We know almost nothing about the life of the apostle Peter after the Council of Jerusalem in the year 49 A.D. (see Acts 15). What was his situation in Jerusalem after his miraculous deliverance the night before his execution (Acts 12)? It was in the year 44 A.D. The death of Herod Agrippa, a few months later, did not prevent the high priests from wanting Paul’s death. When did he leave for the Greek world? What contacts did he have with the communities that Paul established? We do know that, in Corinth, a party laid claim on him and apparently knew him (1 Cor 1:12). When did he get to Rome? This letter is helpful in finding an answer.

This is an important letter not only because of what it says but also because it gives us a glimpse of the Church of the apostles. It has many points of contact with the letters of James and Paul, especially the epistle to the Romans. Faith was not made up of beliefs evolving according to the feelings of diverse communities. The testimonies about Jesus, his person and his Gospel were not left to anonymous writers ready to alter them according to the needs of the moment. There was a solid and coordinated preaching of the apostles based on untouchable information that was already called Tradition or Doctrine. Prophets, who were used to giving a Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, were gradually creating a Christian language and since they were itinerant, this language had to be in agreement with the testimony of the apostles.

Peter tells us that his letter, handwritten by Silas or Silvanus, Paul’s former companion (5:12), is addressed to the communities of the different Roman provinces located in today’s Turkey. Did Peter know them personally? He refers to a persecution threatening them or, at least, to the hostile attitude of the authorities, and he encourages them by showing them the example of Christ. We do not have to imagine a widespread and official persecution as the one that occurred under Domitian at the time of Revelation or under Trajan in the year 110 A.D. Instead, it was a matter of nuisances and slander on the part of unbelievers before the courts. An analysis of the themes and the terminology seems to show that Peter’s letter precedes Paul’s letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, therefore, before the year 60 A.D. It would be very difficult to deny that it was known by the author of the letter to the Hebrews, written before the year 66 A.D. The occasion for writing it may have been Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem in the year 58 A.D., an event that impacted the provinces of Asia where the Jews were influential.

In looking for the originality of this letter, we should emphasize the following three points:
From 1:3 to 3:7, everything draws its inspiration from the baptismal ceremony, hymns and the homily on the meaning of baptism and the type of life that the newly baptized will lead.

The letter praises the new people of the baptized, living stones of the real temple and priests of God for spiritual worship.

On many occasions, Peter invites us to meditate on Christ’s passion: his sacrifice is still present at the heart of God’s people and persecution is part of their vocation.

An ancient tradition assures us that Peter was killed during Nero’s persecution and that he was buried on the property of Vatican hill. Recent excavations have enabled us to find a tomb containing bones and bearing different inscriptions. It is almost certainly the tomb of the apostle Peter, the first stone of the Church.
1 From Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, to all those living as aliens in the Dispersion, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, to those whom God, the Father, has called, according to his plan, and made holy, by the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ, and be purified by his blood: may grace and peace increase among you.

You have been saved

Let us praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his great mercy. In raising Jesus Christ from the dead, he has given us new life, and a living hope. The inheritance that does not corrupt, nor goes bad, nor passes away, was reserved for you, in heaven, since God’s power shall keep you faithful, until salvation is revealed, in the last days.

There is cause for joy, then, even though you may, for a time, have to suffer many trials. Thus will your faith be tested, like gold in a furnace. Gold, however, passes away, but faith, worth so much more, will bring you, in the end, praise, glory and honor, when Jesus Christ appears.

You have not, yet, seen him, and, yet, you love him; even without seeing him, you believe in him, and experience a heavenly joy beyond all words, for you are reaching the goal of your faith: the salvation of your souls.

This was the salvation for which the prophets so eagerly looked when, in days past, they foretold the favor of God, with regard to you. But they could only investigate when the Spirit of Christ present within them, pointed out the time and the circumstances, of this—the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which would follow.

It was revealed to them, that they were working, not for themselves, but for you. Thus, in these days, after the Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven, the gospel’s preachers have taught you these mysteries, which even the angels long to see.

Be holy

So, then, let your spirit be ready. Be alert, with confident trust, in the grace you will receive, when Jesus Christ appears. Like obedient children, do not return to your former life, given over to ignorance and passions. Imitate the one who called you. As he is holy, so you, too, be holy, in all your conduct, since Scripture says: Be holy for I am holy.

You call upon a Father who makes no distinction between persons, but judges, according to each one’s deeds; take seriously, then, these years which
you spend in a strange land. Remem-
er, that you were freed from the use-
less way of life of your ancestors,
not with gold and silver, but with
the precious blood of the Lamb with-
out spot or blemish. God, who has
known Christ before the world began,
revealed him to you in the last days.
Through him, you have faith in God,
who raised him from the dead, and
glorified him, in order that you might
put all your faith and hope in God.

In obeying the truth, you have
gained interior purification, from which
comes sincere mutual love. Love one
another, then, with all your heart,
since you are born again, not from
mortal beings, but with enduring life,
through the word of God, who lives
and remains forever. It is written:
All flesh is grass and its glory like the
flowers of the field. The grass withers
and the flower falls, but the word of
the Lord endures forever. This word,
is the gospel, which has been brought
to you.

Christ is the cornerstone

So, give up all evil and deceit,
hypocrisy, envy, and every kind of
gossip. Like newborn children,
seek, eagerly, for the pure milk of
the word, that will help you grow and
reach salvation. Did you not taste
the goodness of the Lord? He is the
living stone, rejected by people, but
chosen by God, and precious to him;
so that, you, too, become living stones, built
into a spiritual temple, a holy com-
munity of priests, offering spiritual
sacrifices that please God, through
Jesus Christ. Scripture says: See,
I lay in Zion a chosen and precious
cornerstone; whoever believes in him
will not be disappointed.

This means honor, for you who
believed, but for unbelievers, also the
stone which the builders rejected has
become the cornerstone and it is a
stone to stumble over, a rock which
lays people low. They stumble over it,
in rejecting the word, but the plan of
God is fulfilled in this.

You are a chosen race, a com-
munity of priest-kings, a consecrated
nation, a people God has made his
own, to proclaim his wonders. For he
called you, from your darkness, to his
own wonderful light. At one stage,
you were no people, but, now, you are
God's people, you had not received
would be Israel. Peter tells us: "The real peo-
ple of God, the true Israel, are you who have
accepted Christ." We, who are baptized, do not
form one more religion: we are an active minor-
ity and the leaven of the world.

We are priests in the sense this word had for
ancient people: those who know, those who risk
coming close to God. We were made responsible
for the mission of preparing men and
women so that salvation may mature in them.
People and nations may discover their common
destiny and, in the end, admit that they cannot
solve their problems without making the Gospel
the law of their whole lives.

A Christian aware of his dignity as a priestly
member of the people of God, by sheer gift and
grace cannot but proclaim his wonders.
This is what evangelization is all about. These
Christians are a chosen race, a community of
priest-kings called to proclaim the Gospel.
his mercy, but, now, you have been given mercy.

**Live a blameless life**

- **11** Beloved, while you are strangers and exiles, I urge you, not to indulge in selfish passions, that wage war on the soul. **12** Live a blameless life, among the pagans; so, when they accuse you falsely of any wrong, they may see your good works and give glory to God, on the day he comes to them.

- **13** For the Lord’s sake, respect all human authority: the king as chief authority, **14** the governors, as sent by him, to punish evildoers, and to encourage those who do good. **15** And God wants you to do good, so that you may silence those fools who ignorantly criticize you. **16** Behave as free people, but do not speak of freedom as a license for vice; you are free men, and God’s servants. **17** Reverence each person, love your brothers and sisters, fear God and show respect to the emperor.

- **18** Servants must respect their masters, not only those who are good and understanding, but also those who are difficult. **19** For there is merit in putting up with unprovoked suffering, for the sake of God. **20** What merit would there be in taking a beating, when you have done wrong? But if you endure punishment when you have done well, that is a grace before God.

- **21** This is your calling: remember Christ, who suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you may follow in his way. **22** He did no wrong and there was no deceit in his mouth. **23** He did not return insult, for insult, and, when suffering, he did not curse, but put himself in the hands of God, who judges justly. **24** He went to the cross, bearing our sins on his own body, on the cross, so that we might die to sin, and live an upright life. For, by his wounds, you have been healed.

- **25** You were like stray sheep, but you have come back to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

**Duties of husbands and wives**

- **3.1** In the same way, wives must be submissive to their husbands. If any of them resists the word, they will be won over, without words, by the conduct of their wives. **2** It will be enough for them, to see your responsible and blameless conduct.

- **3** Do not be taken up with outward appearances: hairstyles, gold necklaces and clothes. **4** There is something more permanent, that shines from within a person: a gentle and peaceful disposition. This is really precious in God’s eyes. **5** This was the way the Church is anti-feminist and wants women to be submissive? This point was explained in 1 Corinthians 11:9 and Ephesians 5:22. The apostles heard and taught the revolutionary ruling of Jesus who gave women the same rights in marriage. However, since they lived in a male-dominated society, they could hardly imagine or discover a new way of sharing between spouses.

- In any case, they could not reform the male-centered culture of their time overnight. They were speaking for women accustomed to obey. Some among them understood their promotion (Lk 8:1), but it happened that they showed this with actions which scandalized many (see commentaries on 1 Cor 11:6 and 1 Tim 2:11).
holy women of the past dressed. They put their trust in God, and were obedient to their husbands, namely, Sarah, who had such respect for Abraham, that she called him her lord. You are her children, if you do what is right, and are not afraid.

7 Husbands, in your turn, be sensible in your life together. Be considerate, realizing that the woman is of a more frail disposition, and that you both share in the gift of life. This will prevent anything from coming in the way of your prayer.

8 Finally, you should all be of one mind: share each other’s troubles with mutual affection, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil for evil, or answer one insult with another. Give a blessing, instead, since this is what you have been called to do, and so you will receive the blessing. For if you seek life and want to see happiness, keep your tongue from evil and your mouth from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. Because the Lord’s eyes are turned to the just and his ears listen to their appeal. But the Lord frowns on evildoers.

Do not fear or be disturbed

13 Who can harm you if you devote yourselves to doing good? If you suffer for the sake of righteousness, happy are you. Do not fear what they fear or be disturbed as they are, but

bless the Lord Christ in your hearts. Always have an answer ready, when you are called upon, to account for your hope, but give it simply and with respect. Keep your conscience clear, so that those who slander you may be put to shame by your upright, Christian living. Better to suffer for doing good, if it is God’s will, than for doing wrong.

Endure sufferings as Christ did

18 Remember how Christ died, once, and for all, for our sins. He, the just one, died for the unjust, in order to lead us to God. In the body, he was put to death, in the spirit, he was raised to life, and it was then, that he went to preach to the imprisoned spirits. They were the generation who did not believe, when God, in his great patience, delayed punishing the world, while Noah was building the ark, in which a small group of eight persons escaped, through water. That was a type of the baptism that now saves you; this baptism is not a matter of physical cleansing, but of asking God to reconcile us, through the resurrection of Christ Jesus. He has ascended to heaven, and is at the right hand of God, having subjected the angels, Dominions and Powers.

4 Given that Christ suffered in his human life, arm yourselves with this certainty: the one who suffers in
his body has broken with sin, 2 so as to spend the rest of his life following the will of God, and not human passions.

3 You have given enough time, in the past, to living as the pagans do: a life of excess, evil passions, drunkenness, orgies and worship of idols. 4 They now find it strange, that you are no longer swept along with them in this ruinous flood, and then abuse you for it. 5 But they will be accountable to the one who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 The gospel has been preached to many who are now dead. As humans, they received a deadly sentence, but through the spirit, they shall live for God.

7 The end of all things is near; keep your minds calm and sober, for prayer. 8 Above all, let your love for one another be sincere, for love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Welcome one another into your houses without complaining. 10 Serve one another with the gifts each of you received, thus becoming good managers of the varied graces of God. 11 If you speak, deliver the word of God; if you have a special ministry, let it be seen as God’s power, so that, in everything, God may be glorified, in Jesus Christ. To him, belong glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Be glad to share in the sufferings of Christ

12 My dear people, do not be surprised at the testing, by fire, which is taking place among you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 Instead, you should be glad to share in the sufferings of Christ, because, on the day his glory is revealed, you will also fully rejoice.

14 You are fortunate, if you are insulted because of the name of Christ, for the Spirit of glory rests on you. 15 I suppose that none of you should suffer for being a murderer, a thief, a criminal or an informer; 16 but if anyone suffers on account of being a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace; rather, let this name bring glory to God.

17 The time of judgment has come, and it begins with God’s household. If its beginning so affects us, what will be the end of those, who refuse to believe in the gospel? 18 If the just one is barely saved, what will happen to the sinner and unbeliever? 19 So, then, if you suffer, according to God’s will, entrust yourself to the faithful creator, and continue to do good.

Further admonitions

5 * 1 I now address myself to those elders among you; I, too, am an elder, and a witness to the sufferings of Christ, hoping to share the glory that is to be revealed. 2 Shepherd the flock which God has entrusted to you, guarding it, not out of obligation, but, willingly, for God’s sake; not as one looking for a reward, but with a generous heart; 3 do not lord it over, those in your care, rather be an example of Jesus; in our conduct there is nothing to surprise them.

The gospel has been preached to many who are now dead (v. 6). This refers to the previous passage 3:18-20. It is a way of speaking about the mysterious encounter that, after his death, Jesus had with the dead of past ages, whom he had come to save as well.

Keep your minds calm and sober for prayer (v. 7). Prayer requires a disciplined life. Go to bed when it is time and give up entertainments that only devour time and make us halfwits.

12. These verses present a summary of the central idea in this letter.

Let us note that Peter cannot concede that a Christian should have to be judged or go to jail through his own fault, murder, theft, etc. How many “Christians” in name only are in jail today? And, how many more should be there?

5.1 In the varied counsels that follow, note what concerns the elders, leaders and pastors of the community.

In persecution Peter also sees a work of the
devil, who does his best to discourage those who hope in Christ.

It is a proven fact that when we get ready to make an important decision or to make some commitment in the service of Christ, many unexpected obstacles arise. The person who becomes intimidated loses everything. When he tries again to take some step, the devil will increase his attacks. These trials are common and to face them we need to be alert in our faith.

12. To remind you of the kindness of God (v. 12). This kindness, or grace, means God’s whole plan to save us, all that came to us through Christ.

Babylon: in the language of the Christians of the time indicates “the great city,” the center of pagan religions, namely, Rome (see Rev 17). Rome already has a community, the Church, at the time that Peter writes.
According to the prevailing opinion today, it is a later book, probably written around the year 100 A.D. So it is presented as a second letter of Peter and it does its best to convince us. If it is not by Peter, that would not prevent it from being the word of God even if, at times, it expresses thoughts that seem strange on Peter’s lips.

Those who deny its authenticity lean, at times, on the idea that the letter duplicates many passages from the letter of Jude, a text surely written after the death of Peter and Paul (Jd 17-18). In fact, as the early Church used to say, it seems more natural to think that Jude took up the predictions already mentioned in Peter’s second letter (3:3-4). Therefore, we cannot invoke this argument to deny its authenticity.

Its three chapters refer to three concerns of the Church of the time, when the generation of those formed by the apostles appeared before the Church had set the main thrust of its organization. The author wants:

– to preserve the faith just as the witnesses of Jesus taught it;
– to fight against false teachers who distort the faith and also lead to immorality;
– to explain through God’s patience why Christ had not yet returned.
1. Symeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been sanctified by our God and Savior Jesus Christ, and have received a faith as precious as ours:

2. may grace and peace abound in you, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus, our Lord.

We share in the divine nature

3. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and piety. First, the knowledge of the One who called us through his own glory and Might, by which we were given the most extraordinary and precious promises. Through them, you share in the divine nature, after repelling the corruption and evil desires of this world.

4. So, strive with the greatest determination, and increase your faith, with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with moderation, moderation with constancy, constancy with piety, piety with mutual affection, mutual affection with charity. If all these riches are in you, so as to abound in you, you will not be idle and useless; you will, rather, be rooted in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Whoever is not aware of this, is blind and shortsighted, and is forgetful of the cleansing of former sins.

5. Therefore, brothers and sisters, strive, more and more, to respond to the call of God, who chose you. If you do so, you will never stumble. Moreover, you will be generously granted entry to the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

6. So, I shall always remind you of these things, though you know them, and remain firm in the truth that you have. It seems fitting, that as long as I live in the tent of this body, I refresh your memory of them, knowing that my tent may soon be folded up, as our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me. I will, nonetheless, endeavor to see, that, after my departure, you will be constantly reminded of all this.

The foundation of faith

7. Indeed, what we taught you about the power, and the return of Christ Jesus our Lord, was not drawn from myths or formulated theories. We,
ourselves, were eyewitnesses of his
majesty, 17 when he received glory and
honor from God, the Father, when,
from the magnificent glory, this most
extraordinary word came upon him:
“This is my beloved Son, this is my
Chosen One.” 18 We, ourselves, heard
this voice from heaven, when we were
with him on the holy mountain.

Therefore, we believe most firmly
in the message of the prophets, which
you should consider rightly, as a lamp
shining in a dark place, until the break
of day, when the Morning Star shines
in your hearts.

20 Know this well: no prophecy of
Scripture can be handed over to pri-
vate interpretation. 21 since no prop-
hecy comes from human decision, for
it was men of God, moved by the Holy
Spirit, who spoke.

False teachers

1• Just as there have been false
prophets in the midst of the
people of Israel, so will there be false
teachers among you. They will intro-
duce harmful sects and, by denying
the Master who saved them, they
will bring upon themselves sudden
perdition. 2 Many, nonetheless, will
imitate their vices, and, because of
them, the way of truth will be dis-
credited. 3 They will take advantage of
you, with deceitful words, for the sake
of money. But the judgment made
upon them, long ago, is not idle, and
the destruction awaiting them is not
asleep.

4In fact, God did not pardon the
angels who sinned, but cast them into
hell, confining them in the dark pits,
keeping them there, until the day of
judgment. 5 Neither did he pardon the
ancient world, when he unleashed the
waters of the flood upon the world of
wicked people, but protected only
Noah, the preacher of righteousness,
along with seven others. 6 God also
condemned the cities of Sodom and
Gomorrah, reducing them to ashes,
to serve as a warning to the wicked in
the future. 7 But he saved Lot, a good
man, deeply afflicted by the unbridled
conduct of those vicious people. 8 For
Lot, a righteous man, who lived in
their midst, suffered, day after day, in
the goodness of his heart, as he saw
and heard of their crimes.

9 So, then, the Lord knows how to
free from trial, those who serve him,
and keep the wicked for punishment,
on the day of judgment.

10 He will do this, especially, for
certain people who follow the baser
desires of their nature, and despise
the Lord’s majesty. Proud and dar-
ing they are, not afraid of insulting
fallen spirits 11 while the angels, who
are superior to them in strength and
power, do not permit themselves any
injurious accusation in the presence
of the Lord.

12 Those people are like irrational
animals, born to be caught and killed;
after they have slandered what they
cannot understand, they will end,
like animals 13 and they will suffer the
repayment of their wickedness.

They delight in giving themselves
depravity, even in the daytime; they
are deceiving you, even when they
are sharing your table. 14 With their
eyes always looking for adultery, they

is true that anyone, according to his intelligence
and faith, can understand one text or another.
The message, however, is the whole. When we
try to see how statements fit together, to see
the important lines or discover the spirit of the
Scriptures, then only the Church and those who
are spiritually alive in her can discern.

The Morning Star (v. 19). This refers to
Christ (see Rev 22:16).

• 2.1 This chapter dealing with false masters
repeats, in part, the threats found in the Letter
of Jude.
do not tire of sinning, and seducing weak souls. They are full of greed—an accursed people.

15 They abandoned the right way and followed Balaam, son of Beor, who was attached to what he gained from his wrongdoing. 16 But he was rebuked for his sin: his she-ass began to speak with a human voice, stopping the prophet in his madness. 17 These people are like waterless springs, clouds driven by a storm which move swiftly, into the blackest darkness.

18 With their boastful and empty discourses, they encourage the lust and impure desire of those, who have just freed themselves from the common errors.

19 They promise freedom, when, they, themselves, are slaves of corruption: for people are slaves to whatever dominates them. 20 Indeed, after being freed from worldly vices through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they returned to those vices, and surrendered to them; and their present state has become worse than the first. 21 It would have been better, for them, not to know the way of holiness, than, knowing it, to turn away from the sacred doctrine that they had been taught. 22 In their case, these proverbs are relevant: “The dog turns back to its own vomit,” and: “Hardly has the pig been washed, than it again wallows in the mud.”

Why is the second coming of Christ delayed?

3 1 Dearly beloved, this is the second letter I write to you. In both of them, I have intended to remind you of sound doctrine. 2 Do not forget the words of the holy prophets, and the teaching of our Lord and Savior, as you heard it, through his apostles.

3 Remember, first of all, that, in the last days, scoffers will appear, their mockery serving their evil desires. 4 And they will say, “What has become of his promised coming? Since our fathers in faith died, everything still goes on, as it was from the beginning of the world.” 5 Indeed, they deliberately ignore, that, in the beginning, the heavens existed first, and earth appeared from the water, taking its form by the word of God.

6 By the same word of God, this world perished in the Flood. 7 Likewise, the word of God maintains the present heavens and earth, until their destruction, by fire; they are kept for the day of judgment, when the godless will be destroyed. 8 Do not forget, beloved, that with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day. 9 The Lord does not delay in fulfilling his promise, though some speak of delay; rather, he gives you time, because he does not want anyone to perish, but that all may come to conversion. 10 The Day of
the Lord is to come like a thief. Then, the heavens will dissolve with a great noise; the elements will melt away by fire, and the earth, with all that is on it, will be burned up.

11 Since all things are to vanish, how holy and religious your way of life must be, 12 as you wait for the day of God, and long for its coming, when the heavens will dissolve in fire, and the elements melt away in the heat.

13 We wait for a new heaven and a new earth, in which justice reigns, according to God's promise.

14 Therefore, beloved, as you wait in expectation of this, strive, that God may find you rooted in peace, without blemish or fault.

15 And consider, that God's patience is for our salvation, as our beloved brother, Paul, wrote to you, with the wisdom given him. 16 He speaks of these things in all his letters. There are, however, some points in them that are difficult to understand, which people, who are ignorant, and immature in their faith, twist, as they do with the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

17 So then, dearly beloved, as you have been warned, be careful, lest those people who have gone astray, deceive you, in turn, and drag you along, making you stumble, and finally fall away. 18 Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: to him be glory, now, and to the day of eternity. Amen.