suetonius in his *De Vitae Caesarum*. Suetonius, born ca. 69 and writing ca. 120, uses himself, his father and grandfather as witnesses to events that span 85 years. He quotes his grandfather to relay information about Tiberius' succession worries. "When I was a boy, I used to hear my grandfather say that ...Thrasyllus the astrologer had declared to Tiberius (ca. 35), when he was worried about his successor and inclined towards his natural grandson, that Gaius had no more chance of becoming emperor than of riding about over the gulf of Baiae with horses" (*Cal.* 19.3).¹ Likewise he uses his father, who participated in the civil wars of 69, as a source for Otho's reaction to the carnage caused by the civil war: "My father used to say that at this sight Otho cried out that he would no longer endanger the lives of such brave men, who had deserved so well." (*Otho* 10.1). Elsewhere, Suetonius uses conversations with older people to describe the behavior of Claudius (41-54) in court: "I myself used to hear older men say that the pleaders took such advantage of his good-nature..." (*Cl.* 15.3). Suetonius also interjects himself in the narrative as an eyewitness for events that took place during the reign of Domitian (81-96). Elsewhere he places himself as a witness of material evidence: he claims (*Nero* 52) to have seen the autograph poems of Emperor Nero (54-68) and in discussing one of Augustus' names (born 64 BCE), 'Thurinus', cites material evidence to which he had access (*Aug.* 7). In reference to our discussion in § 2.2 about the working habits of Greco-Roman historians, we can schematically present Suetonius' disclosure of sources as follows:

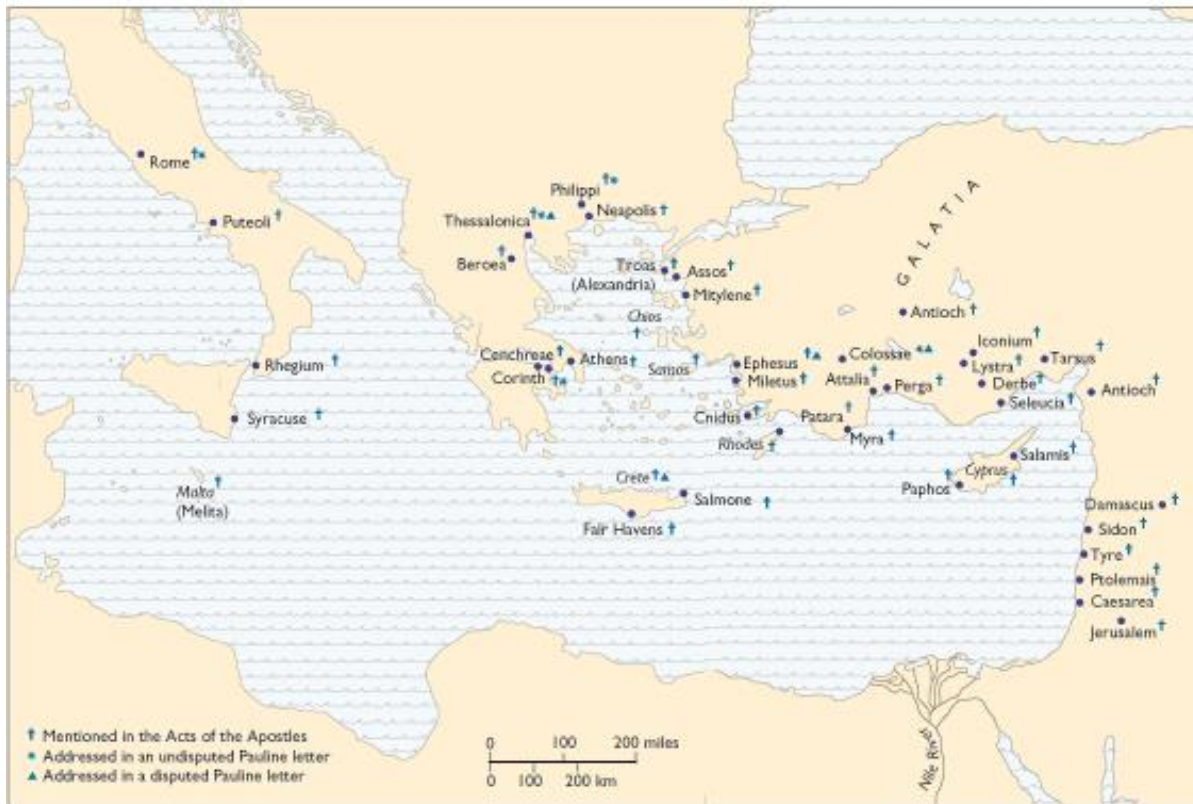
¹ The passages from Suetonius' work in this Appendix are taken from J. C. Rolfe's translation (Loeb Classical Library 38).



Note that Suetonius' use of oral memory did not extend beyond 85 years. One would expect that even within long-lived Roman aristocratic families, information surpassing a century would have been preserved only in writing. For instance, one can imagine that Cato the Younger (†46 BCE), whose great-grandfather Cato the Elder (234-149 BCE) had fought in the Second Punic War (218-202 BCE), would probably have consulted written sources about this war rather than relying on the oral traditions about the events transmitted in his family.²

² A modern example would be the Washburn family in Western North Carolina. The family has been featured recently on UNC-TV. Their store, has been owned by the family for 180 years and has been added to the National Register of Historic Places. I had the pleasure to talk on the phone with Edward Nollie Washburn III, now in his eighties, the great-great nephew of Benjamin Washburn who founded the store in 1831. Checking for long-lived oral memories within the family, Edward told me anecdotes about his own father's childhood. I asked Katherine, Edward's wife, about any stories about the founder of the store that might have survived. She told me that when she married Edward it was related to her by an older Washburn family member that Benjamin had been shot dead in Raleigh and that there were two versions about the events. Other 19th memories within the family seem to exist now only as material evidence (objects in the store) or written documents (e.g. an 1836 license to sell spirits). Any other information about Benjamin not committed to writing has by now been lost. Even in a tight-knit multi-generational family that has resided peacefully in the same area for close to two centuries, it seems as if oral traditions regarding distant ancestors follow the general rule and fall into oblivion after about three generations.

APPENDIX 2.b: PAULINE COMMUNITIES



Note: Taken from Ehrman 2012:319. With permission by the author

APPENDIX 2.c: ACCOUNTS OF NOBLE DEATH IN THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

In this Appendix, I examine the evidence for the literary genre of accounts of noble death in Greco-Roman antiquity. The purpose of this survey is to give us a basis to conjecture about how 2nd century Christian writers would have approached the writing of Paul's death and what Christian audiences would have expected to find in such accounts. Although this exercise is speculative in nature, it will help us to contextualize both historically and literarily some of the material found in the book of Acts and the *Martyrdom of Paul* (studied in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively).

Throughout the Mediterranean basin, stories of noble death helped to shape national identity. Romans celebrated the sacrificial death of the legendary Marcus Curtius and the *devotiones* of the three Decii Mures (ca. 340-270 BCE), who had voluntarily marched to their own deaths through packed enemy lines. Among the Jews, the Maccabean martyrs (1 Macc. 6:44 and 4 Macc. 17:20) epitomized vicarious suffering for the benefit of the community. For their part, Greek-speaking Alexandrians of the 1st and 2nd century CE commemorated the deaths of their own heroes, who had perished at the hand of various Roman emperors in defense of their city.¹ Literary accounts of the final moments of a prominent figure were known as *Teleutai*. The first of these accounts went back to the followers of Socrates, whose forced suicide, the noble death *par excellence*, remained throughout antiquity a constant point of reference. The name of

¹ See Ehrman 2012:302 for the Maccabean martyrs. For the Alexandrian martyrs see Harker 2008.

the genre derives from Plato's *Phaedo*, which closes with the sentence "Such was the end (τελευτή) [of Socrates] ...the best and wisest and most righteous man" (Phd. 118d).²

In early Christianity, the literary treatment of death was also very much part of this Greco-Roman tradition. In the Gospel of Mark the reader is struck by the amount of space occupied by the depiction of Jesus' final days in Jerusalem, his trial and crucifixion. Not surprisingly this gospel has been described as "a passion narrative with a long introduction."³ Mark's emphasis on Jesus' most fateful moments is in harmony with contemporary pagan biographical writings, which also devote much attention to the death of the protagonist. For instance, consider Plutarch's memorable descriptions of the deaths of Marc Antony and Cleopatra (*Ant.* 76-87). Not surprisingly, Christians steeped in this tradition of noble death were keen on remembering the exploits of their martyrs and setting them as *exempla* for future generations. Thus, in writing about the courage and serenity exhibited by those who had been executed in gruesome ways, Christian apologists found an opportunity to show the pagan elite that the best of their men were as noble as theirs. In this vein, ca. 150, Justin Martyr explicitly compared the deaths of Jesus and Socrates (1 *Apol.* 5, 2 *Apol.* 10).⁴ Not much later, we start seeing the increasing appearance of Christian stories whose *raison d'être*, the celebration of a martyr's death, overshadows all other biographical information. Ca. 197 CE Tertullian famously stated "the blood of the martyrs is the seed [of the Church]" (*Apol.* 50.13).

² See discussion in Ker 2009:54-57 and Moss 2012:3-4. Other writers of *Teleutai* mentioned by Ker are Hermippus of Smyrna (mid 3rd century BCE) and Diogenes Laertius (*fl.* 220-250 CE) whose description of the deaths of philosophers is often very detailed.

³ See Witherington 2001:5.

⁴ Moss 2012:65 points out that the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* seems to fuse and interweave **imitatio Christi** and **imitatio Socratis**. According to Moss this writing, although probably based on a 2nd century source, is a 3rd century forgery.

As discussed in § 1.1, Paul was martyred in the 60s during the reign of Nero. Although we have no extant records of a Christian *Teleute* of his demise within living memory of the events, by looking at the writings of Roman historians (ca. 100-120 CE) on the death of other prominent victims of Nero, we can work by analogy and speculate on how literate Christians might have approached the subject. For instance, Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.60-65), ca. 115, described in detail the suicide of the Stoic philosopher Seneca, whom Nero had condemned to death.⁵ Presumably based on eyewitness testimony, Seneca is depicted as planning his death as an *imitatio Socratis*; the scene contains a failed attempt to commit suicide using hemlock, a libation to Jupiter and the dictation of his last words. Other victims of Nero continued to be commemorated decades later by Tacitus and his contemporaries. In fact, from one of Pliny's letters (*Ep.* 8.12.4-5) we learn of a peculiar Roman form of *Teleutai*, collections of "martyrologies" of the so-called "Stoic martyrs" (Rubellius Plautus, Barea Soranus and Thrasea Paetus) who had been killed during Nero's reign. We are also told that a certain Gaius Fannius died ca. 105 while compiling a book entitled *Exitus occisorum aut relegatorum a Nerone* that recounted the fate of those slain or exiled by Nero. In a dream, Nero appeared to Fannius and read through three volumes of his crimes (*Plin. Ep.* 5.5.3). Fannius, horrified, realized that the dream meant that his writing, necessary for preserving the memory of the Emperor's victims, would stop where Nero had left off reading. Regrettably, he was right.⁶

⁵ Seneca would have been pleased to know that a 3rd century back-to-back double herm of his head and Socrates' has survived. Interestingly, in the 4th century, a forged correspondence between Seneca and Paul would emerge, including one letter written during the Neronian persecution. See § 5.2.

⁶ On Gaius Fannius see Champlin 2003:39. Notice also how in Suetonius' *Lives*, written ca. 120, the description of an emperor's death tends to the most elaborate rubric under which the life and times of the ruler are revealed. Incidentally, Suetonius' detailed account of Nero's last days and suicide is one of the most celebrated passages of his work.

The above anecdote shows us that the ancients were keenly mindful of the unavoidable fate of past human events; if not committed to writing, they were bound to fall into oblivion. Pliny offers us another example of this intense awareness of *memoria fugit*. His friend Tacitus, while collecting information for his *Histories* (written ca. 105), had asked Pliny to write to him about the death of his uncle Pliny the Elder during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius (79 CE), so that his account would be as reliable as possible (*quo verius tradere posteris possis*). Pliny, as an eyewitness of the events, was happy to acquiesce. At the very beginning of his letter, recognizing the fragile nature of human memory, Pliny thanked Tacitus for including his uncle in the *Histories*, so that the memory of his uncle's final moments would be forever remembered ("morti eius si celebretur a te immortalam gloriam esse propositam").⁷

Notice that Pliny, ca. 105, implied that memories of events that had taken place in 79 were already at risk of fading away. Presumably by 105, memories of the Neronian persecution, which had taken place fifteen years earlier, would have been even less secure. As discussed in § 1.2, two apocalyptic writings of the early 2nd century have survived that mention, in coded language, the Christians killed by Nero. Regrettably, although they allude to Peter (cf. *Apoc. Pt.* 14.4-5 and *Asc. Isa.* 4.2-3), they tell us nothing of Paul's death. Luke, who wrote between 30 and 55 years after the events, in all likelihood had information about Paul's martyrdom but decided to stop his narrative after the apostle reached Rome.⁸ Despite the absence of Christian accounts of Paul's final days in early 2nd century we can speculate on what narrative elements

⁷ See Plin. *Ep.* 6.16.1-2. Unfortunately, we do not know how Tacitus transferred Pliny's eyewitness material to his book because that portion of Tacitus' *Histories* is now lost. Interestingly, Pliny's uncle also makes it clear that at the death of the participants in historical events, their memories, unless written down for posterity, are bound to fade away. While serving in Germany (ca. 46-48), Pliny the Elder dreamt of Drusus Nero († 8 BCE), brother of Tiberius and successful campaigner commander of troops in Germany. Drusus (Plin. *Ep.* 3.5.4) appeared to him in his sleep, and entreated him to rescue his memory from oblivion (*memoriam suam orabatque ut se ab iniuria oblivionis assereret*).

⁸ The earliest references to Paul's death are discussed in § 2.4. For Acts' date of composition see § 3.1.

were present in traditions about his death by looking at what contemporary pagan writers reported on the deaths of illustrious Romans of the Neronian era. Something that we find for instance is an insistence on famous last words. For example, according to Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.62), when Seneca was forced to commit suicide, the Stoic moralist rebuked his friends who were in tears, asking where was “their training of many years against imminent adversity”?⁹ The ancients called these memorable quips *chreiai* (singular *χρεία*), a general term that rhetoricians used in reference to sayings and deeds of famous people. The learning of *chreiai* took place in the earliest stages of Greco-Roman rhetorical training.¹⁰ As one may suspect, more than one *chreia* could be attributed to a famous person in his final moments. For instance, the gospels variously report that Jesus on the cross spoke these last words: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34/Matt. 27:46); “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34); “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46); and “It is finished” (John 19:30).¹¹ Christians of the post-apostolic generation attributed similar last-moment *chreiai* to others who had been killed in the 1st century. Thus, according to Acts 7:59, the deacon Stephen uttered Jesus’ words found in Luke 23:34 and 23:46 when the Jews were about to kill him, and according to Hegesippus (Eus. *HE* 2.23.16) James the Just before being killed also said the words in Luke 23:34.

⁹ Tacitus also says that his readers likely knew about Seneca’s last dictated words and that for that reason he would pass over them in silence (*Ann.* 15.62). Note that Suetonius’ depiction of Nero’s final moments (*Nero* 49.1) also preserves the Emperor’s famous final words “What an artist die with me!” (*Qualis artifex pereo*). Another famous *dictum*, “Fortune stands by the brave” (*Fortes fortuna iuvat*) was attributed to Pliny the Elder. The younger Pliny (*Ep.* 6.16) told Tacitus that when the Vesuvius erupted, his uncle decided to face danger and bring help to people; he boarded a ship fearlessly and when the helmsman advised him to go back to safe land, he uttered those words.

¹⁰ For first-century definitions and explanations of usage see Theon of Alexandria, *Progymnasmata* 3, Quintilian *Inst.* 1.9.4 and Sen. *Ep.* 33.7. Needless to say, there was a *chreia* associated to Socrates’ death that ran like this: when a certain student named Apollodorus said to him, “The Athenians have unjustly condemned you death,” [Socrates] said with a laugh, “But did you want them to do it justly?” (Theon 3.104-106).

¹¹ To which we may add Jesus’ words to the good thief (in Luke 23:43) and to his mother and John (John 19:26-27).

In light of the above discussion, we are led to suspect that Christian preachers of the Pauline persuasion, ca. 95-120, when talking to potential converts must have had at hand some memorable words spoken by Paul before his death. A memorable *chreia* was an effective means of instructional delivery (from the teacher's standpoint) and a very helpful learning tool (from the audience perspective).¹²

Another frequently observed feature of death accounts is that, when preserved in more than one version, these versions differ from each other. For instance, Seneca the Elder (*Suas.* 6.14-26) tells us that, about sixty years after Cicero's murder, there existed five different versions of his death († 43 BCE).¹³ On the Christian side, apart from the varying accounts of Jesus' final moments in the gospels, we find by the turn of the 1st century three discrepant versions of Judas' death (Acts 1.19, Matthew 27:3-8 and Papias (*apud* Apollinaris of Laodicea), two versions of the killing of James the Just (Jos. *AJ* 18.116-119 and Hegesippus *apud* Eus. *HE* 2.23.3-18) and also two versions of the execution of John the Baptist (Mark 16:17-29 and Jos. *AJ* 20.197-201).¹⁴ In all likelihood, the retelling of the circumstances of Paul's death in circulating traditions was not uniformly consistent.¹⁵

Yet another narrative element that we might expect to have existed in traditions of Paul's final moments is a description of the courageous behavior of the apostle in his last trial and

¹² For Christian use of *chreiai* see Shiell 2011:83-86. Cf. Paul using a *χρεία* of Jesus ("it is better to give than to receive") addressing the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:35). *Chreiai* have been especially studied with regard to Mark's gospel. For the importance of rhetoric in the formation of the Synoptic Gospels, see Byrskog 2000:184-185.

¹³ Seneca the Elder was comparing the accounts of these five historians: Livy (59 BC –17 CE), Pollio (75 BCE –4 CE), Cremutius Cordus († 23 CE), Aufidius Bassus (*fl.* 20s CE) and Bruttidius Niger (*fl.* 20s CE).

¹⁴ For Papias' colorful description of Judas' death see Ehrman 2003:2.105.

¹⁵ Cf. § 4.3. Very different oral traditions about the death of the Argentinian folk saint "La Difunta Correa" († ca. 1841) were transmitted for about 80 years before they were committed to writing.

memorable verbal exchanges that he had held with the judges. Notice that *The Martyrdom of Paul*, which loosely preserves narrative elements of earlier traditions that had otherwise faded away (cf. § 4.4), depicts a verbal exchange between Nero and Paul. Moreover, as attested by Luke's fondness for trial scenes in both his gospel and Acts, "trial literature" was a popular subgenre in the 2nd century. Around 100-150 CE, the Alexandrians were writing *Acta* in honor of the Greek heroes of their city killed after being tried in front of Roman emperors; not much later, Christian themselves started writing stories about their martyrs that as a rule take place in a judicial setting.¹⁶

To conclude this Appendix, we may ask who among the Christians of the 2nd century would have been particularly desirous to write a *Teleute* of Paul, or at least collect, retell and pass down anecdotes of his last days and the *chreiai* that he spoke as his death approached. Obviously, we need to find the answer to our question among practitioners of Paul-centered forms of Christianity in which the historical figure of the apostle was of great importance. Among the proto-Orthodox Christians Polycarp comes to mind. His only extant letter makes it clear that he looked up to Paul (see § 2.4). Moreover, he had visited Rome, the place where the apostle had been martyred and was buried. Unfortunately, if Polycarp said or wrote something about Paul's martyrdom it has not survived.

According to Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 3.3.4), while in Rome, Polycarp confronted other varieties of Christians who had taken residence in the city; the two groups that concern us are

¹⁶ The points in common between the *Acts of the Alexandrian Martyrs* and contemporary Christian literature are further explored in § 3.7.

those formed by Marcion and Valentinus, whom Pervo (2010:242) has called “hyper Paulines.”¹⁷ These two had moved to Rome ca. 136-140. They and their followers saw themselves as the true carriers of the Pauline tradition and held the apostle in the highest esteem, ranking him as a religious figure only below Jesus. Marcion, for whom Paul was the only true apostle, was probably the first Christian to gather a canon of scriptures (his own version of the gospel of Luke and ten letters of Paul).¹⁸ For his part Valentinus considered himself the recipient of Paul’s hidden esoteric knowledge. He was said to have received his theological training from a certain Theudas, a disciple of the apostle Paul.

Given their theological background and considering that they were residing in Rome in the early 140s when there were likely already Christians venerating the alleged grave of Paul on the Ostian Road (see § 4.1), it is only natural to expect that Marcionites and Valentinians must have had something to say about the circumstances of Paul’s death. It appears as if these groups often picked their converts from Christians of the proto-orthodox congregations; since they claimed a special connection with Paul, potential converts from other groups likely have asked them about biographical details of the apostle.¹⁹ Moreover, unlike Luke, whose preoccupation

¹⁷ It is unclear how many times Polycarp visited Rome. Irenaeus (*Ad. Haer.* 3.3.4) recounts that when he met with Marcion (presumably ca. 140) he called him “the first born of Satan”. See discussion in Hartog 2015:2-3. Marcion, who had made a donation to the church of 200,000 sesterces, was initially well-received; yet as a result of theological disputes, he was expelled from Rome in 144. As to Valentinus, he preached successfully in the city for about fifteen years.

¹⁸ Marcion (ca. 85-160 C.E.), born in Sinope, was said to be the son of the local bishop. The city was located in the region of Pontus, from where Paul’s associates Aquila and Priscilla were (Acts 18:2-3). According to the list in the pseudo-Hippolytus, Philologus (another associate of Paul greeted in Romans 16:15) was the first bishop of Sinope. Although these traditions are unverifiable, they do reflect a strong link between Marcion’s hometown and the historical Paul’s missionary activity. Moreover, Christian presence in the area is confirmed by Pliny’s famous letter to Trajan (*Ep.* 10.96) when he was governor of Bithynia-Pontus; among those arrested by him were some who claimed to have “stopped being Christians” twenty-five years earlier (i.e., ca. 85). See discussion on Marcion in Lampe 2003:241-256.

¹⁹ In terms of theology, the Christian culture in the mid-2nd century Rome was highly diverse. See Lampe 2003:381-393. Ca. 150 there were about 1,300 Christians in the city (cf. Appendix 1.a). There was no single or primary leader

with demonstrating that events in Paul's life had been controlled by God outweighed the need to narrate to his readers the circumstances of his martyrdom (cf. § 3.1), Valentinians and Marcionites, in real-life, proselytizing situations, would not have had the luxury of passing over in silence Paul's death. Likewise, we may assume that in doctrinal disputes with other Christian groups, an authoritative traditional account of Paul's final days could be used to buttress theological arguments.²⁰ Unfortunately, none of the Marcionite or Valentinian traditions about Paul's final days have survived. Nevertheless, it would defy reason to believe that they did not have any stories about it. What is more, their traditions about the Pauls' death probably stimulated proto-orthodox Christians to develop their own formalized accounts of the events.

In summary, in this Appendix we have examined the available comparative evidence to conjecture what Christian audiences in the early 2nd century would have expected to find in accounts of Paul's death. We have seen that the literary treatment of death in early Christianity must be placed within its larger context Greco-Roman context. Among biographical works of the period 70-130, the description of the death of a prominent figure occupies a significant place. In fact, writers had a specific genre to depict the "noble death" of a revered person known as *teleute*. The ancients were keenly aware that the memories of someone's death were bound to fade away only decades after the events had taken place and that it was crucial to commit them to writing for them to be preserved. We have observed that accounts of noble death among other pagan and Christian prominent figures generally include certain conventional elements such as

yet. Probably the majority of Christians likely belonged to the proto-orthodox group, yet there were several other groups (Jewish Christians, Valentinians, Marcionites, followers of the school of Justin Martyr and others).

²⁰ We should take for granted that Marcion, like Ignatius and Polycarp (see section 5) had an elevated religious interest concerning Paul's martyrdom. Marcion taught that a readiness to suffer martyrdom was a hallmark of morality (Barnes 1971:124). Interestingly the extant 2nd century Marcionite prologues to Paul's 'captivity' letters (Philippians and Philemon) claim knowledge about the place of composition of the letters ("written from Paul's Roman prison").

the depiction of the character's braveness, a trial scene and *chreiai* (memorable words uttered before death). Moreover, if they survive in more than one version, these versions differ from each as to the circumstances of the death. Last we have conjectured that, although none of their traditions have survived, it is very likely that either the Marcionites or the Valentinians had written accounts of Paul's death.

APPENDIX 3.a: THE NON-NEUTRALITY OF THE WESTERN VARIANTS

In 1966 Eldon Epp published his seminal work on the anti-Judaic tendency of Western Acts, showing numerous instances in which this expanded version of the book puts emphasis on the depiction of Jews as foes of the apostles. His study has been highly influential; yet, it has been subject to criticisms. Slightly over a decade after Epp published his book, C.K. Barrett (1979) wrote an article critical of Epp's position. Barrett's criticisms, however, seem mostly semantic, as he questions the extent to which the Western Text (WT) develops a new theological viewpoint.¹ This is a misrepresentation of Epp's position, who rather than proposing a Western independent *Tendenz* simply notes that one of the main interests of the Western Text was to heighten the already existent anti-Judaic bias of the Alexandrian Text (AT).¹

A more direct challenge to the validity of Epp's theory can be found in W. Strange's *The Problem of the Text of Acts*, published in 1992. Strange advanced a thought-provoking hypothesis regarding the origin of WT. Analyzing the problem from a fresh perspective, he concluded that Acts' manuscript was still in an unfinished state at the author's death. Luke's draft contained here and there annotations in the form of marginal and interlinear notes. After the middle of the 2nd century, this annotated author's copy of Acts came into the hands of two editors who, working independently, produced the surviving Alexandrian and Western versions. The edition that included the annotations resulted in WT, the longer text. One of Strange's insights is that much of the Western material, originally conceived as marginal notes, can be read

¹ See Barrett 1979:15-27. For a balanced view of Epp's contributions to scholarship and Barrett's observations see Kannaday 2004:15-16.

as a commentary.² This is a perceptive observation and a legitimate explanation for some of the variants. Notice that by its very nature, Strange's hypothesis makes the Western and Alexandrian text equally original, whereas according to Epp's theory the Western variants should be understood as alterations of the Alexandrian material. Of particular importance to us, Strange analyzed several Western verses that had been previously studied by Epp from an anti-Judaic perspective, postulating that these same variants can be explained in terms of commentary about the "motives" or "exit of characters."³

Strange's analysis of the same Western material within a different conceptual framework gives us an opportunity to assess the strength of Epp's theory. For comparative purposes, we shall analyze, first, Acts 23:24 and 24:24, two verses that Strange lists under "motives" but that Epp considers anti-Judaic. These verses are also discussed in § 3.2. The Western variant in 23:24 states that the Roman commander Lysias gave Paul a horse to ride as he escorted him to Caesarea, "for he feared that Jews might try to kill Paul." In Acts 24:24, the Western variant explains that Governor Felix, "in order to please his Jewish wife Priscilla," first asked to hear Paul speak and then to keep him in prison. So as Strange points out, both verses express "motives"; nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that the actions of Lysias and Felix are triggered by Jewish hostility towards Paul.

We look now at Acts 12:23 and 5:18, two verses that Strange list under the heading "exit of characters" but Epp considers anti-Judaic. Acts 12:23 reads: "Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died." The Western Text modifies this sentence by adding six words. After "praise to God",

² See Strange 1992:40-41.

³ See Strange 1992:44-47.

it reads “[and he came down from the platform], and he was eaten by worms [while he was still living] and thus died.”⁴ So the Western expansion at 12:23 does describe “the exit of a character”, but it is an exit from life. In the Alexandrian Text, the Jewish king Herod Agrippa I, a persecutor of the Jerusalem Christians, responsible for the death of James the son of Zebedee and the imprisonment of Paul, dies a horrible death. By slightly altering the AT verse, WT makes the description of his gruesome death even more gruesome. What about Acts 5:18? The Western expansion comes after the scene in which the high priest and all his associates, “filled with jealousy”, arrest the apostles and put them in jail, after which WT adds *καὶ ἐπορεύθη εἰς ἕκαστος εἰς τὰ ἴδια*. Strange probably interpreted this as “an exit of character” verse because the apostles seem to be going home after their arrest. Although less clear-cut than the other variants chosen by Epp, Acts 5:18 also lends itself to an anti-Judaic interpretation. Since *τὰ ἴδια* means solitary confinement, the Western variant can be interpreted as saying that the Jewish leaders who imprisoned the apostles locked them in solitary confinement.⁵

The above selection of verses is quite representative of the bulk of Epp’s anti-Judaic Western variants. While in some cases alternative explanations are sensible, in most cases these variants are clearly meant to intensify the negative portrayal of Jews. The foundations of Epp’s theory are solid.

⁴ The Western additions to Acts 12:23 are shown in brackets. See discussion in Epp 1966:145-146.

⁵ See *ibid.* 129-130. The subject of *καὶ ἐπορεύθη εἰς ἕκαστος εἰς τὰ ἴδια* is not specified. Since the last persons mentioned in the last verse are the apostles, Fascher — from whom Epp got the idea — postulated that the apostles were the subject of the added sentence (“and each went to his confinement cell”).

APPENDIX 3.b: PAUL AND THE JEWS ACCORDING TO ACTS

TABLE I. Jewish plots against Paul before he is taken into custody

EPISODE	TEXT OF ACTS
Damascus. After his conversion, Paul starts to preach. The local Jews try to kill him. <u>NOTE:</u> See discussion of this passage under Table II	Acts 9:22-23. ²³ Ὡς δὲ ἐπληροῦντο ἡμέραι ἰκαναί, συνεβουλευσάντο οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀνελεῖν αὐτόν: ²⁴ ἐγνώσθη δὲ τῷ Σαύλῳ ἡ ἐπιβουλὴ αὐτῶν.
Jerusalem. Paul debates against Greek-speaking Jews who try to kill him.	Acts 9:29-30. ²⁹ ἐλάλει τε καὶ συνεζήτει πρὸς τοὺς Ἑλληνιστάς: οἱ δὲ ἐπεχείρουν ἀνελεῖν αὐτόν. ³⁰ ἐπιγόντες δὲ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ κατήγαγον αὐτόν εἰς Καισάρειαν καὶ ἐξαπέστειλαν αὐτόν εἰς Ταρσόν.
Antioch of Pisidia. Some positive reactions. The local Jews become jealous stir up persecution and expel Paul from the region	Acts 13:43-50. ⁴⁵ ιδόντες δὲ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι τοὺς ὄχλους ἐπλήσθησαν ζήλου καὶ ἀντέλεγον τοῖς ὑπὸ Παύλου λαλουμένοις βλασφημοῦντες... ⁵⁰ οἱ δὲ Ἰουδαῖοι παρώτρυναν τὰς σεβομένας γυναῖκας τὰς εὐσχήμονας καὶ τοὺς πρώτους τῆς πόλεως.
Iconium. Some positive reactions. The unbelieving Jews made the souls of the Gentiles evil affected against the brethren.	Acts 14:2-5. ² οἱ δὲ ἀπειθήσαντες Ἰουδαῖοι ἐπήγειραν καὶ ἐκάκωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἐθνῶν κατὰ τῶν ἀδελφῶν.
Lystra. Very positive reaction. Jews from Antioch and Iconium come and win the crowd over. They stone Paul and drag him outside the city, thinking he is dead.	Acts 14:19-20. ¹⁹ Ἐπῆλθαν δὲ ἀπὸ Ἀντιοχείας καὶ Ἰκονίου Ἰουδαῖοι, καὶ πείσαντες τοὺς ὄχλους καὶ λιθάσαντες τὸν Παῦλον ἔσυρον ἔξω τῆς πόλεως, νομίζοντες αὐτὸν τεθνηκέναι.
Thessalonica. Some positive reactions. Some Jews are jealous; so they round up some bad characters from the marketplace, form a mob and start a riot in the city. They rush to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.	Acts 17:4-5. ⁴ καὶ τινες ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐπείσθησαν καὶ προσεκληρώθησαν τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ τῷ Σιλᾷ, ... ⁵ Ζηλώσαντες δὲ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ προσλαβόμενοι τῶν ἀγοραίων ἄνδρας τινὰς πονηροὺς καὶ ὄχλοποιήσαντες ἔθορῶν τὴν πόλιν, καὶ ἐπιστάντες τῇ οἰκίᾳ Ἰάσονος ἐζήτουν αὐτοὺς προαγαεῖν εἰς τὸν δῆμον.
Berea. Some positive reactions. But when the Jews in Thessalonica learn that Paul is preaching the word of God at Berea, some of them go there, agitating the crowds and stirring them up.	Acts 17:12-14. ¹³ Ὡς δὲ ἔγνωσαν οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης Ἰουδαῖοι ὅτι καὶ ἐν τῇ Βεροίᾳ κατηγγέλη ὑπὸ τοῦ Παύλου ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, ἦλθον κάκει σαλεύοντες καὶ τaráσσοντες τοὺς ὄχλους.
Corinth. Some positive reactions. The local Jews make a united attack on Paul and bring him to the place of judgment.	Acts 18:12-13. ¹² Γαλλίωνος δὲ ἀνθυπάτου ὄντος τῆς Ἀχαΐας κατεπέστησαν ὁμοθυμαδὸν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ ἤγαγον αὐτόν ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμα.
Greece. Some Jews plot against him; he leaves.	Acts 20:3. ... ἐπιβουλῆς αὐτῷ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων...

Table II. Jewish plots against Paul while he is under custody

EPISODE	TEXT OF ACTS
<p>Jerusalem. After Paul visits the temple, the Jews try to kill him but he is saved the commander of the Roman troops. Jerusalem is in an uproar.</p>	<p>Acts 21:31. ³¹ζητούντων τε αὐτὸν ἀποκτεῖναι ἀνέβη φάσις τῷ χιλιάρχῳ τῆς σπείρης ὅτι ὅλη συγχύνηται Ἰερουσαλήμ.</p>
<p>Jerusalem. The Jewish crowd becomes violent and tries to seize Paul after he mentions his mission to the Gentiles.</p>	<p>Acts 22:21-22. ²¹καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με, Πορεύου, ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰς ἔθνη μακρὰν ἐξαποστελῶ σε. Ἦκουον δὲ αὐτοῦ ἄχρι τούτου τοῦ λόγου καὶ ἐπῆραν τὴν φωνὴν αὐτῶν λέγοντες, Αἶρε ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς τὸν τοιοῦτον, οὐ γὰρ καθῆκεν αὐτὸν ζῆν.</p>
<p>Jerusalem (after Paul’s speech at the Sanhedrin). More than forty Jews form a conspiracy and bind themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed Paul.</p>	<p>Acts 23:12-15. ¹²Γενομένης δὲ ἡμέρας ποιήσαντες συστροφὴν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀνεθεμάτισαν ἑαυτοὺς λέγοντες μήτε φαγεῖν μήτε πίνειν ἕως οὗ ἀποκτείνωσιν τὸν Παῦλον. ¹³ἦσαν δὲ πλείους τεσσεράκοντα οἱ ταύτην τὴν συνωμοσίαν ποιησάμενοι.</p>
<p>Jerusalem (while Paul is in custody in Caesarea). Jews plot to kill Paul after Festus replaces Felix. They request to have him transferred to Jerusalem so as to ambush and kill him on the road.</p>	<p>Acts 25:3. ²ἐνεφάνισάν τε αὐτῷ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρῶτοι τῶν Ἰουδαίων κατὰ τοῦ Παύλου, καὶ παρεκάλουν αὐτὸν ³αἰτούμενοι χάριν κατ’ αὐτοῦ ὅπως μεταπέμνηται αὐτὸν εἰς Ἰερουσαλήμ, ἐνέδραν ποιοῦντες ἀνελεῖν αὐτὸν κατὰ τὴν ὁδόν.</p>

Note: It is impossible for us to tell how many of the Jewish plots described in Tables I and II have a historical basis. At any rate, Paul’s description of his flight from Damascus (2 Cor. 11:30-33) provides decisive evidence that, in Acts, the portrayal of Jews as the apostle’s relentless enemies is a deliberate literary motif. In Paul’s own account of his escape, he states that he fled from Damascus because the governor under King Aretas, a Nabatean ruler who had seized the city, was trying to capture him. Paul was “**lowered in a basket from a window in the wall**” and thus escaped. Although Acts’ author apparently knew this story, he recast it so as to make the Jews culpable: “After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But his followers took him by night and **lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.**” (Acts 9:23-25). See discussion in Harrill 2012:39-40. It is also worthy of notice that Acts places this scene right after Paul’s conversion. In the scene that follows Paul’s escape from Damascus, we find the apostle arriving in Jerusalem where Jews again try to kill him (Acts 9:29-30). Acts’ account differs sharply from Paul’s description of the events. Indeed, Paul states that after his conversion he went to Arabia and that only “after three years” he went up to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:15-18). Moreover, he says nothing about an assassination attempt against him carried out by Jerusalem Jews.

Table III. Parallel passages in the endings of the Gospel of Luke and Acts

Luke 24:10-27	Acts 28:20-29
<p>(1) Women announce Jesus' resurrection; the disciples do not believe them.</p>	<p>UPBEAT BEGINNING</p>
<p>¹⁰ἦσαν δὲ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ Μαρία καὶ Ἰωάννα καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου· καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ σὺν αὐταῖς ἔλεγον πρὸς τοὺς ἀποστόλους ταῦτα. ¹¹καὶ ἐφάνησαν ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν ὡσεὶ λῆρος τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα, καὶ ἠπίστουν αὐταῖς. (Note: omit Luke 24.12 as a Western non-interpolation)</p>	<p>(4') Israel's Messianic Hope & Paul's mission. Jews are willing to listen.</p>
<p>(2) Two of the disciples confer with each other (suzetein) about the recent events.</p>	<p>²⁰διὰ ταύτην οὖν τὴν αἰτίαν παρεκάλεσα ὑμᾶς ἰδεῖν καὶ προσλαλῆσαι, ἕνεκεν γὰρ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ τὴν ἄλυσιν ταύτην περικείμεαι... ²²ἀξιούμεν δὲ παρὰ σοῦ ἀκοῦσαι ἃ φρονεῖς, περὶ μὲν γὰρ τῆς αἰρέσεως ταύτης γνωστὸν ἡμῖν ἐστὶν ὅτι πανταχοῦ ἀντιλέγεται.</p>
<p>...¹³Καὶ ἰδοὺ δύο ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἦσαν πορευόμενοι εἰς κώμην ... ἧ ὄνομα Ἐμμαοῦς, ¹⁴καὶ αὐτοὶ ὠμίλουν πρὸς ἀλλήλους περὶ πάντων τῶν συμβεβηκότων τούτων. ¹⁵καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ὁμιλεῖν αὐτοὺς καὶ συζητεῖν.</p>	<p>(6') Paul testifies about Jesus by explaining the meaning of the scriptures to the Roman Jews.</p>
<p>(3) Jesus joins the disciples on the way to Emmaus but their eyes do not recognize him.</p>	<p>²³Ταξάμενοι δὲ αὐτῷ ἡμέραν ἦλθον πρὸς αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν ξενίαν πλείονες, οἷς ἐξετίθετο διαμαρτυρόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ πείθων τε αὐτοὺς περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἀπὸ τε τοῦ νόμου Μωϋσέως καὶ τῶν προφητῶν ἀπὸ πρῶτῃ ἕως ἑσπέρας.</p>
<p>καὶ αὐτὸς Ἰησοῦς ἐγγίσας συνεπορεύετο αὐτοῖς, ¹⁶οἱ δὲ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῶν ἐκρατοῦντο τοῦ μὴ ἐπιγνῶναι αὐτόν.</p>	<p>(1') After Paul testifies about Jesus, some of the Jews do not believe.</p>
<p>(4) Israel's Messianic Hope has been dashed.</p>	<p>²⁴καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐπέιθοντο τοῖς λεγομένοις, οἱ δὲ ἠπίστουν: ²⁵ἀσύμφωνοι δὲ ὄντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀπελύοντο.</p>
<p>²¹ἡμεῖς δὲ ἠλπίζομεν ὅτι αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ μέλλων λυτροῦσθαι τὸν Ἰσραὴλ.</p>	<p>(5') Paul rebukes them.</p>
<p>(5) Jesus rebukes the two disciples.</p>	<p>²⁵... ὅτι Καλῶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐλάλησεν διὰ Ἡσαίου τοῦ προφήτου πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν ²⁶λέγων, Πορευθήτη πρὸς τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον καὶ εἰπόν, Ἀκοῆ ἀκούσετε καὶ οὐ μὴ συνῆτε, καὶ βλέποντες βλέψετε καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδητε: ²⁷ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδιά τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου, καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν, ...</p>
<p>²⁵καὶ αὐτὸς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, ὦ ἀνόητοι καὶ βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ τοῦ πιστεύειν ἐπὶ πᾶσιν οἷς ἐλάλησαν οἱ προφῆται: ²⁶οὐχὶ ταῦτα ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ;</p>	<p>(3') The eyes of the Jews are closed.</p>
<p>(6) Jesus explains the scriptures to them.</p>	<p>...καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν: μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν ἀκούσωσιν καὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ συνῶσιν καὶ ἐπιστρέψωσιν,</p>
<p>²⁷καὶ ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ Μωϋσέως καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν προφητῶν διερμήνευσεν αὐτοῖς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς τὰ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ...</p>	<p>(2') The Jews confer with each other about what Paul said (they still do not understand the scriptures).</p>
<p>The disciples' eyes are opened.</p>	<p>καὶ ταῦτα αὐτοῦ εἰπόντος ἀπῆλθον οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι πολλὴν ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς συζήτησιν.</p>
<p>³¹αὐτῶν δὲ διηνοίχθησαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτόν. UPBEAT ENDING</p>	

APPENDIX 3.c: ANALYSIS OF THE EXPRESSION πολλήν ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς συζήτησιν

Operating from the premise that last words are lasting words and working under the assumption that we should not expect the storyline of Western Text to end with an anodyne verse, I intend to analyze the crucial words Acts 28:29 (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι πολλήν ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς συζήτησιν) and show that the second meaning of συζήτησις (“judicial inquiry”), is not only meant to generate an emotional response on the part of the reader but also to retain this connotation in an alternative grammatical interpretation of the sentence. In addition to the presence of the ominous οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (see § 3.2-3), this deceptively simple sentence has some overlooked peculiarities. As seen in § 3.4, the word συζήτησις appears deliberately chosen to partake in the parallelism between Luke 24:10-27 and Acts 28:17-29 (see Appendix 3.b, Table 3). It also appears to have been carefully and deliberately placed at the very end of 28:29 for maximum effect. This word placement is unique in Luke-Acts, where words for discussion usually appear in the middle of the sentence, with γίνομαι in a genitive absolute or in impersonal or prepositional phrases.¹ Yet in Acts 28:29 the writer avoids this stylistic usage in order to ensure that συζήτησιν is the last word of the sentence. Notice also that three words separate the adjective πολλή from its noun συζήτησις in πολλήν ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς συζήτησιν. In Luke-Acts, this separation is unique to verse 28:29. The construction πολὺς, πολλή, πολὺ + noun is used dozens of times in Luke-Acts; in most cases no other word separates the adjective from its noun, in a few cases prepositions or particles such as δὲ or τε separate the words. There are only two other instances (Acts 18:10 and 21:40) in which three words separate the πολὺς, πολλή, πολὺ from its noun, and Acts 28:29 is the only one that concludes a scene.

¹ Cf. ἐγένετο δὲ παροξυσμὸς (Acts 15:39), τοῦτο δὲ αὐτοῦ λαλήσαντος ἐγένετο στάσις (Acts 23:7), πολλῆς δὲ γινομένης στάσεως (Acts 23:10), ὅστις ἦν διὰ στάσιν τινὰ γενομένην (Luke 23:19)

Let us now look at the meaning of ἐν in ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς συζήτησιν.² The preposition often means “among” with a plural noun, but ἐν with the dative of a person or a reflexive pronoun (such as ἐν ἑαυτῷ or ἐν ἑαυτοῖς) can also mean “in the thought” of a person. More particularly, the meaning “within one’s self, in the soul, spirit, heart” is common with verbs of communication such as λέγειν or διαλογίζεσθαι. In the New Testament, when these verbs appear in conjunction with the singular ἐν ἑαυτῷ, it is evident that the character is speaking - silently - to himself (e.g. Luke 12:17 and 18:4). Yet the matter becomes more complicated when the plural ἐν ἑαυτοῖς is used. In some instances, the characters are clearly either talking “among themselves” (e.g. Matt. 21:38) or “to themselves” (e.g. Matt. 3:9/Luke 3:8). However, examine the end of the “sinful woman passage” at Luke 7:49: καὶ ἤρξαντο οἱ συνανακείμενοι λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς· Τίς οὗτός ἐστιν ὃς καὶ ἀμαρτίας ἀφήσιν. Are the dinner-guests talking to themselves or among themselves? Culy-Parsons-Stigall translate ἐν ἑαυτοῖς as “among themselves” but also acknowledge that “it could, however, convey an inward manner of speech (‘to say to themselves’)³. A comparison of modern English versions of Luke 7:49 reveals disagreements among translators. The NIV rendering “among themselves” is shared by seven translators, four more (NASB *et al.*) choose “saying to one another”; yet seven other versions (ASV *et al.*) translate ἐν ἑαυτοῖς as “within themselves”, whereas ERV has “think to themselves”. In Luke 7:49, the thoughts and communications of the dinner-guests (inward or outward?) remain unresolved since there are no indications in the text to aid the reader (cf. Matt. 21:25). On occasion, when those who speak ἐν ἑαυτοῖς are opponents of Jesus, the ambiguous meaning

² Notice that LSJ lists the following constructions for the verb συζητέω: σ. τινί or πρὸς τινα. Cf. *POxy.1673.20* (ii A.D.); σ. πρὸς αὐτοῦς. Indeed, in the other New Testament attestations (Mark 1:27, 9:14, 8:11 and Luke 22:23, Acts 6:9 and 9:29), the dative or πρὸς + acc. are used. Only Acts 28:29 has ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.

³ Parsons, Culy and Stigall 2010:253.

receives clarification in the next verse.⁴ For example, in the synoptic passage Mark 2:6-8/Matt. 9:3-4, it is clear that Jesus' adversaries are muttering or whispering words to themselves since Jesus is immediately depicted as knowing their thoughts.⁵

In Luke-Acts, apart from the Western verse Acts 28:29, Luke 3:8 and Luke 7:49, both discussed above, are the only two other examples of a talking verb with ἐν ἑαυτοῖς. The former possesses the clear meaning “within themselves”, and the latter offers an open interpretation either as “among themselves” or “within themselves.” In general, Luke-Acts prefers other ways to express “talking among themselves.” Consider the aforementioned synoptic passage dealing with the forgiving and healing of the paralyzed man. Matt. 9:3 (τινες τῶν γραμματέων εἶπαν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς) is rendered in Luke 5:21 as ἤρξαντο διαλογίζεσθαι οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι, and Mark 2:8 (ἐπιγνούς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ... ὅτι οὕτως διαλογίζονται ἐν ἑαυτοῖς) is rendered in Luke 5:22 as ἐπιγνούς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς αὐτῶν. Consider now another synoptic passage, the parable of the tenants. Mark 12:7 reads ἐκεῖνοι δὲ οἱ γεωργοὶ **πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς εἶπαν** ὅτι Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κληρονόμος and Matt. 21:38 reads οἱ δὲ γεωργοὶ ἰδόντες τὸν υἱὸν **εἶπον ἐν ἑαυτοῖς...** ,

⁴ Cf. the similar situation in Luke 9:46-47, where the non-reflexive pronoun ἐν αὐτοῖς is used instead of ἐν ἑαυτοῖς: Εἰσηλθεν δὲ διαλογισμὸς **ἐν αὐτοῖς**, τὸ τίς ἂν εἴη μείζων αὐτῶν. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἰδὼς τὸν διαλογισμὸν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν ἐπιλαβόμενος παιδίον ἔστησεν αὐτὸ παρ' ἑαυτῷ (“An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him”). The verse recurs with a small variation in Luke 22:24: Ἐγένετο δὲ καὶ φιλονεικία ἐν αὐτοῖς, τὸ τίς αὐτῶν δοκεῖ εἶναι μείζων (“A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest”).

⁵ Matthew 9:3-4: καὶ ἰδοὺ τινες τῶν γραμματέων **εἶπαν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς**: Οὗτος βλασφημεῖ. καὶ εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς **τὰς ἐνθυμήσεις αὐτῶν εἶπεν**: Ἰνατί ἐνθυμεῖσθε πονηρὰ ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν; (“At this, some of the teachers of the law **said to themselves**, ‘This fellow is blaspheming!’ **Knowing their thoughts**, Jesus said, ‘Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?’”). Mark 2:6-8: ἦσαν δὲ τινες τῶν γραμματέων ἐκεῖ καθήμενοι καὶ διαλογιζόμενοι ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν· Τί οὗτος οὕτως λαλεῖ; βλασφημεῖ· τίς δύναται ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός; καὶ εὐθὺς **ἐπιγνούς ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ πνεύματι αὐτοῦ ὅτι οὕτως διαλογίζονται ἐν ἑαυτοῖς** λέγει αὐτοῖς· Τί ταῦτα διαλογίζεσθε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν; (“Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ‘Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ Immediately **Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts**, and he said to them, ‘Why are you thinking these things?’”).

yet Luke 20.14 reads: ἰδόντες δὲ αὐτὸν οἱ γεωργοὶ διελογίζοντο **πρὸς ἀλλήλους λέγοντες**...

What about Jews talking to each other in Acts? We have already seen the prepositions used in those instances in which Acts portrays Jews discussing or disagreeing among themselves. In Acts 4:17 and 28:25, the construction favored is the reciprocal pronoun **πρὸς ἀλλήλους** variant depicting Jews plotting against Paul, we find οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι συνλαλήσαντες μεθ' ἑαυτῶν ἐπὶ τὸν Παύλον.

To summarize, so far we have noticed that οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι πολλήν ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς συζήτησιν, although at first sight an ordinary Luke-Acts sentence, is somewhat atypical due to (a) the choice of the rare noun συζήτησις, (b) the distance between the adjective and the noun separated by three words, (c) the word for discussion placed at the end of the sentence following a transitive verb and (d) a noun used with the reflexive pronoun ἐν ἑαυτοῖς rather than a genitive absolute construction, an impersonal construction with γίνομαι, or the use of other prepositional phrases that have been favored before. Above and beyond all these observations, the stylistic feature that makes Acts 28:29 most unique is that it constitutes the only instance in Luke-Acts that a discussion is expressed with the idiomatic expression ἔχω + ἐν ἑαυτῷ or ἐν ἑαυτοῖς + noun. The use of the verb ἔχω in this type of construction, while not common, appears several times among Christian authors and is attested as early as Plato. Interestingly, it is at times used to indicate that the subject has within himself — or the subjects have within themselves — feelings or thoughts related to the noun object of ἔχω. Before examining instances of this

construction in the New Testament, we will consider three examples of this idiomatic expression in other texts.⁶

a) Plato's *Republic*.409.b.1 reads: διὸ δὴ καὶ εὐήθεις νέοι ὄντες οἱ ἐπιεικεῖς φαίνονται καὶ εὐεξαπάτητοι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀδίκων, ἅτε **οὐκ ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς παραδείγματα ὁμοιοπαθῆ τοῖς πονηροῖς**. (“And this is the reason why in youth good men often appear to be simple, and are easily practiced upon by the dishonest, because **they have no examples of what evil is in their own souls**.”).⁷

b) In Athanasius' exposition of Psalm 34 (PG 27.169.35), after the initial lines of the psalm (Δίκασον, Κύριε, τοὺς ἀδικοῦντάς με, πολέμησον τοὺς πολεμοῦντάς με) we read in the commentary: Τοὺς Ἰουδαίους φησὶν, **οἳ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς εἰρήνην**, πολέμους ἔχουσι, καὶ πολεμοῦσι Χριστὸν, ὅς ἐστιν εἰρήνη ἡμῶν. (“He says that **the Jews who do not have peace within themselves**, have enemies, and wage war against Christ, who is peace to us”).⁸ Cf. Origen's commentary of Psalm 34 (PG.12.1309.30).

c) In Philo's *Deus* 50.7: ὀφείλουσι πρὸ τῶν χειρόνων αἰρεῖσθαι τὰ κρείττω **λογισμὸν ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς** ὥσπερ τινὰ δικαστὴν ἀδωροδόκητον λόγος πεισθησόμενον, οἷς δ' ἂν ὁ ἐναντίος ἀπειθήσονται. (“Therefore he teaches us by this sentence both that men have a knowledge of good and of the contrary, evil, and that it is their duty to choose the better in preference to the worse, preserving **reason within themselves** as an incorruptible judge”). Cf. Philo's *Mos.* 1.48: τὸν ἀλείπτῃ ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ λογισμὸν ἀστεῖον.⁹

In the examples above, the construction ἔχω + ἐν ἑαυτοῖς + noun is used to describe the inner life of the subjects of the sentence or, borrowing from Jowett's translation of *Rep.* 409.b.1, the thoughts and feelings “in their souls.”¹⁰ In the above examples the nouns are all abstract, yet as we see in the following examples New Testament writers use the same idiomatic expression with both abstract and concrete nouns. More importantly, it is always clear that the action

⁶ Here I limit myself to examples in which the verb appears as a nominative present participle. The expression is used with the same meaning (within themselves) with other forms of the verb ἔχω. For example, ἔχουσιν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς is found in (a) *Hermas, Shepherd* 103.8, (b) *Just., Dial.* 8.2 and (c) *Septuaginta, Daniel* 4. 37a.

⁷ Words in English as they appeared in Benjamin Jowett's 19th translation of Plato's works.

⁸ Translation mine.

⁹ These two quotations are taken from Colson et al. 1991.

¹⁰ Cf. the analogous N.T. expression ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ (e.g. Luke 24:38, Acts 28:27), which indicates the seat of feelings and thoughts.

expressed by ἐν ἑαυτοῖς takes place “inwardly” (that is, “within”) rather than “outwardly” (that is, “among”).¹¹

- a) Mark 4:17: καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ῥίζαν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀλλὰ πρόσκαιροί εἰσιν. Same usage in the parallel passage Matt. 13:21: οὐκ ἔχει δὲ ῥίζαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἀλλὰ πρόσκαιρός ἐστιν.
- b) Mark 9:50: Καλὸν τὸ ἄλας ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἄλας ἀναλον γένηται ἐν τίνι αὐτὸ ἀρτύσετε ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἄλλα καὶ εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἀλλήλοις. Notice the contrast in the pronouns: “Have salt *within* yourselves, and be at peace *with one* another”.
- c) John 5:42: ἀλλὰ ἔγνωκα ὑμᾶς ὅτι τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.
- d) John 6:53: εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ἐὰν μὴ φάγητε τὴν σάρκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πίνητε αὐτοῦ τὸ αἶμα οὐκ ἔχετε ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.
- e) 2 Cor 1:9: ἀλλὰ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου ἐσχίκαμεν.

For our purposes, the most interesting example is the last one, 2 Cor. 1:9. Paul is speaking here metaphorically, which makes it hard to know exactly what he means. And as shown by modern versions, it is even more difficult to translate his words into English. From the context (2 Cor. 1:8-10) we gather that Paul is writing about recent risks to his life that took place in Asia (presumably in the context of persecution, although the historical circumstances are lost to us). The word τὸ ἀπόκριμα (a “judicial decision”) is semantically unproblematic. The difficulty resides in faithfully rendering its meaning within the idiomatic expression ἔχω + ἐν ἑαυτοῖς + noun. Among current translations we have for instance: (a) NASB: “Indeed, **we had** the sentence of death **within ourselves**”; (b) NIV: “Indeed, **we felt** we had received the sentence of death”; (c) VOICE: “**We thought** we would have to serve out our death sentences right then and there.” The NASB version of 2 Cor. 1:9 renders the Greek faithfully, word for word, but forces the modern reader to struggle with the meaning; the NIV translation, by using the verb “to feel”,

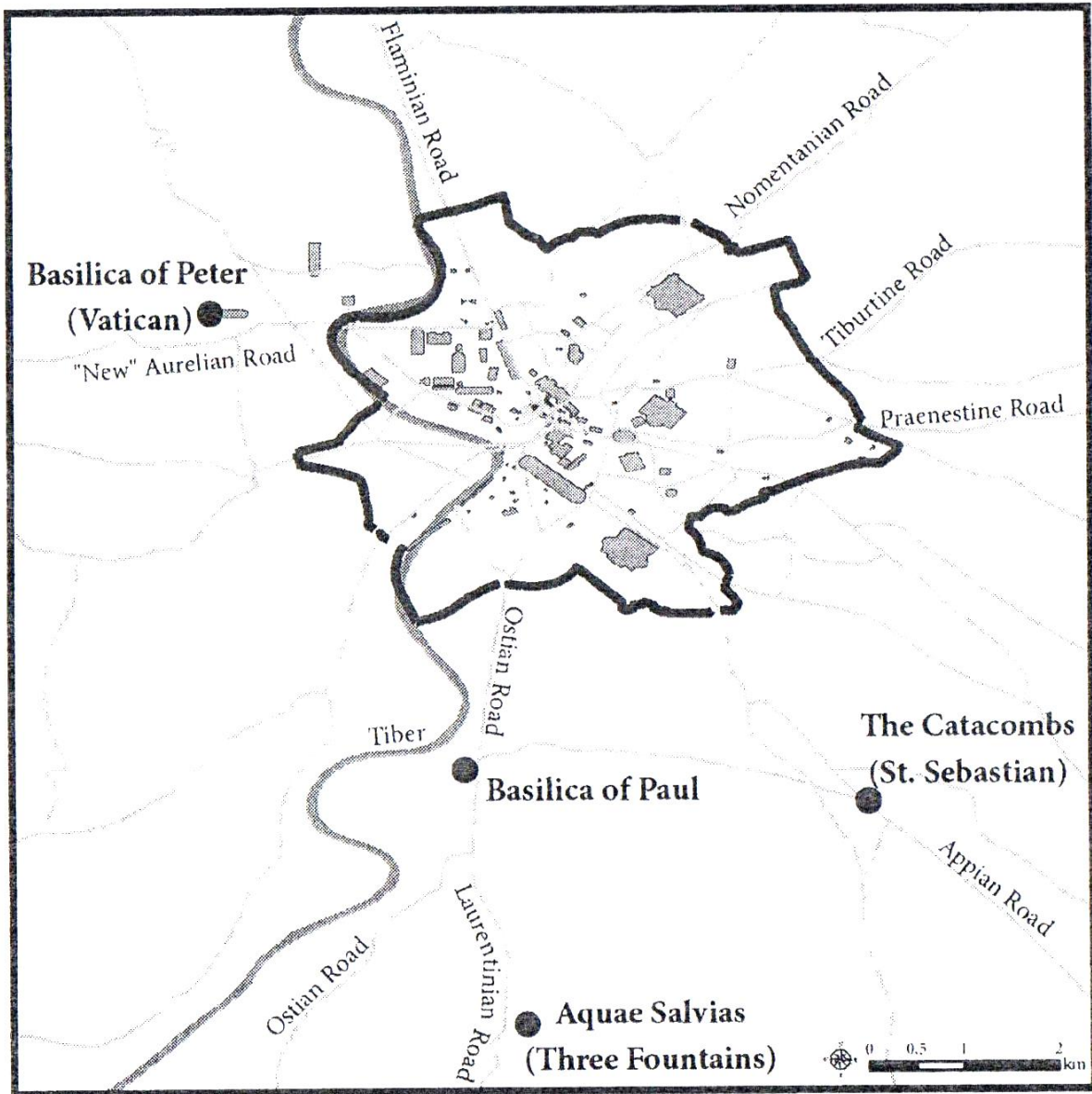
¹¹ Instances of this construction with ἐν ἑαυτῷ are found in (a) Matt. 13:21: οὐκ ἔχει δὲ ῥίζαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἀλλὰ πρόσκαιρός ἐστιν (parallel passage of Mark 4.17), (b) John 5:26: ὡσπερ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ἔχει ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ οὕτως καὶ τῷ υἱῷ ἔδωκεν ζωὴν ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ and (c) 1 John 5:10: ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἔχει τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ.

although it deviates from the Greek, better communicates what is meant by ἔχω + ἐν ἑαυτοῖς. It is the VOICE version that, albeit taking some liberties, probably best presents to a modern English speaker the thoughts of despair of Paul and his companions when the apostle says ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου ἐσχήκαμεν.

In my judgement, the expression πολλὴν ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς συζήτησιν in Acts 28:29 lends itself to a similar interpretation. The first mental picture that 28:29 offers to Acts' readers is that of the leading Jews of Rome conferring with each other (ἐν ἑαυτοῖς) as they leave Paul's quarters. However, given the above analysis of 28:29, the construction ἔχω + ἐν ἑαυτοῖς + noun and its use in 2 Cor. 1:9, we can also take the words πολλὴν ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς συζήτησιν as reflecting the inward thoughts of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as they left Paul's quarters, "having συζήτησιν within themselves." Thus an alternative meaning of Acts 28.29 is "After Paul had said these things, the Jews left thinking about a strict inquiry."¹²

¹² As discussed in § 3.5, the word ζήτησις (in the sense of "legal inquiry"), when found in combination with πολλή, has previously been translated by English-speaking scholars as "strict inquiry". See Earnest Cary's translation of D.H. Ant. Rom. 8.89.4 in the 1945 Loeb edition of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the translation of Plut. *Dem.* 25.6 in John Dryden's 1683 edition of Plutarch's Lives.

APPENDIX 4.a: APOSTOLIC CULT SITES IN ROME



Note: Taken from Eastman 2011:16. With permission by the author

APPENDIX 4.b: MARTYRDOM OF THE HOLY APOSTLE PAUL IN ROME¹

1. Luke, who had come from Gaul, and Titus, who had come from Dalmatia, were awaiting Paul in Rome. When Paul saw them he rejoiced and rented a barn outside Rome in which he was teaching the word of truth with the brothers and sisters. He became famous, and many souls were being added to the Lord, so there was a certain sound going out in Rome. And a great crowd came out to him from the house of Caesar and immediately believed in the word, so that there was great joy for Paul and those hearing. A certain cupbearer of Caesar, named Patroclus, came to the barn one evening but was not able to go in to Paul because of the crowd. After sitting on a certain high window, he was hearing the word of God. But because the wicked devil was jealous of the love in the Lord and the salvation of the brothers and sisters, Patroclus dozed off, fell down from the window, and died. It was quickly reported to Nero by his household servants that he had died.

Paul perceived it in his spirit and said, "Brothers and sisters, the evil one has had an opportunity to test us. Go outside, and you will find a youth who has just fallen and died. Bring him to me." They went out and brought the youth to him. Seeing this the crowds were troubled, but Paul said, "Now let our faith be seen. All of you come, and let us cry out to our Lord Jesus Christ, so that this youth may live and we may remain undisturbed." After they had all prayed to the Lord, the youth arose and regained his breath. They set him on a beast and sent him away with the others from the house of Caesar.

2. When Caesar heard about the death of Patroclus, he was deeply grieved. Having come back from the bath, he ordered another to take charge of the wine. But his servants said to him, "Caesar, Patroclus is alive and is standing at the table."

Caesar ordered him to come, and after he had come, he said, "Patroclus, are you alive?"

And Patroclus said, "I am alive."

Caesar said, "Who made you alive?"

Empowered by the strength of his faith, Patroclus said, "Jesus Christ, the king of the whole world and the ages."

Caesar was troubled and said, "Is that one, then, going to rule throughout the ages and destroy all the kingdoms under heaven?"

Patroclus answered and said, "Yes, for he rules in heaven and on earth, namely Jesus Christ. He destroys not only the kingdoms under heaven, but also every empire of darkness and the power

¹ This is Eastman's 2015 English translation of the *Martyrdom of Paul* based on Zwierlein's 2010 edition of the Greek text. For ease of reading, I have bracketed and italicized the units of material that appear to be later additions (see Snyder 2013:58-59 and 219). For manuscript sources see Eastman 2015:123-124. Reprinted by permission of the author.

of death and wicked authority. He alone is the one whose kingdom will have no end forever, and there is no kingdom that will escape him."

But Nero struck him on the face and said, "Patroclus, are you also a soldier of that king?"

And he said, "Yes, for he raised me from the dead"

Then Justus the flat-footed, Orion the Cappadocian, and Hephaestus the Galatian, the chief bodyguards of Nero, said, "We are also soldiers of that eternal king." Caesar locked them in prison and tortured them—the ones whom he used to love very much. He also sent word that the soldiers of the great king should be sought out, and he issued an edict to the effect that all those found to be Christians should be killed.

3. Among the many, Paul was also brought in chains. All his fellow prisoners paid attention to him and to what Paul answered, so Caesar understood that he was the leader of the armies. Nero said to him, "Oh, man of the great king and military commander, why did it seem good to you to enter secretly into the empire of the Romans and enlist soldiers from my kingdom?" And Paul said in front of everyone, "Caesar, we levy soldiers not only from your kingdom but also from the entire world. For this has been ordained for us, that no one wishing to be a soldier for my king should be excluded. Thus, even you, if it pleases you, can be his soldier, for wealth and the splendid things now in this life will not save you. But if you believe in my king Jesus Christ, he will save you, for he will come one day to judge the world in righteousness." After he heard these things, Caesar ordered all those in chains to be burned with fire, but Paul to be beheaded according to the law of the Romans. Paul was not silent but was proclaiming to all the word of God, preaching even to the prefect Longinus and the centurion Cescus. *[But Nero, roused by the evil one, was acting in Rome with great force, such that he killed many Christians. Finally, the Romans stood in front of the palace and cried out, "Enough is enough, Caesar, for these people are ours! You are destroying the power of the Romans!" Because of these people he relented and established an edict that none of the Christians should be set on fire² unless he passed judgment on the affairs concerning them.*

4. *When Paul was brought to him in accordance with the edict, he stood by his sentence, saying, "Decapitate this man, lest he should take on strange ideas as his own." And Paul said, "Caesar, it is not for a short time that I live for my king. Know that even if you cut off my head, I will do this: I will appear to you after I have been raised again, so that you may know that I did not die but am alive in my king Jesus Christ, who judges the entire world."]* But Longinus and Cescus said to Paul, "How did you come to have this king, such that you believe in him in this way and are not willing to be swayed, but even look at death with disdain?"

And Paul said to them, "You who are in ignorance and error, repent and be saved from the fire that is coming upon the whole world. For we do not take the field, as you suppose, for an earthly king but a heavenly one, the living God, who remains forever and who, because of the lawless

² Eastman translates ἄπτεσθαι "should be set on fire", assuming continuity in the text between this new edict and Nero's first edict that Christians should be killed (see last sentence of *MPI* 2). Yet what the inserted passage actually means is that nobody should lay hands on Christians (literally "touch") without a prior trial.

things that have been done on earth, comes as judge of the living and the dead. Blessed is the one who has believed in him before his appearance. Such a person will live forever when he comes purifying and completely consuming the world with fire."

But Longinus and Cescus were saying, "We ask you to help us and make us become such men, and we will free you."

And Paul said, "I am not a deserter that you should grant this favor to me, but I am a lawful soldier of Christ. For if I knew that I were going to die, Longinus and Cescus, then I would flee, but since I know that I live for Christ my king, I go away to him rejoicing, so that I may also come with him in the glory of his Father."

They said to him, "And how, after you have been beheaded, will we live in him?"

5. [*While they were still saying these things, Nero sent Parthenius and Pheres to see if Paul had already been decapitated, and they found him still alive. Paul called them to him and said, "Believe in the living God, who will raise from the dead both me and those who have believed in him." But they said to him, "We are going back to Nero in the meantime, but after you die and rise, then we will believe in your God."*] Because Longinus and Cescus were inquiring about their salvation, Paul said, "Go quickly [at dawn] to my tomb, and you will find two men praying—Titus and Luke. They will give you the seal in Christ." After turning to the east and stretching out his hands, Paul prayed for a long time in the Hebrew language. He ended his prayer and shared the word with them. Then he said the "amen" and stretched out his neck to be severed. When he was silent and no longer speaking, the soldier cut off his head. As his head was cut off, milk spurted onto the clothes of the soldier. After they saw this, the crowds standing there were amazed and glorified God, who had given such grace to Paul. They went away and reported to Nero the things that had happened.

6. [*While Caesar was still amazed and at a loss, Paul came at around the ninth hour, when many philosophers and leaders—both rich and distinguished—were standing with Caesar, and when the centurion was present. Appearing to them all, Paul said, "Caesar, see that the soldier of God did not die but lives. There will be great evil for you on account of the many righteous people whose blood you spilled, and these things will happen to you after not many days." Nero was troubled and ordered that all the prisoners be set free, including Patroclus and all those remaining.*]

7. As Paul had ordered, at dawn the centurion and those with him went with fear and hesitation and approached the tomb of Paul.³ They drew near and saw men praying, Titus and Luke [*and Paul standing in their midst.*] They saw this and were astounded. Titus and Luke, being men and fearful, started to flee. But after they pursued and laid hold of them, they said, "We pursue you not to kill you, servants of Christ, but so that you may give us eternal life, just as Paul [*the one who was praying in your midst just a little bit ago*] commanded us." After they heard these things, Titus and Luke received them, glorified God, and gave them the seal in Christ, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

³ Those approaching are only Longinus and Cescus in Pervo's text (2014:318) and Tajra's text (1994:126).

APPENDIX 5.a: JEROME'S DISCUSSION OF AUTHORSHIP IN *DE VIRIS ILLUSTRIBUS*

In *DVI*, Jerome states that he included Seneca in his list of *ecclesiastici scriptores* based on the letters that he had exchanged with Paul during the Apostle's stay in Rome. Did Jerome actually believe in the genuineness of the forged correspondence? Over the past century, scholars have offered various opinions on this issue. They can be classified as follows. (a) Jerome actually thought that the correspondence was real. (b) Jerome possibly did not see the letters and accepted the genuineness of the correspondence reluctantly. (c) Jerome may have only heard of the correspondence from a friend or had imperfect second-hand information about it. (d) Jerome displays a neutral attitude towards its authenticity and leaves the question open to his readers.¹

All these explanations imply that the Church Father either did not carefully examine the correspondence or was undecided as to its genuineness. Knowing what we know of Jerome as a scholar and after a detailed analysis of the internal structure of *DVI*, both alternatives seem to me highly improbable. In his own letters, Jerome comes off as a bibliophile.² He had collected throughout his life a large and ever-expanding library which he had taken from Rome to Jerusalem when he moved to the Holy Land in 386 CE. Jerome also frequented the library of Caesarea and had secretaries working for him to copy books and letters. The end of the 4th century was characterized by an intense circulation and publication of books and letters. Most of

¹ For explanation (a) see Corsaro 1987:264-282 and Colish 1992:338-339; for (b) see Reynolds 1965:81-82 and 89; for (c) see Barlow 1938:5 and Jannaccone 1963:326-338; for (d) see Bocciolini Palagi 1985:21.

² For a detailed discussion about the circulation and publication of literary works in Jerome's times see Gamble 1997, who discusses Jerome's bibliophilic activities in various places. Also of note is Jerome's mention of his collection of Pamphilus' writings in *DVI*: "I have twenty-five volumes of commentaries of Origen, written in his hand, *On the twelve prophets* which I hug and guard with such joy that I deem myself to have the wealth of Croesus." See also discussion in Kelly 1975:135.

Jerome's letters are fairly long, and so are the extant letters that he received. The correspondence of Paul and Seneca, however, generally occupies no more than two folios in the extant manuscripts. If a friend wanted to mention a passage of the forgery (for instance, the one quoted in *DVI*) in a letter to Jerome, we may ask why did he not send the whole correspondence, which would not have taken much writing space and would have amounted perhaps to one fifth of "a moderately long letter"?³ Moreover, it is unlikely that Jerome would have been satisfied with hearsay instead of insisting on seeing all the letters. After all, this was not a minor discovery but a correspondence written in Latin between the apostle Paul and the most important pagan writer of the 1st century. We may note that in two other occasions in *DVI* — in the notices on Dexter (c.132) and Ambrose of Alexandria (c. 126) — Jerome acknowledges that he has heard of a book but not read it. Given that Jerome himself states that Seneca's inclusion in *DVI* is based on the epistolary exchange, it is hard to explain why he would not have requested the entire correspondence and examined it carefully.

We may now ask whether Jerome appears to be neutral or convinced regarding the correspondence's authenticity. In his notice he says the following: *quem non ponerem in catalogo Sanctorum, nisi me illae Epistolae provocarent, quae leguntur a plurimis, Pauli ad Senecam, et Senecae ad Paulum*. Do these words show his reluctance to include Seneca in *DVI*? Previous scholarship has not examined Jerome's words in the context of the Church Father's analysis of authorship issues in *DVI*.⁴ In his catalog of Christian writers, Jerome displays a keen

³ Jerome uses the words 'moderately long letter' to describe *Epist.* 112 (written in 397) which is roughly five times longer than the entire correspondence between Seneca and Paul. Thus, using his own standards of epistolary length, the entire correspondence occupied as much space as what he would have considered a rather 'short letter'.

⁴ See Hulley 1944:87-109. Hulley did a very good survey of Jerome's analysis of authorship issues (in *DVI* and other writings), yet he does not mention at all the notice on Seneca in *DVI*. Conversely, none of the scholars who

interest in matters of authorship and constantly applies his scholarly acumen to identifying authorship problems. In the first ten notices of the *DVI* (all of which precede c.12 that deals with Seneca), Jerome does not shy away from discussing questions of authenticity regarding the writers of the New Testament (a thorny area of research even among modern scholars). Interestingly, he deals with canonical works attributed to Christian figures of the first order in a rather dispassionate way, resembling more a skeptical biblical scholar than a defender of Christian orthodoxy. In notice after notice, as he lists the writings of early Christian writers, Jerome analyzes a variety of authorship problems (pseudepigraphy, anonymity, homonymity, misattribution, co-authorship and self-identification) using an assortment of criteria (facility with the language, stylistic features, historical improbabilities, acceptability based on authority or usefulness and scholarly agreement).

For instance, in his notice about Paul, Jerome examines at length authorship issues about the *Epistle to the Hebrews* and says that the letter is not considered to belong to him, on account of its difference from the others in style and language (*propter styli sermonisque dissonantiam*). In favor of authenticity he states that “since Paul was writing to Hebrews and was in disrepute among them, he may have omitted his name from the salutation on this account” and ends by suggesting that Paul wrote originally the epistle in Hebrew and that the letter was subsequently translated into Greek; for that reason it seems to differ from other epistles of Paul (*quod a caeteris Pauli epistolis discrepare videatur*). As to the forged letter *To the Laodiceans*, Jerome says that it is rejected by everyone (*ab omnibus exploditur*). The Church Father also rejects *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* since he finds impossible that Luke, “the inseparable companion of the Apostle in his other affairs,” should have been ignorant of “the fable about the lion” baptized by

have studied the correspondence appeared to have focused on Jerome’s analysis of authorship issues in the other notices of *DVI*.

Paul. Likewise, Jerome rejects five apocryphal books falsely written under Peter's name or about him ("his *Acts*... his *gospel* ... his *Preaching* ... his *Revelation* and ... his Judgment").

As the table below demonstrates, the other eight initial notices on Christian writers in *DVI* are similarly filled with Jerome's astute observations about issues of authorship and canonicity.

Writer and works discussed	Authorship and canonicity issues
James Letter of James	Pseudepigraphy / acceptability based on authority "He wrote a single epistle... and even this is claimed by some to have been published by someone else under his name (<i>ipsa ab alio quodam sub nomine eius edita asseritur</i>), and gradually as time went on to have gained authority (<i>auctoritatem</i>)."
Matthew Greek translator of the Gospel of Matthew	Anonymity "Composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew, but this was afterwards translated into Greek, though by what author is uncertain (<i>quis postea in Graecum transtulerit, non satis certum est</i>)."
Jude Letter of Jude	Acceptability based on authority "Left a short epistle... and because in it he quotes from the apocryphal book of Enoch, it is rejected by many (<i>a plerisque reiicitur</i>)... Nevertheless, by age and use (<i>vetustate iam et usu</i>) it has gained authority and is reckoned among the Holy Scriptures."
Barnabas Epistle of Barnabas	Usefulness of a work versus apocryphal nature "Wrote one <i>Epistle</i> , valuable for the edification of the church (<i>ad aedificationem Ecclesiae pertinentem</i>), which is reckoned among the apocryphal writings."
Mark/Peter Gospel of Mark	Coauthorship (In c.1, notice on Peter) "Then, too, the Gospel according to Mark, who was his disciple and interpreter, is ascribed to him (<i>huius dicitur</i>)."

John

Johannine Epistles

Homonymity and misattribution

“The other two [letters; i.e. 2 John and 3 John]... are said to be (*asseruntur*) the work of John the Presbyter.” Jerome also refers to Notice 18 on Papias in which he states that John the Presbyter and John the Apostle were two different persons.

Hermas

The Shepherd of Hermas

Acceptability based on usefulness

“[Hermas] is reputed to be the author of the book which is called *The Pastor*...It is in fact a useful book (*utilis liber*), and many of the ancient writers quote from it as authority.”

After Jerome’s reflections on the authorship of writings ascribed to these 1st century Christian authors, we find the only four notices in *DVI* that deal with non-Christian writers: Philo, Josephus and Justus of Tiberias, three Jews included because of their usefulness for defending the historicity of early Christianity, and Seneca, the only pagan writer in the *catalogus*. Before examining Seneca’s notice, it is worth discussing some additional examples of Jerome’s musings on authorial issues in *DVI* that were not presented in the previous table. Here follows a non-exhaustive list. (1) *Pseudepigraphic works / scholarly consensus*: Jerome explicitly discusses which works are considered apocryphal (this Greek word appears four times in *DVI*), which works appear under someone’s name (*sub eius nomine*, used seven times in *DVI*) and which writings are rejected by scholarly consensus (*repudiatur/reprobatur/etc*).⁵ (2) *Discussion of misattributions*: see, for example, c. 58 on Minucius Felix and c. 70 on Novatianus. (3) *Analysis of style*: The words *elegans* or *inelegans* are used nineteen times, and in four instances he uses the expression *mihi videtur...convenire/congruere* to give his opinion on stylistic matters. (4) *Miscellanea*: He is sensitive to differences in ideas and word order (c. 50) and problems between the known character of the author and the style of the work (c. 99).

⁵ Interestingly, Jerome does not use the terminology found in Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* (which is one of the sources of *DVI*). Eusebius had divided Christian writings into λεγόμενοι, ἀντιλεγόμενοι and νόθοι.

He discusses contradictions in the source material (c. 63) and knows how to use internal evidence to date writings (c. 76). Of particular importance to us and as discussed before, in c.132 he states that he has heard of Dexter's *Universal History* but has not read it and in his notice on Ambrose of Alexandria (c.126) he states that he has been recently informed about Ambrose's *Commentaries on Job*.

Considering that the forged correspondence is rife with easily recognizable problems and given that Jerome is eager to discuss authorship issues everywhere else in *DVI*, it is very difficult to explain why he avoids that discussion in Seneca's case.⁶ There is no reason to expect Jerome to have used in Seneca's notice all the analytical tools at his disposal; what is astonishing is that he uses none of them. The correspondence is almost an invitation for the Church Father to play "authorship detective" as he does in the rest of *DVI*. The most reasonable explanation that I find for Jerome's silence is that he wants to divert attention from his willingness to include Seneca in *DVI* based on a rather clumsy forgery. Consider these intriguing instances of silence in Jerome's mention of the correspondence: (1) There is no discussion of Jerome's extent of familiarity with the letters. If he had not read them all, why not say it explicitly, as he does in the notices on Dexter and Ambrose of Alexandria? (2) There is no assessment of the literary quality of the letters. Why does Jerome not use his favorite qualifiers *elegans* and *inelegans*? (3) There is no analysis of the stylistic features (ideas, order of words, etc) of the correspondence. (4) There is no discussion of the internal contradictions found in the letters, or the jumbled order of letters 10-14 that is so apparent if one examines their appended dates.⁷ (5) There is no discussion of

⁶ Notice that Jerome had already translated and written commentaries on Paul's letters before embarking on *DVI*. As previously discussed, he was also familiar with Seneca.

⁷ There is a chance that the text available to Jerome was not exactly the same as the one currently extant, which seems to have undergone revisions. If it is true that a second forger introduced letter 11, he may have done so after

discrepancies between the known character of the authors and the nature of the work. Did Jerome really imagine that Paul could have taken part in an epistolary exchange written in Latin? Why discuss the subject of Paul's familiarity with languages when talking about the *Epistle to the Hebrews* in Paul's notice but not in Seneca's notice where we are purportedly reading six letters by Paul written in Latin?

I see no better explanation for the above questions than the following: Jerome was not fooled by the forged correspondence, yet as a champion of Christianity he had very a pragmatic approach to matters of authorship and found it convenient to co-opt Seneca's writings for his own purposes.⁸ As I argue in § 5.2, he found them useful for the intellectual defense of Christian doctrine in his *Ad Jovinianum* which he published roughly at the same time as *DVI*. To justify his reliance on Seneca in this context, Jerome had recourse to forged letters that in all likelihood he had read for the first time not long before.

the publication of *DVI*. Even in that case there would still have been other serious historical, stylistic and thematic problems that Jerome should have discussed.

⁸,Jerome's analysis of Paul's behavior in the Antioch incident (Gal. 2:11-14) suggests that, in some instances, he had a tolerant attitude towards deception. The reader might recall that Augustine (Mend. 43) thought that Jerome's interpretation of this passage had justified the use of lies and that a heated epistolary exchange between the two Church Fathers ensued regarding this matter. See discussion in Myers 2013.

APPENDIX 5.b: PLAUTILLA, THE “CITY GATE” AND THE DATE OF THE PSEUDO-LINUS

Although scholars believe that the Pseudo-Linus (Ps-Ln) was written in Rome, they disagree about its date of composition.¹ The best way to date a work is in reference to its latest identifiable features. In that regard, I believe that Ps-Ln contains a few overlooked internal clues that can help us to get a better grasp of the circumstances under which the story was written. Indeed, various narrative elements in Ps-Ln are consistent with historical conditions known to have existed at Rome in the early years of the 5th century.

Our first piece of evidence is the introduction in Ps-Ln of Seneca as a member of the imperial court sympathetic to Paul. From this we can deduce that, given our discussion of the forged correspondence in § 5.2, Ps-Ln could not have been composed before the last decades of the 4th century. Our second clue is the out-of-place atmosphere of religious procession in Ps-Ln 10-12, as listeners acclaim Paul’s lengthy sermon (including a theological discussion on the Trinity) and interact with him on his way towards his *locus passionis*.² The scenario imagined by the author is an obvious historical anachronism. Indeed, it seems to reflect the ambiance of early 5th century processions at Rome on June 29th, Paul’s *dies natalis*, as described by the poet

¹ Tajra 1994:138 considers it a 4th-5th century work. De Santos Otero (1992:439) and Lanéry (2008:127-128) lean towards the 5th century, Eastman (2015:141) suggests the 5th or 6th century. The last three scholars point out that this late *Martyrdom of Paul* was probably conceived as a counterpart to the late *Martyrdom of Peter* that was also transmitted under the name of Linus and written in Rome in the late 4th/early 5th century.

² Paul’s discourse on the Trinitarian nature of God in Ps-Ln fits well within the controversies of the late 4th/early 5th century. Compare *quia deitatis nomen per plures nequaquam diuiditur, quoniam unus Deus a quo omnia, et unus dominus Iesus Christus per quem sunt omnia, et unus Spiritus Sanctus in quo consistunt uniuersa* (Ps-Ln 11) with *Unus deus pater, et unus dei filius, et unus spiritus sanctus, sicut scriptum est: Haec autem omnia operatur unus atque idem spiritus, diuidens singulis prout uult* (Ambrose, *De Institutione Virginis* 10.64). For the Latin text of Ps-Ln, English translation and commentary, see Eastman 2015:139-169.

Prudentius in the *Passio Apostolorum Petri et Pauli*, written ca. 395-403.³ In the beginning lines of this poem (1-4), a Christian visiting Rome asks an unnamed interlocutor why there are crowds in the streets. The visitor is informed that they are celebrating the *dies natalis* of Peter and Paul. After talking about their martyrdoms, the local guide next describes St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican and St. Paul's Basilica on the Ostian Road and how the latter has been recently expanded and consecrated by Emperor Theodosius (45-54). The local Christian asks the visitor to notice how people go "through the streets two separate ways" (57-58). He then invites the visitor to attend both festivals with him and details the route that they will follow: "after attending Peter's festival, we shall go further on, where the way leads over Hadrian's bridge" (i.e. the modern Ponte S. Angelo) and "afterwards seek the left bank of the river" (i.e. go towards St. Paul's Basilica).

Another piece of evidence for dating Ps-Ln is what — in my view — are allusions to a place and a relic that Paul's devotees would have cherished as sacred during the celebration of the apostle's *dies natalis*. In the remainder of the Appendix I will develop this point in detail. Notice first that in the Ps-Ln Paul has to go through an unnamed "city gate" (Ps-Ln 14) on his way to his *locus passionis*. Although Tajra 1994:141 wrote that the author did not give "any specific indication as to which city gate he meant", the original readers of the account would have had no problem identifying it. The pilgrims described in Prudentius' poem had to exit the city via the Ostian Gate (the modern Porta San Paolo), which had been restored under Honorius (401-403), and from where they had no less than a half an hour walk towards Saint Paul's

³ See *Perist.* 12. Initially the custom was to visit the Basilicas of both apostles on the same day. This must have been exhausting for both the celebrating bishop and the pilgrims. Thus, the double service was afterwards given up and the commemoration of Paul's martyrdom transferred to the next day. For a discussion of the date see Harries 1984:71-73.

Basilica.⁴ Now, is the allusion to the Ostian gate a gratuitous reference within Ps-Ln? Not at all. A close reading of *Ps.Ln* indicates that the Ostian Gate plays an important function in the narrative.⁵ In Ps-Ln 7, the author gives his readers advance notice regarding Paul's crossing of a city gate as Nero commands his prefects to take Paul to a place *extra urbem* and make a spectacle of his death for the people (*populo spectaculum de eius occisione*) by having him decapitated. Next, in Ps-Ln 14 we read: "When they were proceeding ... accompanied by countless crowds of people, he came to the gate of the city of Rome (*ad portam urbis Romae*)". At the gate Paul meets a woman named Plautilla who gives him her veil. Paul promises to come back to the gate after his death to reward her faith. Plautilla, abiding by the apostle's request to await his return, stays there all the time. When she meets Paul's unbelieving executioners Parthenius and Pheritas, as they reenter the city on their way back from Paul's *locus passionis*, Plautilla informs them that Paul appeared to her posthumously and gave her back the veil, now soaked in his blood after the apostle had used it as a blindfold at his execution.⁶

As discussed in § 5.4, the earliest artistic depiction of Plautilla is found on a scene that shows Paul's arrest in the "Sarcophagus of the Travelers", likely produced at Rome during Theodosian's reign (Utro 2011:35). We do not know exactly when the legend of Plautilla's veil

⁴ The *porta* is identified as such as early as the 5th century by Aethicus of Istria: *Ostiensem portam quae est domni Pauli apostoli* (*Cosmographia* 1.24). The same information is found in Procop. *BG* 2.4.3, 9; 3.36. The reference in Ps-Ln to crowds acclaiming Paul on his way to his *locus passionis* also fits with historical developments of the early 5th century, characterized by a renewed engagement of the Theodosian dynasty with the cults of Paul and Peter in Rome in an effort to distinguish the city as the Christian *caput urbium*. Theodosius I was the driving force behind the ambitious expansion project of the Basilica which began in 385/386. The project, incomplete at the death of Theodosius in 395, was continued under the patronage of his son Honorius, who embellished the interior of the Basilica and dedicated it ca. 400, as attested in an inscription now located above the Basilica's triumphal arch: *Theodosius coepit, perfecit Honorius*. See Thacker 2012:380-406.

⁵ Note the similar importance of the *Quo Vadis* city gate on the Appian Road, which is featured in the late martyrdom account known as *Passio Petri* (Eastman 2015:27-65) and also attributed to Linus (see discussion in §5.4).

⁶ For the characters Parthenius and Pheritas see discussion in § 4.4 on the 2nd century *Martyrdom of Paul*.

originated but its significance certainly exceeded that of a simple literary motif. In the patristic period, the veil was considered a precious relic, as attested by the letter of Gregory the Great to Constantina (*Ep.* 4.30). When the Byzantine Empress asked the Pope to send her the relic, Gregory informed her that this was not possible since the *sudarium* was buried with the apostle.⁷

Why would the author of Ps-Ln purposely place Plautilla at the gate as a stationary character who shows her relic stained with Paul's blood to passersby? The scene not only evokes the procession of believers at the *dies natalis* of Paul, described in Prudentius' poem, but is also reminiscent of ritualistic elements in Egeria's account of her visit to the Holy Land during Easter (ca. 384). Egeria's diary reveals that pilgrims going to the Holy Land in the 380s for Easter celebrations could expect to find sacred spots at which Jesus had stopped and also touch Jesus' Holy Cross, the ultimate relic of Christendom.⁸ Since the original 2nd century *Martyrdom of Paul* was barren of any local color and devotional objects, probably one of the goals of Ps-Ln was to make more tangible the experience of the yearly festival of Paul's martyrdom to pilgrims visiting Rome (making it similar to the pilgrims' experience in the Holy Land).⁹ One can reasonably conjecture that Ps-Ln — or parts of it — was read for liturgical purposes on that day and that the narrative contains allusions to places and relics that would have attracted the pious

⁷ See discussion in Eastman 2011:57-58. Whether Plautilla's veil had already been placed inside Paul's 4th-century sarcophagus (see § 4.2), we do not know. Probably more details on the veil could be unearthed in overlooked Roman documents of the 4th and 5th century.

⁸ For instance we learn that when Egeria visited Jerusalem ca. 385, there was a two-mile pilgrimage from Jerusalem to Bethany to visit Lazarus' tomb during which pilgrims stopped midway at the spot where Mary, the sister of Lazarus, had met Jesus. There, the pertinent gospel passage (John 11:1-44) was read before they continued their way to Bethany (*Itinerarium* 2.25.11). Also in Egeria's diary, we learn that on Good Friday the holy wood of the cross was shown to pilgrims and that they were allowed to kiss it (*ibid.* 2.37.1-3). As a colorful anecdote, Egeria tells us that once an irreverent pilgrim took a bite at the cross and afterward the relic became more closely guarded.

⁹ Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 17.2, recounts that he made the pilgrimage to Rome every year from 394 to 406 for the very popular "apostolic birth celebration". For his part, John Chrysostom aspired to travel from Antioch to Rome one day and to be riveted to the apostle's tomb (*Hom. Rom.* 32.3). See discussion in Eastman 2012: 54-55.

interest of visitors. For instance, we know that Paul's chains (cf. Ps-Ln 6, *consuetudinarias catenas*) were on display for pilgrims.¹⁰ Hence, we can also venture that the particular place where Paul had met Plautilla was pointed out to visitors and that Plautilla's veil was on display at the *porta civitatis* as pilgrims exit the city limits on their way to the Basilica.¹¹ At the very least, we can be sure that the gate referred in Ps-Ln whose identification had bothered Tajra can be no other than the modern Porta San Paolo, which still today is the gateway towards Paul's Basilica for those walking from the center of Rome.

In summary, in this Appendix I have examined internal clues within Ps-Ln that help us pinpoint its date of composition. The insertion of Seneca as a new character (whose correspondence with Paul was forged ca. 370-392), and to a lesser extent the appearance of Plautilla (first attested in a Theodosian sarcophagus), gives us a *terminus a quo* ca. 392. Paul's discourse on the Trinitarian issue fits well with the period 392-410; so does the "procession" ambiance, which is reminiscent of Prudentius' *Perist.* 12 (written ca. 395-403). Last, the account's emphasis on "the city gate" suggests that it was composed in Rome in the

¹⁰ Paul's chains, still on display in the modern Basilica of St. Paul, were among the most prized relics of Christendom already in the late 4th century. John Chrysostom (see footnote above) longed to visit Rome. In *Hom. Eph.* 8.1.2, he expresses his yearning to see Paul's chains and jail (presumably the Mamertime prison): "Were I free from the cares of the church, had I my body strong and vigorous, I would not shrink from undertaking so long a journey [to Rome], only for the sake of beholding those chains, for the sake of seeing the prison where he was bound." Translation from Harrill 2012:134.

¹¹ The scenario I propose here, namely a Christian matron – in the guise of Plautilla – standing at the *porta* and greeting passersby, is not at all improbable. Egeria (*Itinerarium* 2.31.4) recounts how in the celebration of Palm Sunday the Bishop of Jerusalem was escorted into the city as Jesus had been in his own time. Presumably "Plautilla" showed to passersby a piece of the original bloodstained veil or more likely, a "contact" or secondary relic. Examples of the latter abound in late antiquity: for instance, the linen cloths dipped in the blood of Gervasius and Protasius (cf. Chapter 5.3) or the widely circulated tiny splinters of the holy cross, like the one that Paulinus of Nola (*Ep.* 31, 268.11–19) gave to Sulpicius Severus, the author of the *Chronica* (cf. § 5.1). The veil shown to pilgrims could have also been a facsimile of the original *sudarium* of Plautilla, like the facsimilia of relics shown in Rome from the Middle Ages and still sold to visitors in the twentieth century (Moore 1904:288). For a discussion of relics in late antiquity see Klein 2010:55-68.

first decade of the 5th century, at the completion of the renovations (ca. 386-403) carried out at both the Porta San Paolo and the Basilica of St. Paul, probably before the city was sacked in 410.

**APPENDIX 5.c. A TABULAR PRESENTATION OF TRADITIONS FOUND IN LATE
MARTYRDOM ACCOUNTS**

TRADITION	PS.-LINUS	PS.-MARCELLUS	PS.-ABDIAS
ANTI-NERONIAN	Yes	Yes	Yes
ANTI-JUDAIC	No	Yes	Yes
CATHOLIC	No	Yes	No
PATROCLUS	Yes	No	No
SENECA	Yes	No	No
PLAUTILLA	Yes	Yes	No
LUCINA	No	No	Yes
OSTIAN ROAD	No	Yes	Yes
APPIAN ROAD	No	Yes (Greek version)	No
AQUAE SALVIAE	No	Yes	No

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