

Is the Letter *Credebamus post* from Boniface I or Leo I?

Geoffrey D. Dunn

BONIFACE I, bishop of Rome between 418 and 422, seems a long way removed from unity and partition theories as applied to the Pauline letters in the New Testament. Indeed, not only did he offer no comment about such a topic, but Scripture rarely features in the twenty or so surviving letters to or from this fifth-century Roman bishop.¹ In terms of the Pauline letters, we find only three references in Boniface's correspondence. He quotes 2 Cor 11:2 without acknowledgement in a letter to Honorius, the emperor in Ravenna, comparing him to Christ who protects the intact virgin who has

¹ Bonif. *Ep.* 4.3 (*PL* 20.761 = Pierre Coustant, *Epistolae Romanorum Pontificum et quae ad eos scriptae sunt a S. Clemente I usque ad Innocentium III I* [Paris 1721] 1021 = Philippe Jaffé, *Regesta pontificum Romanorum I* [Leipzig 1885: 'JK'] 350), quotes Ps (35)36:7; *Ep.* 15.1 and 4 (*PL* 779 and 781 = *Collectio Thessalonicensis Ep.* 8, in K. Silva-Tarouca, *Epistularum Romanorum pontificum ad vicarios per Illyricum aliosque episcopos* [Rome 1937] 27 and 29 = JK 365) cites Matt 16:18; *Ep.* 15.3 cites 1 Pet 5:6; *Ep.* 15.4 cites Matt 16:19 and 11:29. In the fragments of Boniface's letters preserved in medieval canonists we find reference to Lev 27 (*Nulli liceat ignorare* [*PL* 789 = Ivo of Chartres *Decr.* 14.87 (*PL* 161.850)] = JK 357); 1 John 4:7, 3:8, 3:10–11, 3:15, and Eph 4:26–27 (*Sicut omnis qui* [*PL* 789–790 = Burchard of Worms *Decr.* 1.131 (*PL* 140.587)] = JK 360). Christof Rölker, *Canon Law and the Letters of Ivo of Chartres* (Cambridge 2010), retains Ivo's authorship of *Decretum*. Interestingly, a passage identical to *Sicut omnis qui* appears as Canon 4 of the Eleventh Synod of Toledo (675): Gonzalo Martínez Díez and Félix Rodríguez, *La Colección Canónica Hispana VI* (Madrid 2002) 103–105. This means either the Spanish bishops took this from a letter of Boniface or else Burchard's attribution of this to Boniface was inaccurate.

been promised to himself in marriage.² He quotes 1 Cor 4:21 to justify his admonition of bishops in the province of Thessalia in the civil diocese of Macedonia.³ He quotes 2 Cor 2:10–11 in a letter to Rufus, bishop of Thessaloniki, and the other bishops of the prefecture of Illyricum Orientale (the civil dioceses of Macedonia and Dacia—the modern Greece, Albania, and the former Yugoslavia) about his willingness to forgive.⁴ Nowhere does he allude to any doubt about the integrity of 2 Corinthians. He has nothing to contribute to such a debate about unity and partition in Paul's letters *per se*.

Nonetheless, partition theory may be relevant to an examination of a letter connected with Boniface and help us resolve a disputed question of authorship. As we shall see, this letter is beset with problems and partition theory may be of assistance in grappling with it. At least five of his letters concern the disputed election of Perigenes, a local cleric, as metropolitan bishop of Corinth, in the province of Achaia. This episode is worthy of reconsideration because there is considerable misinterpretation of this letter by the few who consider it, which is usually only in passing. For example, Peter Norton claims that this matter was passed on to Boniface from Rufus, bishop of Thessaloniki and papal vicar exercising Rome's supervisory role over the churches of the prefecture.⁵ As will become evident from the letter we are examining, however, Boniface writes to Rufus complaining he has not heard from Rufus on the matter, so the notion that Rufus passed it on is inaccurate. Jalland argued that Boniface, in supporting the petition sent to him, overturned a position held by Rufus.⁶ The same response

² Bonif. *Ep.* 7.1 (*PL* 766 = Coustant 1026) = JK 353.

³ Bonif. *Ep.* 14.3 (*PL* 778 = *Coll. Thess. Ep.* 10 [Silva-Tarouca 35]) = JK 364.

⁴ Bonif. *Ep.* 15.6 (*PL* 783 = *Coll. Thess. Ep.* 8 [Silva-Tarouca 31]).

⁵ Peter Norton, *Episcopal Elections 250–600: Hierarchy and Popular Will in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2007) 42 and 135.

⁶ Trevor Jalland, *The Church and the Papacy: An Historical Study* (London 1944) 274.

could be made to this: Rufus seems to have been completely uninvolved until the Roman bishop wrote to him. The letter, which gives us insight into the life of a church nearly five hundred years after Paul established it, demands closer attention.

In this paper I wish to consider the situation that was emerging in Corinth in the early 420s and see how it contributed to a growing rivalry between the churches of Constantinople and Rome because of clashes over the question of which bishop exercised responsibility for Illyricum Orientale. This rivalry has had a profound impact upon history and it is important to have an appreciation of its origins. In addition, I wish to examine this letter from Rome that gives us information about Perigenes within the context of its preservation in a collection of letters and address the unresolved question of authorship using partition theory as an interpretative tool. I shall argue that not only are the two halves of *Credebamus post* separate letters but that the complete letter to which the second half of *Credebamus post* belongs is the first on this topic and was written just before Boniface's *Ep.* 4, which explains why they both seem to cover much the same ground.

Election of Perigenes as bishop of Corinth

The election of Perigenes was controversial because previously he had been elected as bishop of Patras, a local church within the province, even though he never took up the appointment because of unexplained local opposition. Despite there being exceptions in practice (like Gregory of Nazianzus becoming bishop of Constantinople in 380 although he had been bishop of Sasima since 372), there were canonical provisions prohibiting the translation of bishops from one church to another, including Canon 15 of the 325 Council of Nicaea.⁷

⁷ For the details of Perigenes see Bonif. *Ep.* 4 (*PL* 760–761 = *Coll. Thess. Ep.* 7 [Silva-Tarouca 24–27]). Nicaea: G. Alberigo et al., *The Ecumenical Councils from Nicaea I to Nicaea II (325–787)* (Turnhout 2006) 27–28. On translation of bishops see Josef Rist, “Zum Beispiel Proklos von Konstantinopel. Über Chancen und Grenzen des spätantiken Bischofsamtes,” in Johan Leemans et al. (eds.), *Episcopal Elections in Late Antiquity* (Berlin 2011)

The fact that Perigenes never took up his appointment made the seemingly simple directive of Nicaea open to question, qualification, clarification, and exception. Boniface, in a response to a non-extant letter sent to him about this election, supported Perigenes' election to Corinth but wanted Rufus to handle the matter and passed it on for him to resolve.⁸ Under the arrangements in place at least since the time of Innocent I if not before, communication between the churches of Illyricum Orientale and Rome needed to be channelled through the bishop of Thessaloniki. Boniface's letter to Rufus shows that the Roman bishop wanted to respect that system. The other letters in the group indicate further developments in this episode over subsequent years, which indicate that opposition to Perigenes' election to Corinth did emerge.⁹

515–529. As a point of interest, when Leo *Ep.* 6.4 (*PL* 54.618–619 = *Coll. Thess. Ep.* 23 [Silva-Tarouca 55–56]) = JK 404, wrote to Anastasius of Thessaloniki on 12 January 444 and appointed him to the now traditional role of papal vicar for Illyricum Orientale, he noted that while metropolitans had the right of ordaining bishops in their province, they were not to do so without the knowledge (and presumably approval) of the bishop of Thessaloniki and this was even more important in cases where metropolitans were being ordained. Anastasius needed to be reminded of this sometime later in *Ep.* 14.6 (*PL* 54.673) = JK 411, as well as that bishops were not to be translated from one church to another (14.8 [674]).

⁸ Under the terms of the bishop of Thessaloniki exercising Rome's prerogatives of being a court of appeal in Illyricum Orientale as set out in Innoc. *Ep.* 13 (*PL* 20.515–517 = Coustant 815–817) = JK 300, this resolution could take the form of Rufus deciding the matter himself or referring it on to Rome. The point Boniface is making is that other bishops or the local church of Corinth—whoever wrote to him is not made entirely clear—should not have passed it to Rome themselves; it should have been passed on to Rufus for this was a decision for him to make. Boniface ought to have found out about this matter through Rufus directly. Interestingly, Innocent's letter did not mention specifically Rufus' role in the election of bishops throughout the prefecture.

⁹ On the development of the so-called papal vicariate of Thessaloniki see F. Streichhan, "Die Anfänge des Vikariates von Thessalonich," *Σav* 43 (56) *Kanon.Abt.* 12 (1922) 350–365; S. L. Greenslade, "The Illyrian Churches

Collectio Thessalonicensis

These letters from Boniface are preserved in the *Collectio ecclesiae Thessalonicensis*, the name given (rather erroneously) to a group of twenty-six or twenty-seven letters surviving in a ninth- or tenth-century manuscript, written possible in Bobbio or Verona, and held in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana since 1618.¹⁰ The letters are almost exclusively from Roman bishops of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, written to churches in the Roman prefecture of Illyricum Orientale concerning the relationship between the church of Rome and the bishops of this prefecture. Although only the first half of the collection survives, the material in the manuscript is the record of a synod in Rome in 531, in which Stephen, bishop of Larissa, appealed to Rome against Epiphanius, bishop of Constantinople, who, in response to an appeal from two presbyters of Larissa, had ruled Stephen's election as bishop invalid. Epiphanius' verdict had been upheld by a synod in Constantinople despite Stephen's claim that Rome not Constantinople was the church for appeals from Illyricum Orientale. In his appeal to Rome Stephen had included letters in his archive showing the history of the

and the Vicariate of Thessaloinica 378–95,” *JThS* 46 (1945–1946) 17–30; J. Macdonald, “Who Instituted the Papal Vicariate of Thessalonica?” in F. L. Cross (ed.), *Studia Patristica IV* (Texte u. Unters. 79 [1961]) 478–482; Josef Rist, “Das apostolische Vikariat von Thessaloniki als Beispiel der Begegnung zwischen Rom und Konstantinopel in der Spätantike,” in R. Harreither et al. (eds.), *Acta Congressus Internationalis XIV Archaeologiae Christianae* (Studi di Antichità Cristiana 62 [2006]) 649–662; Geoffrey D. Dunn, “Innocent I and Anysius of Thessalonica,” *Byzantion* 77 (2007) 124–148, “Innocent I and Rufus of Thessalonica,” *JÖByz* 59 (2009) 51–64, and “Innocent I and the Illyrian Churches on the Question of Heretical Ordination,” *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association* 4 (2008) 77–93.

¹⁰ *Vat.lat.* 5751. There are a couple of later transcriptions of this MS. in the library's collection. R. Nostitz-Rieneck, “Die päpstlichen Urkunden für Thessalonike und deren Kritik durch Prof. Friedrich,” *zKTh* 21 (1897) 1–50, at 4; Silva-Tarouca, *Epistularum* viii. P. Collura, *Studi paleografici. La precarolina e la carolina a Bobbio* (Milan 1943) 133–134, identified the MS. as no. 57 in the Bobbio inventory of 1461.

Roman church's supervision of ecclesiastical affairs in the region; these letters were read into the proceedings of the Roman synod and now constitute the surviving bulk of the *Collectio Thessalonicensis*, which perhaps should be called the *Collectio Larissae*. This is a valuable collection for these letters are not preserved elsewhere and without this single manuscript we would be in the dark about some of the origins of tensions between the churches of Constantinople and Rome.

Controversy over the authorship of *Credebamus post*

The last of the letters surviving in the *collectio* (*Credebamus post*) has the salutation indicating it is from Leo I, bishop of Rome from 440 to 461, to Anastasius, bishop of Thessaloniki from 444, but the letter has a closing date of 18 September 419.¹¹ The standard solution, adopted since the seventeenth century by Holstein, the Ballerini brothers, Coustant, and Mansi, was to accept the date and emend the sender from Leo to Boniface, who was the Roman bishop in 419, thereby preserving the integrity and unity of the letter as a whole.¹² In 1937, however, the editor of the *Collectio Thessalonicensis*, the Jesuit Karl Silva-Tarouca, accepting the arguments of Schwartz,¹³ proposed that this was in fact two letters, the first half of *Credebamus post* being a letter from Leo, which he dates to 446 and associates

¹¹ *Coll. Thess. Epp.* 26 and 27 (Silva-Tarouca 62–65). While Silva-Tarouca follows the MS. in dating the letter to 14 days before the Kalends of October, inexplicably Lukas Holstein, *Collectio Romana bipartita ueterum aliquot historiae ecclesiasticae monumentorum* (Rome 1662) 60; Coustant, *Epistolae* 1023; and Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum IV* (Florence 1760) 436, emended the text to read 13 days, which has been accepted by Roger S. Bagnall et al., *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta 1987) 372.

¹² Holstein, *Collectio Romana* 54; Pietro and Girolamo Ballerini, *De antiquis collectionibus et collectoribus canonum* (Venice 1757) 2.13 (= *PL* 56.191); Mansi IV 436; Coustant, *Epistolae* 1021. Thus, in Jaffé, *Regesta* I 53, it is numbered as 351.

¹³ E. Schwartz, "Die sog. Sammlung der Kirche von Thessalonich," in E. Fraenkel et al. (eds.), *Festschrift Richard Reitzenstein* (Leipzig 1931) 137–159, at 151–159.

with the previous letter in the *collectio* (*Grato animo*),¹⁴ and the second half (starting with *tales esse*) being a letter from Boniface to Rufus. Thus, he did not emend the letter as such, but divided it into two. Although he says that the two letters “inepte contaminatas esse” he does not offer any explanation as to how he reached this conclusion.¹⁵ Schwartz simply had noted that in coming into the manuscript “offenbar war die Vorlage in Unordnung geraten.”¹⁶

Is the letter *Credebamus post* a single letter by Boniface I or by Leo I or is it indeed fragments of two letters, one by each of these two Roman bishops? What criteria may be employed to determine this issue?

Partition theory

Ever since Semler in 1776, partition theory with regard to 2 Corinthians considers internal evidence (such as changes in mood between the confidence Paul feels for the community in Corinth in 1–9 and the concern and fear he has in 10–13,¹⁷ discussion of developing conflict in 2:14–7:4 and of reconciliation in 1:1–2:13, contrasting references to the collection for Jerusalem in 8 and 9,¹⁸ the contrast between first person plural references in 1–9 and singular in 10–13, not to mention the possibility of 6:14–7:1 being an interpolation because of the non-Pauline theme and language)¹⁹ and external evidence (of

¹⁴ Leo *Ep.* 13 (= *Coll. Thess. Ep.* 25 [Silva-Tarouca 60–62]) = JK 409.

¹⁵ Silva-Tarouca, *Epistularum* 62.

¹⁶ Schwartz, in *Festschrift Richard Reitzenstein* 152.

¹⁷ F. Watson, “2 Corinthians X–XIII and Paul’s Painful Letter to the Corinthians,” *JThS* 35 (1984) 324–346; L. L. Welborn, “The Identification of 2 Corinthians 10–13 with the ‘Letter of Tears,’” *NT* 37 (1995) 138–153; and Ivar Vegge, *2 Corinthians: A Letter about Reconciliation* (Tübingen 2008) 12–33.

¹⁸ Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9* (Philadelphia 1985).

¹⁹ Hans Dieter Betz, “2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1: An Anti-Pauline Fragment,” *JBL* 92 (1973) 88–108; and P. B. Duff, “The Mind of the Redactor: 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 in its Secondary Context,” *NT* 35 (1993) 160–180, at 161.

comparing statements in the letter with facts known from outside the letter, particularly from Acts, like the number of visits of Titus to Corinth) in order to argue about the integrity and unity of the letter. Rhetorical criticism attempts to explain how changing argumentative tactics could explain why there are twists and turns within the single letter.²⁰ These approaches can be applied to *Credebamus post* to assist in resolving questions of this letter's integrity.

Internal evidence

We may use internal evidence. The sender and recipient of the letter in the salutation (Leo and Anastasius) are figures from the 440s,²¹ while the date at the end of the letter is 419. It is obvious that something is wrong. In the second half of the letter, just after Silva-Tarouca's point of division we have reference to two bishops by name: Adelphius and Perigenes. As Perigenes died in 435 and is the subject of other letters in the *Collectio Thessalonicensis* between Boniface and Rufus (and other bishops of the region), which are dated to 11 March 422,²² it would seem that at least the second half of the letter must be associated with the 419 date and that the whole letter could not possibly have been written by Leo. Adelphius is an otherwise unknown figure and his role in the events is impossible to de-

²⁰ J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Relating 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 to its Context," *NTS* 33 (1987) 140–161; F. W. Danker, "Paul's Debt to the *De Corona* of Demosthenes: A Study of Rhetorical Techniques in Second Corinthians," in D. F. Watson (ed.), *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy* (Sheffield 1991) 262–280; J. D. Hester, "Re-reading 2 Corinthians: A Rhetorical Approach," in A. Erickson et al. (eds.), *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts* (Harrisburg 2002) 276–295; F. J. Matera, *2 Corinthians* (Louisville 2003); and F. J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology: The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians* (Cambridge 2004).

²¹ On Leo's appointment of Anastasius see Susan Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome* (Leiden/Boston 2008) 116–117.

²² Bonif. *Epp.* 13 (*PL* 20.774–777 = *Coll. Thess. Ep.* 9 [Silva-Tarouca 32–34]) = *JK* 363; 14 (*PL* 777–779 = *Coll. Thess. Ep.* 10 [Silva-Tarouca 34–36]); and 15 (*PL* 779–784 = *Coll. Thess. Ep.* 8 [Silva-Tarouca 27–32]).

termine. The question remains whether or not one would agree with the most recent editor that the first half of the letter comes from Leo or with previous editors who assign the entire letter to Boniface and emend the salutation. Addressing this question is the major task of this paper, but one to which we shall return below.

External evidence – Comparison with Boniface’s *Epistula 4*

The matter of the second half *Credebamus post* is complicated by external evidence. Another of the letters in the *Collectio Thessalonicensis* from Boniface to Rufus concerning Perigenes (*Ep. 4, Beatus apostolus*) seems to come from early in this episode, around the same time as the letter we are considering. *Ep. 4* is not without its own textual difficulties, as it appears twice in the *Collectio Thessalonicensis* as the seventh and eleventh items, with the latter being a longer version of the former.²³ In the eighteenth century Coustant suggested that *Ep. 4* came before *Credebamus post*,²⁴ but that the last sections of each letter ought to be swapped around as they do not seem well connected with where they are located.²⁵ Part of the argument—that *Crede-*

²³ See Geoffrey D. Dunn, “Boniface I and the Illyrian Churches on the Translation of Perigenes to Corinth: The Evidence and Problems of *Beatus apostolus* (JK 350),” *Sacris Erudiri* (forthcoming).

²⁴ Coustant, *Epistolae* 1017: “Ex hac narratione cum constet, duas a Bonifacio de praedicto negotio scriptas esse epistolas, unam qua suspensam tenebat Corinthiorum expectationem, alteram qua eorum postulatis Perigenem concedebat, e subsequentibus epistolis ultra prior censenda sit, dijudicari facilius potest ... Quibus uerbis, ad hunc Thessalonicensem episcopum de Perigenes negotio tunc primum scribere se satis aperte indicat. Alteram uero tunc scriptam esse planum est, cum mutuas a se inuicem Bonifacius ad Rufus accepissent litteras; ac non solum Rufus ac Bonifacium de ecclesiarum sibi commissarum statu scripsisset, sed et ab eo suscepisset responsa ‘quae in singulorum notitiam pertulerat’.”

²⁵ Coustant, *Epistolae* 1020 n. g: “Sed haec [Coustant’s comments are attached to section 4, beginning *qua uel consensu*] cum subnexis ad finem subsequentis epistolae pertinere, et quae in eadem epistola toto numero 4 continentur, huc referenda esse jam superius praemonuimus.” And 1022 n.

bamus post shows that Boniface and Rufus had been in communication with each other, which is not evident in *Ep.* 4—is based on the belief that the first half of *Credebamus post* is by Boniface as well. What can we say about the relationship between the two letters?

Coustant's comment about the material in the first half of *Credebamus post* not corresponding with the material in the second half of the letter explains the context for Silva-Tarouca's suggested solution that they are from different authors, yet Coustant did not see this solution. If Silva-Tarouca is correct then Coustant's argument for dating *Ep.* 4 before *Credebamus post* disappears as we can remove the presumption that the latter shows previous communication between Boniface and Rufus on this topic since we are removing the first half of the letter. Is there still need to swap the two second halves of each letter?

Let us consider the details in the second half of *Credebamus post* more carefully and then compare that with the contents of *Ep.* 4. Boniface mentions that some while ago (*iam dudum*) a synod of bishops elected Perigenes as bishop of Corinth, which was the will of God (*ad episcopatus speculam eum uocabat Dei inaequiuoca sententia*). This explains why what appeared at first to be God's harsh treatment of Perigenes in not allowing him to take up the church of Patras was in fact a blessing in disguise, because it released him to be free to take Corinth when it became available (*nonne huic hoc expediens erat, ut hunc ciuitate sua Patrensis populi unitae uoces contradictionis arcerent?*). The election had involved the local church of Corinth (*a suis poscitur*) and Perigenes is described as having been born and initiated in it (*in qua natus adseritur et renatus*). Someone had written to Boniface about this matter. Although they are not identified clearly, it

f: "Cum antecedentibus nulla ratione cohaerent subnexa: sed si eorum loco substituantur haec superioris epistolae num. 4 continentur, huc referenda esse jam superius praemonuimus: *Quare consensu eorum qui illic auctoritatem sedis apostolicae repraesentabunt, eum in nostrorum numerum recipimus*, etc. nihil erit quod non aptissime cohaereat."

seems from the context that they are suppliants (*supplices*) appealing to Boniface to accept the election of Perigenes. Caspar stated that they were the bishops of the province of Achaia gathered in synod in Corinth for the election of their metropolitan,²⁶ although a sentence or two later he refers to Corinthian clergy.²⁷ We do know that both the local church and bishops of the province would have been involved in the electoral process.²⁸ Rist notes simply that it was a synod meeting in Corinth that appealed to Rome.²⁹ That whoever it was had written to Rome would indicate that there was controversy about the election outcome. In the normal course of events the election of a bishop required only the consent of the bishops of the province including the metropolitan according to the canons of Nicaea (the situation where the bishop being elected was to be the metropolitan was not specified).³⁰ The provisions in Innocent I's letter upon Rufus' election as bishop of Thessaloniki (*Ep.* 13) do not specify that the election of any bishop in another province, whether suffragan or metropolitan, needed the approval or endorsement of the bishop of Thessaloniki, let alone the bishop of Rome.

Boniface is surprised (*non absque admiratione*) that he has heard about this from them and not from Rufus, since it is the latter's

²⁶ Erich Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums I* (Tübingen 1930) 373: "Den Anlaß zu einer Korrespondenz mit Rufus von Thessalonich bot ihm schon im ersten Pontifikatsjahr der Appell einer Korinther Synode der Provinz Achaja in Sachen des Bischofs Perigenes."

²⁷ Caspar, *Geschichte* 373: "Nun forderten die Korinther Kleriker ihren Landsmann als Bischof für die eigene Kirche und richteten eine Bittschrift nach Rom."

²⁸ On episcopal elections at this time see Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Canonical Legislation on the Ordination of Bishops: Innocent I's Letter to Victricius of Rouen," in *Episcopal Elections* 145–166, and the other chapters in the volume.

²⁹ Rist, in *Episcopal Elections* 525–526: "In dieser Situation bittet eine in Korinth versammelte Synode den Papst um die Bestätigung der Wahl des Perigenes."

³⁰ Council of Nicaea, Can. 4 (21–22 Alberigo).

responsibility to approve episcopal elections (*quoniam prudentiae tuae iniunctorum uel delegatorum pondus incumbit*)³¹ (and this makes clear that our letter is addressed to Rufus and not to any other bishop in the region). Boniface wants Rufus to investigate it, as he should have, and then write to him in Rome (*omnibus eo quem res exigunt ordine celebratis, aliqua ad nos scripta transmittas*) before Boniface issues a letter of communion (*nolumus enim coepiscopo nostro Perigeni nostram paginam destinare, priusquam tuas accipiamus epistulas*), which therefore seems to be what the suppliants had asked of him. They had pointed out that Perigenes had not been catapulted into this position but was a man of great experience, having been promoted steadily through the clerical ranks, so Boniface seems to have been willing to support the election had it only been brought to his attention the right way. Asking Rufus to exercise his delegated responsibilities was the best way to ensure that his dignity as papal vicar and the Roman church's dignity in having created this position were both protected (*ut et apostolicae sedis auctoritas, et dilectionis tuae honorificentia seruetur*).

Some questions emerge from this narrative. Why had the suppliants written to Boniface and why had Rufus not? Either the suppliants had avoided writing to Rufus and bypassed him fearing his response or else they had written to him but disagreed with his expressed position in his reply and had wanted to overturn that decision on appeal to Rome. Certainly there is nothing in Boniface's letter indicating that the suppliants were

³¹ This seems to argue against the point made in the preceding paragraph. This would suggest one of several things that could be said in response to preserve that point: either in the decade after Innocent had written the confirmation of episcopal elections throughout the prefecture had been added to the bishop of Thessaloniki's responsibilities (and we no longer have the evidence for it) or Rufus had taken on that role, interpreting the non-specific provisions of Innocent's letter in that way, or it had become the custom that only disputed elections or elections of metropolitans were referred on to Rufus, or Boniface was simply mistaken in what he believed were the responsibilities of the bishop of Thessaloniki. We cannot tell.

appealing against a position of Rufus, nor do we ever hear in the later letters that Rufus had opposed Perigenes' election. So I think we must conclude that they had avoided writing to Rufus. Further, one would hardly expect the provincial bishops to be unaware of the prerogatives of Rufus in supervising ecclesiastical life in the region, at least on appeal if not directly with regard to episcopal election outcomes. Logically one must conclude that the Achaian bishops, if they were the suppliants, either feared Rufus' response or thought the matter so important or controversial as to warrant the immediate involvement of the Roman bishop. This would explain why Rufus had not written to Boniface about the matter: he knew nothing about it. As to why they might have feared Rufus' response we have nothing to help explain the basis for such a possible feeling. Had there been other examples of attempted translation of bishops in recent years to which Rufus had reacted negatively? Or was he known already to have a positive regard for Perigenes and Boniface was contacted by those opposed to the election? Given the comments in *Credebamus post* that suggest the authors wanted his election to be confirmed I would not think the second option likely. Whether they had any real basis for avoiding Rufus must remain a mystery.

From the contents of the letter it is clear that those who wrote to Boniface must have raised the issue of Perigenes' previous election to Patras in the missing section of the letter and sought to eliminate it as an impediment to his elevation in Corinth in Boniface's mind. There is no evidence in the letter that the fear of the suppliants that there were opponents to Perigenes' election to Corinth was to be realised.

What is interesting is the fact that Boniface seems scrupulous in wanting the system in place for the churches of Illyricum Orientale to be followed. He did not want churches there to bypass the papal vicar, the bishop of Thessaloniki, and appeal directly to Rome, which as we know, was sometimes the practice under one of his predecessors, Innocent I. Although Innocent did much to establish the theory of how ecclesiastical appeals were to operate, in practice we have evidence that he

was happy enough to be appealed to directly rather than through the vicar.³²

Let us compare this now with the material in *Ep.* 4. This letter suggests, in its first three-quarters, that this is the first time Boniface is writing to Rufus about the matter of Perigenes because he seems to indicate that he is making Rufus aware of the situation (*ut sanctitatem tuam gnaram faciamus huiusce negotii*) and attaching the petition (*Corinthii ... quorum preces subdendas magis credimus esse, quam narrandas*), which is here described as coming from the Corinthians and from a synod (as in *Credebamus post* it is described as being *iam dudum*) and is about the local church retaining Perigenes (*non tam accipere quam retinere*). This is what one would expect to happen at the start of the correspondence between Rome and Thessaloniki. Boniface will not rehearse Perigenes' *cursus honorum* through the clerical ranks, which indicates that the petition to him had contained such information. As in the other letter, the rejection of Perigenes by the church in Patras is described as a blessing in disguise, with the ways of God being unfathomable (Ps 35[36]:6[7]).

Boniface indicates his willingness to accept Perigenes so long as Rufus first agrees. However, then, in the last quarter, the part which Coustant wished to swap, we read something not found in *Credebamus post*. Boniface states that those who oppose the election and incite people against Rome's position would need to be dealt with harshly (*in eos necesse est uigorem censurae, qui contra nostrum factum post haec nescientibus nostris incitare dicuntur populos*). That this is not anticipating a theoretical opposition comes from the last sentence of the letter where Boniface asks Rufus to deal with those who are outspoken (*quod quidem et dilectionem tuam in eos ex nostra praeceptione facere uolumus, ut eorum licentiam quibus nihil tale commisimus refrenemus*).

³² Innoc. *Ep.* 18 (*PL* 20.537–538 = Coustant 841–842) = JK 304. See Geoffrey D. Dunn, “The Church of Rome as a Court of Appeal in the Early Fifth Century: The Evidence of Innocent I and the Illyrian Churches,” *JEH* 64 (2013) 679–699.

The opening of *Ep.* 4 does not have a parallel with anything in the second half of *Credebamus post* (given that at the moment we have accepted Silva-Tarouca's division of the letter and the attribution of its first half to Leo, to which we shall return, thereby excluding it from consideration). In it Boniface outlines his Petrine position (*quid enim gaudio debeat maiore pensare, quam quod agnoscit acceptae potestatis in se iura seruari?*) and Rufus' delegated authority to deal with conflict in the Illyrian churches (*quibus sollicitudinem ecclesiarum, per Macedoniam et Achaiam sitarum fraternitati tuae*).³³ Boniface does not express as much surprise in this letter about the petition having come to him directly without being channelled through Rufus, although there is a muted hint of this (*ad prouinciam auribus nostris ingeritur destinatum, cuius prudentiae tuae dudum cura mandata est*).

We are left with a dilemma. Both letters seem to be the first communication from Boniface to Rufus on the matter. Essentially they cover much the same ground (the petition coming from Corinth, the mysterious divine blessing that Perigenes was not accepted in Patras, the exemplary clerical career of Perigenes, and Boniface's willingness to accept Perigenes' election to Corinth provided Rufus first agrees), with the notable exception that *Ep.* 4 gives some evidence of the opposition to Perigenes' election to Corinth, which was to grow louder over the following years. The surprise that Rufus has not been involved is stronger in *Credebamus post* than in *Ep.* 4. Are *Ep.* 4 and (at least) the second half of *Credebamus post* two versions of the same letter (leaving aside the fact that there are already two versions of *Ep.* 4)? Is the second half of *Credebamus post* part of *Ep.* 4, which somehow became detached from the original letter? Since so much identical ground is covered in both, although in clearly distinguishable terms, I doubt that the second option is realistic.

³³ On references to Peter in Roman bishops of late antiquity see George E. Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia 2013).

Further, I believe a suggestion can be made to explain why we should not see *Ep.* 4 and the second half of *Credebamus post* as belonging to the one letter nor see them as being two versions of the same letter, but why we should see them as two very similar letters sent in quick succession covering much the same topics: news of the extent of opposition to Perigenes' election reached Boniface later than did the news of the election itself. My suggestion would be that the provincial synod in Corinth wrote to Boniface in the summer of 419 informing him of their election of Perigenes and asking him to support their decision given that the election could be seen as contravening the Council of Nicaea's prohibition on the translation of bishops. Boniface then wrote to Rufus in September with a letter, the second half of which is now the second half *Credebamus post*, indicating his willingness to accept this outcome but asking Rufus to be the one to investigate the matter and be the one to write to Rome asking for Rome's concurrence. Information must then have reached Rome about the ongoing opposition of some bishops to this election to Corinth after the synod had concluded, and Boniface, annoyed that they would voice (and continue to voice) such opposition when he had indicated his willingness to accept it (presuming that news of his willingness circulated widely), wrote to Rufus a second time (*Ep.* 4) insisting that his Petrine position not be threatened, repeating his support for Perigenes, and, after the briefest mention of his original request to Rufus to sort it out, instructing Rufus to deal with the opposition.

We need not concern ourselves here with the later history of this business, when bishops of the region appealed to Constantinople against Rome and when the two emperors, Theodosius II in the East and Honorius in the West, became involved in a dispute between the churches of Constantinople and Rome about ecclesiastical supremacy, a dispute that would contribute significantly I would suggest to the so-far enduring schism of 1054. This is a matter worthy of its own investigation at some other time. Suffice it to say that understanding the early years of this conflict is important for comprehending those develop-

ments and for dealing in the present with resolving it. All that needs be said here is that the letters in the *Collectio Thessalonicensis*, particularly those from Innocent I, show that the Roman bishop believed that the churches of Illyricum Orientale belonged to his area of supervision and that, even though the political boundaries had changed (as they seem to have done frequently in living memory) so that the prefecture was assigned to the eastern empire, they should remain his responsibility. The election of Perigenes is where this potential area for conflict eventually would be actualised, although at the start it was not a matter that involved Constantinople in any way. That church was dragged into the dispute as the opponents of Perigenes found Rome to be unhelpful to their cause. This is something to which I shall return on a later occasion.

The first half of *Credebamus post*

What then of the first half of *Credebamus post*? There is nothing in it to indicate any connection with the Perigenes affair, but, it has to be said, neither does the first half of *Ep.* 4, if we read that in isolation, have anything explicit to do with Perigenes. Both are general statements about the relationship between the churches of Rome and Thessaloniki in terms of Petrine authority and the duties of the papal vicar. Since Rufus and Anastasius were both bishops of Thessaloniki and therefore papal vicars, there is nothing surprising in the contents. Schwartz pointed out that the first half of *Credebamus post* fits in perfectly well with the previous couple of letters in the *Collectio Thessalonicensis* in which Anastasius had asked to be promoted to what had become the traditional position of bishops of Thessaloniki in the past few generations, the role of papal vicar.³⁴ In his letter to various metropolitans throughout Illyricum (*Grato*

³⁴ Schwartz, in *Festschrift Richard Reitzenstein* 154–156. See Leo *Ep.* 6 (*PL* 54.616–620 = *Coll. Thess. Ep.* 23 [Silva-Tarouca 53–57]).

animo) from January 446,³⁵ in which he expressed his annoyance that the metropolitans were failing to adhere to ecclesiastical discipline, including that relating to the translation of bishops, Leo indicated to them that he would write to Anastasius, and the first half of *Credebamus post* fits this situation perfectly.³⁶ We know from another letter³⁷ how Anastasius treated Atticus, bishop of Palaia Preveza (ancient Nicopolis) and metropolitan in Epirus Vetus, having him dragged from his church by civil officials when he had failed to attend a synod owing to ill health, so it is not surprising that other Illyrian bishops did not communicate with Anastasius.

Classical rhetorical criticism would indicate that in seeking to be persuasive a speaker or writer could employ a variety of tactics, which can explain changes in style and not support the idea of a composite work. However, the arguments presented nearly a century ago by Schwartz seem reasonable and the first half is consistent with a letter from Leo following up the previous letter (*Ep.* 13). Since that earlier letter concerns the ways in which bishops in the region failed to respect the authority of the vicar and the teachings of the church about such matters as the translation of bishops,³⁸ it is perhaps understandable why the second half of the letter, which is also about the translation of bishops, came to be associated with it by some scribe who failed to appreciate that Leo was not bishop in 419 and did not deal with Perigenes.

³⁵ Leo *Ep.* 13 (*PL* 54.663–666 = *Coll. Thess. Ep.* 25 [Silva-Tarouca 60–62]).

³⁶ Schwartz, in *Festschrift Richard Reitzenstein* 156.

³⁷ *Quanta fraternitate*, not in the *Collectio Thessalonicensis*: *PL* 54.670.

³⁸ See Charles Pietri, “La géographie de l’Illyricum ecclésiastique et ses relations avec l’Eglise de Rome (Ve–VIe siècles),” in *Villes et peuplement dans l’Illyricum protobyzantin* (Paris 1984) 21–62, at 24–34; Lucio Casula, *Leone Magno. Il conflitto tra ortodossia ed eresia nel quinto secolo* (Rome 2002) 310; and Wessel, *Leo the Great* 118–119.

Conclusion

With regard to *Credebamus post* it is indisputable that the salutation and second half of this letter cannot both be original to it. Unlike 2 Corinthians, where there is no specific evidence of this kind, there is no argument that can be sustained for the entire letter in its current form being all one letter. The salutation indicates that it was written in the middle of the fifth century by Leo while the second part comes from a letter of Boniface I to Rufus of Thessaloniki over the affair of Perigenes' election as bishop of Corinth and translation from the church of Patras, albeit a position he had never managed to occupy in practice. Should we simply remove the salutation as incorrect, as many have done, or are the arguments of Schwartz, endorsed by Silva-Tarouca, that the entire first half of the letter is by Leo, convincing? The integrity of *Credebamus post* is complicated further because another letter (*Beatus apostolus*: Boniface *Ep.* 4) exists that seems in many ways to duplicate parts of it.

By using both internal and external evidence as partition theory does with 2 Corinthians, a comparison between the second half of *Credebamus post* and Boniface's *Ep.* 4 reveals that much the same topics are discussed, yet the language is not so similar as to suggest two transmission traditions of a single letter. Yet it is similar enough that we need not conclude that the second half of *Credebamus post* somehow was detached from *Ep.* 4. My conclusion is that these were two separate, but inter-related, letters, and that *Credebamus post* exists now only in its damaged state. Indeed, the fact that only *Ep.* 4 contains news about opponents to Perigenes' election to Corinth, coupled with the remaining similar content, indicates that we are dealing with two letters on the same topic sent within a short time frame, the second letter being necessary after new developments unfolded.

The kinds of skills scholars have developed in addressing issues about the integrity and unity of 2 Corinthians are helpful in addressing how we are to interpret the material that survives in the *Collectio Thessalonicensis* dealing with controversy in the church of Corinth in the early years of the fifth century. None-

theless in tracing some of the very origins of what would become an early incident in the clashes between Rome and Constantinople over questions of ecclesiastical primacy it is regrettable that one of our earliest pieces of evidence for what developed into and has remained an intractable conflict is in the state that it is, making our appreciation of these foundational events that much more complicated to appreciate.³⁹

March, 2014

Senior Research Fellow
Centre for Early Christian Studies
Australian Catholic University
P.O. Box 456
Virginia Qld 4014, Australia
geoffrey.dunn@acu.edu.au

³⁹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 68th general meeting of the Society for New Testament Studies at Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia (July 2013). I appreciate the invitation of Prof. R. Bieringer to join their seminar. I am grateful for the helpful suggestions both from the participants there and from the journal reviewers who have helped improve it.