

## The Denials of Peter.

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### *Excursus to Section III.*

#### THE HOUSE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

SEVERAL other references to house architecture in the New Testament suit the type of house described in this section; but we must except (1) the incident in Mk 2<sup>1-4</sup>, Mt 9<sup>2</sup>, Lk 5<sup>19</sup>, which implies a peasant's hut, the humble kind of house alluded to in passing.<sup>1</sup> (2) It was on the third floor that Paul preached on the Sunday night at Troas to the assembled Christians (Ac 20<sup>8</sup>),<sup>2</sup> and Eutychus fell through the window. This window was simply a large opening to the air, without any glass or shutters or lattices. Through such an opening Jesus looked and saw Peter by the light of the fire in the courtyard beneath; but that took place on the second floor: the rooms on the ground being the first floor. The house at Troas, therefore, differed in construction from the regular Asiatic and Syrian house, and is probably to be understood as a Roman type of house in the Roman Colony of Alexandria Troas Augusta: the house was a large one with a *turris*, and the congregation gathered in the highest room of the *turris*, evidently a room of large size. This seems to be hardly a satisfactory explanation of the incident (with regard to which I do not feel at all confident).

I almost shrink from offering a conjectural explanation of the incident at Troas and of the expression ἀπὸ τοῦ τριστεγίου, because I have made free with accepted explanations in so many other cases. The phrase does not mean 'from the third floor,' but 'from a place, or part of the house, which has a third ceiling or roof.' There may have been a gallery at one end of the ὑπερφῶν in which the Brethren assembled, viz. at the end overlooking the courtyard, and opposite the upper end of the chamber where Paul and the most honoured persons of the congregation were. I cannot remember any exact analogy to this in the ordinary type of Eastern dwelling-house; but in the Tetrapyrgia type, as mentioned above, the

method of construction with galleries is quite common. This τριστεγιον at Troas would, then, be a species of Bala-khane,<sup>3</sup> 'high house,' whose name indicates its nature. The existence of this constructional term proves that the construction is a usual Eastern device; but I have seen it only in khans (which, as was mentioned above, are modelled on the ancient Tetrapyrgia type). In the best example that I have seen, the Bala-khane was over the stairs leading up to the first floor and the ὑπερφῶν, and was a separate room; but inside galleries are quite a common feature of the large khans; and it seems in accordance with the purpose and nature of the device that it might be used as an enlargement of the main audience-chamber, open to it and closed on the outside by a wall containing one or more upper windows. This would involve only a slight modification of the house construction which I have seen; but it would carry with it an important result. The house at Troas, where the disciples assembled, must have been a mansion of considerable size and pretentious construction, belonging to a family of wealth and distinction. The house of Lydia, the Thyatiran merchant at Philippi, was perhaps of the same type, for Lydia was evidently a person of standing and possessed of some wealth: it would not have been in accordance with social custom for a woman to entertain four men in a small house; she must have had plenty of room and a numerous household.

The same result would follow from the other supposition that this was a house of Roman type with a *turris*. The term *turris* was applied to any part of a Roman house that was elevated above the roof of the ground floor; and a *turris* containing a room suited for the assembly would have been part of a large mansion: moreover, as being Roman, it would be the property of an aristocratic family: the Romans were the local aristocracy.

On either supposition it is certain that the congregation at Troas included at least one household of standing and influence. As Paul wrote to the

<sup>1</sup> The incident is fully discussed in *Christ Born at Bethlehem*, p. 57 f.

<sup>2</sup> τριστεγιου.

<sup>3</sup> Bala-khane is our word 'balcony,' coming from the East through the Italian, though the dictionaries make 'balcony' a Teutonic word.

Corinthians, there were in his congregations 'not many nobles,' but this implies that there were a few. Deissmann, however, insists that there were none, and quotes these words in proof.

In other passages of the N.T. the 'upper chamber' was the public reception-room, the one large room of the house, of the same type as that in which Annas sat to investigate the case of Jesus. In such a room it was that every gathering took place, and honoured guests were entertained. In that upper chamber the body of Dorcas was laid in state before her burial (Ac 9<sup>37</sup>).<sup>1</sup> Dr. G. M. Mackie has some excellent remarks and also some that I cannot accept, on this subject.<sup>2</sup> 'The funeral of such an eminent and beloved disciple was to be of a public nature, and there would be much preparation and consultation about the ceremony.' This is good. Funerals were, and still are, occasion of much display; and many families in Turkey run into debt in order to make a sufficiently stately show. So far, however, as my experience goes, there would be no time for much preparation and consultation after the death of Dorcas. Funerals are hurried on very soon after death, and the rites are in almost every case much the same. With the rest of Dr. Mackie's remarks I am unable to agree: 'The upper chamber . . . would be chosen for the sake of privacy and quiet as a place where her friends might look for the last time on her face.' It was, however, not

<sup>1</sup> This was the real intention of the local congregation, when 'they laid her in an upper chamber.'

<sup>2</sup> See his notes in the *Sunday School Times*, March 1916.

privacy that was sought, but state and compliment to the deceased. The main chamber of the house was chosen, because it was specially the public room. At that time, and still at the present day among Greeks of the old fashion, the corpse was carried to the grave fully exposed to view in the most splendid dress that was worn by the deceased in life.<sup>3</sup> This was not a case, as among us in Britain, when a few friends were admitted to a last view before the coffin was closed: there was no coffin, but only a bier. The disciples met in an upper chamber, as being a large room, able to accommodate them all (Ac 1<sup>13</sup>). So also the Last Supper was held in 'a large upper chamber furnished and ready': it was the 'guest-chamber' of the house (Mk 14<sup>14f</sup>).

A chamber of this kind was called in the Attic dialect *ἀνωγέων*, and by Mark (followed by Luke) *ἀνάγειον*; but this term, meaning only 'above the ground,' was applicable to any room in an upper story, though it is commonly used of the principal room. There were often other upstairs rooms, besides this principal one. In the Acts the term for the upper chamber is *ὑπερφῶν*, which seems to be synonymous with *ἀνάγειον*. It was in a *ὑπερφῶν* that the earliest congregation met in Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> Among the Greeks at the present time the dress is economically removed, as a rule, from the corpse, before it is placed in the grave. In Italy (as Juvenal mentions in his first Satire) the face of a man who had been poisoned by his wife, was exposed to open view as the funeral was borne through the streets of Rome; and the populace saw the signs of poison in the face, and whispered to each other as it passed.

## Contributions and Comments.

### Acts xvii. 39.

In the course of various journeys here during the last six months, I have had frequent occasion to pass St. Paul's Bay, and have seen it from every possible point of view, and under all sorts of conditions of weather. For example, a few evenings ago, when returning from an outlying service, I saw it in dim moonlight. A sailing-ship, probably not so big as that which carried the apostle, lay at anchor in the bay, riding safely at anchor in the

very creek into which the mariners of St. Paul's vessel were 'minded if possible to thrust the ship.'

On the occasion of a former visit to the island I studied with some care most of the literature on the subject of the shipwreck, including Conybeare and Howson and Smith of Jordanhill.

The usually accepted view of the matter is that the ship anchored to the east of the place where the two seas meet, *i.e.* on the side nearest Asia and furthest from Europe.

During my former visit, having sailed round the