

THE ROMAN CHRISTIANS OF ROMANS 16<sup>1</sup>

*Peter Lampe*

Was Romans 16 originally addressed to Rome, or was it a separate letter to Ephesus, as has been proposed?<sup>2</sup> I do not want to discuss in detail the problems to which the Ephesus hypothesis leads us, such as:<sup>3</sup> (a) Why does Paul greet only his co-workers Urbanus, Aquila, and Prisca in "Ephesus" (Rom. 16:3, 9), when many others have been staying there?<sup>4</sup> Has the whole group moved? Does Paul forget to greet them? (b) Why was a letter to the Ephesians added to a letter to the Romans? This would be without parallel. It is true, 2 Cor. was comprised of several letters, but these separate letters were not addressed to different churches. (c) We know letters that consisted mainly of greetings.<sup>5</sup> But can we picture *Paul* writing such a letter? (d) Why do the Romans 16 names "Urbanus," "Phlegon," "Persis," and "Asyncritus" not occur in any of the thousands of Ephesian inscriptions, while they do show up on epigraphs in the city of Rome?<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A more comprehensive study will be forthcoming in one chapter of the English translation of my book, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr 1989) 2nd edition, pp. 124–53, 301–2, 358; ET by Fortress Press, translated by Dr. L. Holland (Dr. Holland, unfortunately, did not translate this article into English).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. for one example: Scott, *Romans*, 24.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. the discussion in Ollrog, "Abfassungsverhältnisse," 221–24.

<sup>4</sup>Epaphras, Mark, Luke, Aristarchus, Demas (Phlm. 23–24; cf. Col 4:7–14); Sosthenes (1 Cor. 1:1); Apollos, Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus (1 Cor. 16:12, 17); Jesus Justus (Col. 4:7–14) and others.

<sup>5</sup>See McDonald, "Separate Letter?" 369–72.

<sup>6</sup>For Rome see below. For Ephesus see the concordance by Nollé, *Die Inschriften von Ephesos*, and Knibbe, "Neue Inschriften," 107–49. "Olympas," "Patrobas," and "Herodion" cannot be found in the epigraphs of either of the two cities. The remaining names of Rom. 16:3–16 are represented in both cities.

## I. Romans 16 as an Original Part of the Letter to the Romans

I want to discuss positively the reasons why Romans 16 has to be considered an integral part of the original letter to the Romans.

1. Paul would never have ended a letter with Romans 15:33. Formulations like "the God of peace [with you]" never conclude a letter but precede requests to greet—greetings like the ones in Romans 16!<sup>7</sup> The *de* in Romans 16:1, on the other hand, presupposes a *previous* text. That means: Romans 15 and 16 mutually presuppose each other. Why separate them?

2. Textual criticism teaches that no Romans manuscript ever ends with chapter 15. The manuscripts either omit both chapters (15:1–33 and 16:1–23), or they have them both in one block.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, 15:1–16:23 have to be treated as one unit by the textual critic—one block which is addressed to Rome, as 15:22–29 assures.

There are only two exceptions from this rule. (a) The minuscule 1506 from the year 1320 has chapter 15, but omits 16:1–23. The medieval scribe copied Romans 1–14; 16:25–27; chapter 15, and again 16:25–27. How can this strange arrangement be explained? The genealogical trees (*stemmas*), which have been proposed for the manuscripts of the letter to the Romans agree that the text of minuscule 1506 is a descendant of Marcion's Romans text (Rom. 1–14) and of texts that offer chapters 15 and 16:1–23 as one block *together*.<sup>9</sup> Thus, minuscule 1506 only *seems* to be an exception to the rule. The ancestors of minuscule 1506 assure that Romans 15 and 16:1–23 belong together once we come to the older strata of textual history. (b) P<sup>46</sup> from the year ca. 200 reads chapters 1–14; 15; 16:25–27; 16:1–23. It presents both chapter 15 and 16:1–23, but this time they do not appear in one block. Did P<sup>46</sup> therefore descend from a text which consisted only of 1–14; 15? In other words, Does P<sup>46</sup> suggest this textual history: 1–14; 15 → 1–14; 15; 16:25–27 → 1–14; 15; 16:25–27; 16:1–23 (=P<sup>46</sup>)? No. Again, we have to look at the possible *stemmas* that put all manuscripts into a genealogical relation. We know fourteen text types for the letter to the Romans, having the task to put them together into a family tree. If we wanted to put 1–14; 15 at the root of the genealogical tree, an organic plant would not grow. The *stemma* would have several missing pieces, representing the weakest hypothesis.<sup>10</sup> P<sup>46</sup> therefore cannot support the hypothesis that Paul's original letter included only chapters 1–15.

3. Romans 16 shows several unique features when compared to the rest of the Pauline letters. Romans 1–15, on the other hand, offer the unparalleled quality that Paul writes to a church which he has never visited in person, a church which does not belong to his missionary area, but one with which he wants to get acquainted and from which he hopes to start a new missionary project in Spain. In other words, the uncharacteristic

<sup>7</sup>Phil. 4:9; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 3:16; Heb. 13:20; 3 John 15. Neither do Gal. 6:16; Eph. 6:23 end a letter. The only exception in the New Testament is not Pauline: 1 Pet 5:14. *amēn* does not conclude letters: Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; Gal. 1:5; 1 Thess. 3:13, etc.

<sup>8</sup>See the material in Lampe, "Textgeschichte," 273–77.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

features of Romans 16 can be explained by the unusual situation of Romans 1–15. Thus, Romans 1–15 and 16 should not be separated.

What do I mean specifically? (a) The ecumenical greeting in Romans 16:16 is unusual for Paul: “All the churches of Christ greet you.” This global perspective can be easily explained by the unique situation of Romans 1–15. Paul stands on the door step between east and west. He looks back at his missionary work in the east, leaving behind and summing up (15:19, 23). Making this survey, his eye easily catches “all churches of Christ” in the east. Furthermore, Paul looks ahead (15:22–32). Planning to do missionary work in Spain, he wants the Romans to support him (15:24, 30). But they do not even know him personally. Paul therefore first has to gain their confidence.<sup>11</sup> “All churches” sending greetings through Paul are the best recommendation for Paul himself and for his trustworthiness!

(b) Romans 16:3–16 as a whole is a text of recommendation for Paul himself—and only marginally also for Phoebe (16:1–2). The greetings of Romans 16:3–16 present two peculiarities compared to the other Pauline letters: greetings are sent to individual persons, and the list of greetings is unusually long. Both irregularities can be explained in light of Romans 1–15. Not knowing the Roman church as a whole personally, Paul sends greetings to individuals whom he does know in person.<sup>12</sup> Common friends build a first bridge of confidence between people who do not know each other. Paul wants to signal: See, I already know many of you personally (therefore the long list). And some of these common friends to whom I am connected with love (*agapētos*) have merits (e.g., 16:4, 6) and authority (16:7). They cast some light on myself. Look at these many and honorable personal friends of mine in the midst of your church—and you will find that I, too, am trustworthy. Here we have the hidden message of the unique and long list of personal greetings. The list is a reference for Paul himself! And Paul certainly needed all the recommendations he could get after he and his law-free gospel had become so controversial in the east.

Our interpretation attributes some sense also to the fact that Paul does not greet his personal friends directly but makes the Romans deliver his greetings to them (*aspasasthe*). The greetings send a message to the Roman church as a whole; they are not merely communication between Paul and these individuals.

(c) A last oddity is Timothy’s introduction as “my co-worker” (16:21). The eastern churches to which the rest of Paul’s letters were addressed

<sup>11</sup>The whole letter has this purpose. Paul assures that he has been mentally and emotionally connected with the Romans for a long time (1:9–11, 13, 15). He explains the contents of his gospel in order to introduce himself. He uses *captationes benevolentiae* (e.g., 1:8; 15:14; 16:19a), etc.

<sup>12</sup>The same pattern is imitated in the deutero-Pauline letter to the Colossians: Not knowing the church in Colossae personally, “Paul” uses personal relations (4:7ff.) and greetings to individuals (4:15; cf. 4:17).

knew Timothy. For them this introduction was not necessary, while it makes sense in a letter to the Romans.

4. According to Romans 15:19–29, chapters 1–15 were written in Greece at the end of the so-called third mission journey (Acts 20:1–5). This coincides perfectly with the situation of Romans 16: (a) Romans 16 also was written in Greece; Paul sends off Phoebe from the Corinthian harbor Cencreae (16:1). (b) The people whom we would expect in Paul's surroundings at the end of the "third mission journey" (Acts 20:4) are exactly those who send greetings in Romans 16:21–23: Timothy, So(s)ipater, and Gaius.<sup>13</sup> Both lists, Romans 16:21–23 and Acts 20:4, coincide surprisingly well, although they are source-critically independent from each other.<sup>14</sup>

5. The following material is often quoted in favor of Ephesus as the addressee of Romans 16. I will try to show that it can be understood in a letter to Rome as well. In other words, this material is neutral—it should be left out of the discussion of Rome or Ephesus.

(a) According to Romans 16, Paul knows 26 Christian persons in Rome.<sup>15</sup> Is this strange in a letter to a city where he never has been? Have all these 26 people been in the east? Is 26 an outrageous number? In view of mobility in the Roman Empire, this number is not surprising. Many famous Roman Christians had immigrated to Rome from the east: Aquila, Hermas, Marcion, Valentinus, Justin, many of his students in the *Acta Iustini*, Tatian, Hippolytus, and the presbyter Anicetus.<sup>16</sup> The fact that the Roman church still spoke predominantly Greek even during the whole second century indicates how high the percentage of eastern immigrants must have been. The Jews, too, were busy travelling back and forth between Rome and the east.<sup>17</sup> On the inscription CIG 3920, the craftsman Flavius Zeuxis brags that he sailed 72 times (!) from the east to Italy. Of course, this was exceptional, because it is proudly mentioned on an epitaph. But it shows how vast the possibilities for travel were. Furthermore, many journeys between the east and Rome may even have been forced upon the Christians. It is possible that many of the 26 persons had been expelled from Rome under Claudius and had returned after Claudius' death—just like Aquila and Prisca (Acts 18:2; Rom. 16:3).

No, a number of 26 is not surprising. And for those who still have doubts it may be stated that 26 is only a maximum number. Nothing forces

<sup>13</sup>*So(s)ipatros*: Both forms stand for the same name. See the later textual history of Acts 20:4 and cf. BAGD, 800. If *Gaius* (Rom. 16:23) were the Gaius of 1 Cor. 1:14, this would fit as well into the situation of Rom. 1–15. This Gaius lived in Greece (Corinth) where Rom. 1–15 was written.

<sup>14</sup>(a) Both lists name people whom the other list does not have. (b) *So(s)ipater's* name is reproduced in the two different versions.

<sup>15</sup>I exclude Narcissus and Aristobulus, both not being Christian as will be shown below.

<sup>16</sup>According to the *Liber Pontificalis* (s.v.) Anicetus was "natione Syrus."

<sup>17</sup>E.g., Acts 2:10. Rabbis who visited Rome: Joshua ben Hananiah, Akiba, Eleazar b. Azariah, Rabban Gamaliel (m. *Eruv.* 4.1; cf. also m. *Abodah Zarah* 4.7, and Schäfer, "Rabbi Aqiba," 113–30).

us to assume that Paul actually knew *all* of the 26 personally and that consequently all of them had been in the east for a while. The names of the last ten individuals in verses 14–15 *may* have come to Paul's attention only through narratives told by third persons.<sup>18</sup> Mentioning only the names and no other individual information (vv. 14–15), the greetings for these ten pale in comparison to the ones in verses 3–13. Not even Mary (Maria, 16:6) needs to be personally acquainted with Paul. The information "she has worked hard among you" presupposes that Paul was told things about her he had not witnessed himself. The same may be true about Tryphaena and Tryphosa (16:12) and about Herodion, (16:11) whose Jewish "kinship" may have been reported to Paul by third persons too. Only for the remaining twelve people do we *have* to assume that they saw Paul in person in the east; the comments added to their names leave hardly any room for another interpretation: Prisca, Aquila, Epaenetus, Andronicus, Junia, Urbanus, Rufus and his mother, Ampliatus, Stachys, Persis, and probably also Apelles.<sup>19</sup> Whether 26 or 12 mobile people, a basis for Ephesus as destination can hardly be found in these figures.

(b) The presence of Aquila and Prisca among the addressees has already been explained: After having been expelled from Rome by Claudius (Acts 18:2), they returned to Rome between the times that 1 Corinthians 16:19 and Romans 16:3 were written. In other words, they returned around the year 55/56. This date fits well. Claudius died in the fall of the year 54, which was reason enough to give up finally any remaining timidity to return to Rome.

The craftsman<sup>20</sup> Aquila had already moved at least three times in his life: Pontus—Rome—Corinth—Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:19; the tradition in Acts 18:1–2, cf. 18:18, 26). Why could he not have moved a fourth time? The Christian Aberkios<sup>21</sup> in the second century stayed in Phrygia, in Rome, in Syria, and in Nisibis across the Euphrates. Again, mobility was no problem, especially since Aquila and Prisca were apostolic co-workers (Romans 16:3). It is easy to imagine that Paul had sent them back to Rome as a "vanguard" for himself, as he had already done with them in Ephesus (Acts 18:18–21, 24–26; 19:1). It is possible (nothing more) that their return to Rome had been "strategically" planned by Paul. In Rome, they indeed were active again as Paul's "co-workers," assembling even a house-church around them (Rom. 16:3–5). Epaenetus, "the first convert in Asia," may have moved

<sup>18</sup>Aquila and Prisca could easily have informed Paul about the Roman church and its details. They knew it in person, as the tradition in Acts 18:2 assures.

<sup>19</sup>I tend to believe that also Paul's appraisal of Apelles as "approved in Christ" (16:10) could hardly be said without a personal acquaintance: According to the context (14:18), *do-kimos* is defined as "serving Christ" in the everyday love and care of interhuman relations (14:15–21).

<sup>20</sup>Concerning Aquila's tentmaking, see Lampe, "Paulus—Zeltmacher," 256–61. Aquila did not produce leather tents for the military, but linen tents and awnings for private clients in the cities—which allowed mobility for the craftsman.

<sup>21</sup>See the famous Aberkios-Inscription, e.g., in Altaner, *Patrology*, 95–96.

from Ephesus to Rome together with Prisca and Aquila. He is named right after them (Rom. 16:5).

These are only conjectures as to how it could have been. But in our argumentation, they have the function of showing that the Roman addressee of Romans 16 is as conceivable as an Ephesian. In other words, the fact that, for example, the “first convert of Asia” is greeted does not prove anything in favor of an Ephesian addressee. This Asian may easily have moved to Rome together with the people who most likely had converted him: Prisca and Aquila.

Only 2 Timothy 4:19 could be the last branch to hold on to for the defenders of the Ephesus hypothesis: The Pastoral Letters place Paul in Rome while Aquila and Prisca still dwell in Ephesus. Is this a proof for Ephesus? No. It is likely that 2 Timothy 4:19 only presents another example of the historical flaws in the Pastoral Letters; also the next verse (4:20) is historically untenable.<sup>22</sup> Why did the Pastoral Letters place Prisca and Aquila in Ephesus? The author needed some prominent names in Ephesus to support the portrayal of Paul writing from Rome (1:16–17) to Ephesus (1:16–18; 4:13, 19) and sending greetings to people there. In 1 Corinthians 16:19 and Acts 18:26 the author found what he or she wanted: two prominent Christians in Ephesus—Prisca and Aquila. Similarly the Ephesian Tychicus (Acts 20:4; Col. 4:7; Eph. 6:21) was placed fictitiously in Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12), as was even Mark (2 Tim. 4:11), who had been known to have visited Ephesus (Phlm. 24; Col. 4:10).

(c) Commentators often wonder about the changing of tone in the anti-heretical section of Romans 16:17–20a.<sup>23</sup> Contrary to the rest of the letter, Paul suddenly sounds a sharp note. Is Romans 16 therefore not part of the original letter to the Romans? No. The harsh tone is not directed against the Roman church, which is even praised (16:19) like it is in the rest of the letter (1:8; 15:14).<sup>24</sup> The sharp polemic is directed against third persons: against possible heretics not belonging to the Roman church but maybe planning to infiltrate it. Paul may think of his opponents in the east, fearing that they could reach out and influence the Romans’ opinion of him. In the rest of the letter, these outside “heretics” were not mentioned directly (except for maybe 15:31). We therefore cannot expect the angry tone in the other Romans passages.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup>(a) 2 Tim. (1:16–18; 4:13, 16–20) tries to reflect the situation of Acts 28:16–31 and the collection trip of Acts 20:2–3, 5ff., 15ff. But contrary to 2 Tim. (4:20), Timothy was *present* at least in Corinth (Acts 20:4; Rom. 16:21). Thus 2 Tim. 4:20a is superfluous. It tells Timothy that Erastus stayed in Corinth. The historical Timothy already knew it! (b) Trophimus was not left behind sick in Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20), he gladly accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 21:29; 20:4). (c) Another example would be 1 Tim. 1:3. Contrary to this verse, Timothy was not left behind when Paul moved from Ephesus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22; 20:1–4; Rom. 16:21).

<sup>23</sup>E.g., Käsemann, *Römer*, 399–400.

<sup>24</sup>*parakalō* (16:17), on the other hand, occurs also in Rom. 12:1, 15:30.

<sup>25</sup>For other arguments in favor of Rome as the destination of Rom. 16, see my *Die stadtrömischen* 124ff. Pages 131–35, e.g., furnish *linguistic data* which indicate that Rom. 16 was dictated together with the rest of the letter to the Romans.

## II. The Households of Aristobulus and Narcissus (16:10b, 11b)

Aristobulus and Narcissus are non-Christians: (a) Paul does not send greetings to them but to people in their households. If they were Christians, Paul would also greet these heads of households themselves—similarly to 16:3–5 and probably 16:14, 15. (b) Only a *part* of their households is Christian. Otherwise Paul would have formulated *hoi Aristoboulou* instead of *hoi ek tōn Aristoboulou*. The attribute *tous ontas en kyriō* points in the same direction: those who are Christian—contrary to the others in this household. These Christians were slaves, freedmen, or freedwomen of Aristobulus and Narcissus. There is no means to define their social status more concretely.<sup>26</sup>

Was Aristobulus a member of the royal Herodian family? The least we can say is that he seems to have immigrated to Rome: His name occurs very rarely in the city of Rome.<sup>27</sup> In the event that he had brought his Christian slaves with him from the east, we would be able to identify one channel through which Christianity entered into the capital city of the empire.

## III. Women—Men

Romans 16:3–16 name 26 Christian individuals in Rome: 9 women and 17 men. But who is praised for being especially active in the church? More women than men!

\* Seven (or six) women:

- Prisca 16:3–4, *synergos* etc.
- Mary 16:6, *polla ekopiasen eis hymas*
- Junia (see below) 16:7, *synaichmalōtoi mou, episēmoi en tois apostolois*
- Tryphaena and
- Tryphosa 16:12, *kopiōsas en kyriō*
- Persis 16:12, *polla ekopiasen en kyriō*
- perhaps also: Rufus' mother 16:13, *mētēr kai emou*

\* Five (or three) men:

- Aquila 16:3–4, *synergos* etc.
- Andronicus 16:7, *synaichmalōtoi mou, episēmoi en tois apostolois*
- Urbanus 16:9, *synergos hēmōn*
- perhaps: Apelles 16:10, *dokimos en Christō*
- perhaps: Rufus 16:13, *eklektos en kyriō*<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Slaves could live in the house of the patron even after being freed: cf. e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 2:17:9.

<sup>27</sup>In the thousands of inscriptions of *CIL* VI only twice: 17577 and 29104.

<sup>28</sup>Epainetos is *aparchē tēs Asias* and *agapētos mou*, but this does not express a special activity in the Roman church. The same is true about the *agapētoi mou* Ampliatus and Stachys. *agapētos* is not an indication of special activity as Persis shows. She is “beloved,” but her activity has to be mentioned separately: she “has worked hard in the Lord” (16:12).

If we were especially picky, we could even state that Andronicus' and Urbanus' activities mentioned took place in the east and not in Rome (*synaichmalōtoi mou, hēmōn*). Mary on the contrary earned special merits in the Roman church (*eis hymas*).

The active part the women took can also be observed in two other instances: (a) *kopiaō* is a technical term describing the labors of a missionary. Paul uses it for himself in Galatians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 15:10. In Romans 16:3–16 it is used four times—exclusively for women, not for men. (b) Prisca is mentioned *before* her husband Aquila in Romans 16:3; Acts 18:18, 26; and 2 Timothy 4:19. Only 1 Corinthians 16:19 (cf. Acts 18:2) presents the opposite order. Apparently Prisca was even more outstanding in her work for the church than was Aquila.<sup>29</sup>

One woman in our list deserves special attention since she has been mistaken for a man for centuries: Junia. In the majuscules, we cannot distinguish between *Iounian*, an accusative of a feminine “Junia,” and *Iounian*, the accusative of a masculine “Junias.” Therefore we have to move on to the minuscules. According to Aland’s textual critical apparatus, the feminine “Junia” does not appear in the manuscripts. Indeed, most of the medieval scribes of minuscules made Junias a man. But not all, as I discovered recently: Minuscule 33 (9th century) reads the feminine *iounian*. Which reading is to be preferred? Clearly “Junia.” “Junia” was a common name in the Roman Empire, while “Junias” did not exist. The modern grammars<sup>30</sup> support a masculine reading by theorizing that “Junias” was a short form of “Junianus,” without being able to quote evidence for this assumption. The fathers and mothers of the early church knew better, always identifying Andronicus’ companion as the woman Junia.<sup>31</sup> The very first church father coming up with the masculine version was Aegidius of Rome (A.D. 1245–1316).<sup>32</sup> For medieval authors and scribes “Junia” was the “*lectio difficilior*.” They could not picture a woman as an active missionary.

Andronicus and Junia may have travelled together as a married mis-

<sup>29</sup>Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 59, assumes that Prisca occupied a higher social position than Aquila and was therefore mentioned before him. Our source (Rom. 16), however, is not secular but Christian. It stands in the wider context of Gal. 3:28 and hardly cares about a person’s significance in the Roman society. It cares about a person’s significance for the church: see e.g., Rom. 16:3b, 4, 5a. Also the passage Rom. 16:21–23 does not list the socially elevated first (Erastus with his municipal office and Gaius with his spacious habitation). It first mentions five other Christians. One of them is a missionary co-worker, another functions as Paul’s secretary. If Luke had known anything about a socially elevated status of Prisca, he would have loved to mention it, distinguished women being a preferred subject for him: e.g., Luke 8:3; Acts 17:4, 12; cf. 16:14; 17:34.

<sup>30</sup>E.g., Blass–Debrunner–Funk, *Grammar*, 68.

<sup>31</sup>Some also as a woman Julia—like P<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>32</sup>See the history of interpretation of Rom. 16:7 by Brooten, “Junia,” 141–44. Fàbrega, “Junia(s),” 59, erroneously relies on Migne’s reading “Junias” in Origen’s commentary (Migne, PG 14, 1281B and 1289A), although all other textual witnesses to this commentary (including the quotation by Hraban of Fulda in PL 111,1608D) offer “Junia.”



sionary couple, as 1 Corinthians 9:5 reports about other apostles too. The most natural understanding of *episēmoi en tois apostolois* is that they both were outstanding apostles—and not only splendid *in the eyes* of the apostles. Why would they have been famous only *in their eyes*? The *en* has to be translated as “among” (the apostles) like in 1 Corinthians 15:12 and James 5:13–14, 19.

After having analyzed the women’s role in Romans 16, we unfortunately cannot generalize these results. A group of 26 people hardly allows any generalization about the Roman church as a whole. On the contrary, the data that I analyzed in my book about Rome<sup>33</sup> suggest that the women’s influence in the Roman church was reduced to a minimum at the latest by the end of the first century. While the 50s of the first century still saw influential church women like Prisca, Junia, Persis, Phoebe, and others, this female influence later survived only in marginal Christian groups which soon were viewed as having the taint of heresy. In 1 Clement 21:7; 1:3, at the end of the first century, the voices of the women were already silenced—otherwise these verses could not have been formulated.

#### IV. Jewish Christians—Gentile Christians

The names by themselves do not release any information about the persons’ Jewish or pagan background.<sup>34</sup> But luckily Paul calls three Roman persons in Romans 16:3–16 “my kins(wo)men”: Andronicus, Junia, and Herodion. The term *syngenēs* never occurs in the other Pauline letters. In Romans, however, after chapters 9–11 and especially 9:3,<sup>35</sup> Paul has a *special interest* in emphasizing the Jewish origin of Christians (Rom. 16:7, 11, 21). Why? Paul prays for the salvation of the Jews (10:1). “I ask, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite” (11:1), and he thus offers a proof that God did not reject the Jews. The “kins(wo)men” in Romans 16 are living proofs of the same grace towards Israel. They and Paul himself are the “remnant at the present time, chosen by grace” (11:5). “Israel failed to obtain what it sought. But the elect (i.e., Paul and his Christian kins[wo]men) obtained it” (11:7). They are signs of hope that Israel is not yet lost. On the contrary, Israel will be fully included in the salvation one time in the future (11:12, 23, 24, 26, 29, 31, 32).

Having this kind of special theological interest in emphasizing the Jewish kinship of Christians in Romans—and only in Romans—Paul probably applies the term “kins(wo)man” rather consistently to all Jewish Christians

<sup>33</sup>See Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen*. See pages 119–23, 297–99, 73, 78, 82, 96–102, 104, 106–7, 112, 115, 161, 180, 200–203, 207, 229, 238–39, 263, 269, 284–87, 305 about the women in Roman Christianity.

<sup>34</sup>See also Solin, “Juden und Syrer,” 665. Concerning “Maria” as a pagan name see below.

<sup>35</sup>*hyper tōn adelphōn mou tōn syngenōn mou kata sarka.*

he can identify in the group of Romans 16.<sup>36</sup> The list, then, shows that only a small minority of Jewish Christians existed among the 26 persons of this Roman group (15%).

This result is affirmed by two other observations. (a) Several times in Romans Paul presumes that the vast majority in the Roman church is Gentile.<sup>37</sup> These clear and direct statements seem to contradict the impression that much of the contents of Romans could be understood only by people who were trained in Jewish culture. The solution of the paradox is at hand if we assume that most people in the Roman church were of Gentile origin but had lived as sympathizers on the margins of the synagogues before they became Christian.<sup>38</sup>

(b) Only three names of the Romans 16 list occur also in the Jewish inscriptions (CIJ) of Rome: "Maria" (=Mary) and the typically Latin names "Rufus" and "Julia."<sup>39</sup> Besides these two Latin names, even "Maria" cannot be considered especially Jewish. It is often taken for granted that "Maria/Mary" equals the semitic *mirjam*. The following epigraphical data, however, suggest that "Maria" in Romans 16 represents the pagan name of a Roman *gens*. "Marius," in the feminine form "Maria," was a Latin *nomen gentile* by which a woman was sufficiently characterized without having to carry a *cognomen*. This Latin-pagan "Maria" occurs approximately 108 times in the city of Rome inscriptions of CIL VI. The semitic "Maria" cannot be counted even 20 times in Rome.<sup>40</sup> Thus, chances are good that our Christian Maria was a Gentile—Paul in fact does not call her a "kinswoman," as we saw.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup>The only exception seems to be Aquila, a Jewish Christian according to Acts 18:2. Paul reports so many other things about him and his wife that the ethnic attribute is understandably left unremarked.

<sup>37</sup>1:5–6, 13–15; 11:13, 17–18, 24, 28, 30–31; 15:15–16, 18; 9:3ff. Cf. also 15:9ff., 6:17–21 in connection with 1:18ff., further Acts 28:24–31.

<sup>38</sup>See a more elaborate discussion of the problem and materials in my *Die stadtrömischen*, 53–63; ET forthcoming. There the issue is also put into the broader perspective of the first two centuries. A strong flow of originally Jewish materials prevailed in the Roman church during both centuries. Gentile Christians being bearers of Jewish traditions, etc. The *sy Ioudaios* in Rom. 2:17 is rhetorical and cannot be used for the identification of the addressee: 2:17ff. are an example for the rhetorical *dialogus cum Iudaeis* that Paul leads in front of a predominantly Gentile audience.

<sup>39</sup>"Maria" CIJ 251, 252, 457, 459, 1, 137, 374, 375, 511, 96, 12. Outside of Rome also Josephus, *War* 6.201; *CPJ* II 223, 227. "Julia" e.g., CIJ 123, 124, 34, 35, 352. "Rufus" CIJ 145, 146. Outside of Rome also Josephus, *War* 2.52, 2.74; *Ant.* 17.266, 17.294. Josephus and *CPJ* only attribute two other names of our list to Jews *outside* of Rome: "Andronikos," *Jos. Ant.* 13.75ff., *CPJ* I 18, III 470, and "Tryphaina" *CPJ* II 421:183, III 453:20. The remaining 19 names of our list are not mentioned in Josephus or *CPJ*.

<sup>40</sup>See the epigraphical material in *Die stadtrömischen*, 146–47.

<sup>41</sup>Fàbrega, "Junia(s)," 49–50 (see above note 32) translates *syngenēs* as "friend" instead of "kins(wo)man." His decision is weakly based. (a) According to Fàbrega, Jason and Sosipater in Rom. 16:21 were not Jewish Christians (Acts 17:5; 20:4). But Jason could have easily been a Jew in Luke's eyes (see Acts 17:4a). The same is true about Sopater (see Acts 17:10–12). (b) The context is decisive for the semantical definition: Rom. 9–11, especially 9:3, clearly suggest the meaning "kins(wo)man" in Rom. 16. (c) Fàbrega notes that the "Jewish Christians" Mary, Rufus, his mother, Prisca, and Aquila are not called *syngeneis* in Rom. 16. The

## V. Immigrants—Natives of Rome

We already saw that *at least* Prisca, Aquila, Epaenetus, Andronicus, Junia, Urbanus, Rufus, his mother, Ampliatius, Stachys, Persis, and Apelles had travelled between the east and Rome. But who was actually of oriental origin? Many of the twelve persons mentioned may have been Romans, having been expelled by Claudius and returning to Rome later. Only four were visibly of oriental birth: Aquila (Pontus), Epaenetus (first convert in Asia), Andronicus, and Junia, who belonged to the first Palestinian apostles and had been Christians already before Paul.

Do we have to give up on our question? A second approach is possible on the basis of the inscriptions in CIL VI (computerized concordance) and of Solin's book about Greek names in Rome.<sup>42</sup> Which names of our list were rare in the city of Rome, which occurred frequently?<sup>43</sup>

Julia	+ 1400 times
Hermes	640
Rufus	ca. 374
*Junia	+ 250
Prisca/Priscilla	+ 200
Maria	ca. 108
Urbanus	ca. 95
Ampliatius	ca. 80
Tryphaena	47
Tryphosa	29
Nereus	28
*Aquila	ca. 28
*Andronicus	19
Philologus	18
<i>Apelles</i>	15
<i>Stachys</i>	11
Phlegon	7
<i>Persis</i>	3
Hermas	3
*Epaenetus	3
Asynkritos	1
Olympas	0
Patrobas	0, but the name is a shortened version of Patrobius
Patrobius	4
Herodion	0

reason is easy: Not only Mary, but also Rufus and his mother were not Jewish Christians. Nothing tells us that Rufus and his mother belonged to the Jewish Christian family of Mark 15:21 (Simon of Cyrene and his sons Rufus and Alexander). The connection is not even likely: Why didn't Paul mention Rufus' famous father in Rom. 16:13? Concerning Aquila see above note 35. About Prisca's background we know nothing.

<sup>42</sup>Solin, *Griechischen Personennamen*. Note that I shall deduct the Rom. 16 examples from Solin's figures in order to obtain a picture of the environment.

<sup>43</sup>The figures in the table are already a result of subtractions. Many inscriptions being clearly not contemporary to Rom. 16 are already subtracted from the total number of oc-

How does this list coincide with our previous findings? The four oriental persons we found earlier are marked with an asterisk. Three of them, Aquila, Andronicus, and Epānetus, indeed appear in the lower section (< 29) of the table. Only the oriental Junia ranks high—for good reasons: Her name is not a *cognomen* but a Latin *nomen gentile*, by which a woman was sufficiently identified. Prominent Roman *gentes* included a lot of orientals among their slaves. Being freed, they obtained the name of the *gens*, in this case “Junius/Junia.” Our oriental Junia is indeed most likely a freed slave or a descendant of a freed(wo)man of the *gens Junia*.<sup>44</sup>

With three factual orientals occurring in the lower section of the table, chances are good that also the other rare names in the lower section belong to immigrants. Indeed, earlier we had already identified three of them as names of individuals who had at least travelled between the east and Rome: Apelles, Stachys, and Persis.

Thus, about 14 people out of 26 were presumably not born in Rome itself. An oriental origin of the remaining 12 cannot be excluded—but neither can it be indicated. We do not even get a clue about Prisca: Did Aquila meet and start seeing her in Pontus—or in Rome?

Looking at the Roman church of the first and second centuries as a whole, the proportion 14:26 seems a minimal figure. Other data suggest that the proportion of immigrants in the Roman church was much higher than just 54% during this period. The influx of *peregrini* to the church of the capital city was immense—and also had its theological impact.<sup>45</sup>

## VI. Juridical and Social Position

Which juridical position did the 26 people obtain? Do their *names* release any information about *free birth* or *slave origins*? I am not going to repeat the methodological state of affairs, the five criteria I used, or the many epigraphical data.<sup>46</sup> I just quote the results of my analysis:

1. The names “Urbanus,” “Prisca,” “Aquila,” and “Rufus” do not indicate any affinity to people born into slavery. Surprisingly, this result co-

---

currences in Rome. See the more comprehensive list in my *Die stadtrömischen*, 139–40. This does not mean, however, that all the inscriptions counted in the table talk about first-century people. The dating of the inscriptions is often uncertain.

<sup>44</sup>A more elaborate discussion of Junia's social position in *Die stadtrömischen*, 146, 147, and see Lampe, “Junia” in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (forthcoming). “Junia” and “Aquila” are only examples for the general rule that Latin names do not indicate a western origin of a person. See my *Die stadtrömischen*, 140 note 47.

<sup>45</sup>For the whole see *Die stadtrömischen*, 117–19, 296–97, 347; specific material 26, 34, 36, 42, 44, 46, 48, 52, 64, 66, 68, 79, 95–96, 110–11, 128, 136–42, 146, 148–49, 152–53, 156, 159, 182–200, 202, 208, 219–21, 230–31, 238–39, 242, 246–50, 253–70, 284–87, 289–90, 294–95; theological impact pp. 320–34.

<sup>46</sup>See *Die stadtrömischen*, 141–53. Prosopographical information about most of the Rom. 16 individuals can also be found in the corresponding articles I wrote for the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (forthcoming).

incides with three other independent observations. And the reader may decide whether this is mere coincidence or whether a causal relation plays a role: (a) Two of the persons mentioned are married: Aquila and Prisca—apparently both free born. They are also the only ones about whom we have more detailed prosopographical information.<sup>47</sup> (b) Only Aquila, Prisca, and Urbanus are called Paul's "co-workers" in Romans 16—nobody else! (c) Rufus' mother was a mother also to Paul (16:13). This fits well to a free matron of a household being hospitable to an apostle.

2. The following people were most probably slaves or freed(wo)men: Nereus, Hermes, Persis, Herodion, Tryphosa, Tryphaena, Ampliatus. Freedwomen or descendants of freed(wo)men were Julia, Junia, and most likely Maria.

3. For the remaining twelve persons, we are not able to make a probability statement (Asyncritus, Patrobas, Philologus, Andronicus, Olympas, Apelles, Phlegon, Hermas, Stachys, Epaenetus, also Nereus' sister and Rufus' mother).<sup>48</sup>

4. Thus, more than two thirds of the people for whom we can make a probability statement have an affinity to slave origins. The slaves or freed(wo)men of Narcissus and Aristobulus were not alone in the Romans 16 group. And looking at the first two centuries as a whole, we discover indeed plenty of Christian slaves and freed(wo)men in Rome.<sup>49</sup>

But to what extent is the two-thirds proportion representative for the Roman church? Interestingly enough, a similar proportion between freeborn people and persons born into slavery occurs in a variant Roman data pool;<sup>50</sup> although it is difficult to know whether this is mere coincidence or not. We do not even know for sure how high the percentage of slaves and freed(wo)men was in the entire society. The estimations vary between 20% and 40% slaves. The freed(wo)men counted at least as many on top of the slave figure, which leaves 20–60% to the freeborn people.<sup>51</sup> However, if we take the mean average of these figures (30% slaves, 30% freed[wo]men, 40% freeborn), we end up with proportions comparable to the aforementioned two data pools of the Roman church (63–67% slave-

<sup>47</sup>See the chapter about the couple in *Die stadtrömischen*, 156–64.

<sup>48</sup>While Rufus most likely was freeborn, the same is not necessarily true about his mother who could have been a freedwoman. While Nereus' most likely was born a slave, the same is not necessarily true about his sister.

<sup>49</sup>Named and anonymous; see *Die stadtrömischen*, 68ff., 71ff., 80, 98ff., 104ff., 153ff., 182ff., 278ff., etc.

<sup>50</sup>Looking at the list on pp. 422–24 in my *Die stadtrömischen*, we discover a similar percentage of slaves and freed slaves as in Rom. 16: out of the remaining 74 Christians whom we know by name in the first two centuries in Rome (I subtracted the 26 people of Rom. 16), 18–19 were slaves or freed slaves, 10–12 were freeborn, while we cannot state anything about the juridical status of the remaining 43. This means that ca. 63% of the people about whom we can make a statement were of slave origins, and only ca. 37% were freeborn.

<sup>51</sup>See *Die stadtrömischen*, 143.

born, 33–37% freeborn). At some points, the social profile of the church indeed seems to mirror the profile of the entire society.<sup>52</sup>

To what extent is the juridical status an indicator for the social position? Many freed(women) were rich business people and in a better economic position than many freeborn. Therefore the juridical status—free birth, slave, or freed slave—does not necessarily say much about the socio-economic position of an individual. Only a general direction can be given for the Romans 16 persons by asking: How did the proportions between socially elevated persons and lower strata people look in the Roman church during the first two centuries? The *humiliores* represented the vast majority in the Roman church—and socially elevated people formed only a minority.<sup>53</sup> This is especially true for the first century. Referring the reader to the materials in my book, I only select one significant example here: Several Roman Christians during the first century sold themselves into slavery in order to finance the support of Christian brothers and sisters.<sup>54</sup> This illustrates the necessity for social action—there were many needy among the Roman Christians. And it discloses the lack of enough well-to-do Christians supporting these needy.

## VII. Divided Nature of the Roman Christianity— House Congregations

During the two first centuries the Christians of the city of Rome met separately in privately owned locations scattered around the capital city. Forming a number of house-churches, they had no central worship facility—a lack of central coordination that matched the profile of the separated synagogues in Rome.<sup>55</sup>

With separate pockets of Christians in the city of Rome being prevalent throughout the first two centuries and even beyond them, Romans 16 must be read in this light. Indicating the divided nature of Roman Christianity, Paul does not call it *ekklēsia* anywhere in Romans, not even in 1:7 where we would expect it according to the other Pauline letters. Only a part is called *ekklēsia*: the house-church around Aquila and Prisca (Rom. 16:5).<sup>56</sup>

Besides this first one, four other pockets of Christians in the city of Rome are identified by Romans 16:

<sup>52</sup>See *ibid.*, 113, 451 with other examples.

<sup>53</sup>See *ibid.*, 112ff.

<sup>54</sup>See *ibid.*, 68–69 where these cases are further analyzed.

<sup>55</sup>See *ibid.*, 301–45, 367–68. In a topographical study on pp. 10–52 I also try to indicate the quarters in Rome where early Christians lived.

<sup>56</sup>I do not agree with Gielen, “Paulinischen Formel,” 109–25, who suggests that this formula meant the whole church in one city. (a) She admits herself (note 70) that this view can only be maintained if Rom. 16 was a separate letter. (b) Only in Corinth we know of a central meeting place for all Christians in the city (Rom. 16:23 e.g.). But for Corinth this formula is never used!

- The Christians around Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, and Her-  
mas (16:14).
- The Christians around Philologus, Julia, Olympas, Nereus, and his sister  
(16:15).
- The Christians in Aristobulus' household (16:10).
- The Christians in Narcissus' household (16:11).

If we assume that the other fourteen individuals in the Romans 16 list belonged to none of these five crystallization points, and that they hardly have belonged to only *one* further circle, the result is at least seven separate groups. The number grew to at least eight when Paul himself started to assemble Christians in his Roman rented lodging (Acts 28:30–31).<sup>57</sup>

Looking at the lack of a central worship place in Rome throughout the centuries, we can hardly avoid the conclusion that these (at least) eight circles also worshipped separately—in separate dwellings somewhere in the different quarters of the city. Thus, probably all eight can be identified as worshipping “house-congregations” or “house-churches.” This does not exclude that some of them were also held together by kinship or household-ties.<sup>58</sup>

In the later history of the Roman church, this divided nature helped “heresies” to survive in the capital city for decades. It also prevented the institution of a Roman monarchical bishop until the second half of the second century.<sup>59</sup> Although we are already far beyond Romans 16 with this, it shows again the broader perspectives in which the data of Romans 16 can be integrated.

<sup>57</sup>Verse 30 is pre-Lukan, as Lüdemann affirms (*Das frühe Christentum*, 275). I do not agree, however, that *en idiō mishōma* could be translated “at his own expense” (see also the RSV). This is too general: *mishōma* always means specifically the contract price, the rent you pay. *en idiō mishōma* therefore indicates that Paul lived “at his own rental expense.” But what did he rent? Certainly not a horse and buggy. Also the context (v. 30b) assures that Luke talks about a dwelling place.

<sup>58</sup>See, at least, the worshipping communities of the slaves and freed(wo)men in Aristobulus' and Narcissus' households. Their “house-churches” are not without parallel: we know of several households in which the slaves and freed(wo)men cultivated their own religion—independently from the patron. Also Jewish slaves and freedmen of one and the same households constituted their own synagogues. See the materials in *Die stadtrömischen*, 319.

<sup>59</sup>See *Die stadtrömischen*, 320–45.