

## ST. PAUL'S SECOND IMPRISONMENT IN ROME.

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### (I) THE ACTS AND THE APOSTLES.

**B**EFORE he was brought to Rome, St. Paul's plan had been to visit Spain after Rome. He often spoke of his intention to visit Rome, which had been frustrated from time to time, just as Cicero was prevented from undertaking journeys he had planned. But Rome was not the real objective of his journey. Like a true architect he would not build on another's foundation (Rom. xv. 20), a sentiment that would be appreciated by Romans, whose early legend of Romulus was connected with another's foundation. When referring to the same project in 2 Corinthians x. 16, he said he would not glory in another's "line" (*canon*). The Romans might be disappointed to think that Rome was not the real goal of his journey, but would be flattered by hearing of his "intense desire to visit them these many years" (Rom. xv. 23). Although neither he nor any other apostle had founded the Church of Rome, he wished to confirm it (i. 11). Luke quotes his saying, "after I have been there (Jerusalem) I must also see Rome" (xix. 21), so that his intention was well known, but he had not yet had the opportunity. His resolution is fixed, but not the time. "Whensoever I shall take my journey to Spain. For I hope *on my way through* to see you, and to have a send-off from you on my journey there" (xv. 24). Here he used a term that would have recalled Polybius' description (iii. 68) of the legions that passed through Rome on their march to meet Hannibal. He also glances at the Roman custom of escorting distinguished people to their offices. The word also conveys the temporary nature of his visit; and that his sphere of action lies beyond. When he has handed over his collection in Jerusalem he says, "I shall make my way back through you to Spain." He thus speaks twice of the visit he has planned to Spain, and neither passage can be treated as an interpolation. To prevent the Romans being jealous he said he would come to them in the fullness of the *blessing* (*eulogia* of the benefit for the poor Jews in 2 Cor. ix. 5) of Christ. He had said nothing about this visit to Spain in the words quoted in Acts xix. 21, possibly because he did not wish to create bad feeling, as the Ephesians would have been more jealous of this visit to Spain than the Romans would. There was keen competition between the eastern and western markets of the Empire, and the Romans naturally favoured the romanized west above the hellenized east. This may be the reason why there is no record of the visit to Spain. We have to take into account not merely the jealousy of Gentile and Jew, but also that of Greek

and Roman. The intense feeling against the Greeks in Rome and romanized districts was reciprocated by the Greeks.

The situation when Paul wrote Romans xv. was this. His face was set towards Jerusalem but his intention was to return and visit Spain, taking Rome on the way. So far he says he has, while preaching the Gospel, "proceeded from Jerusalem round about even to Illyricum," meaning that he has so far attended to the eastern and now would attend to the western portion of the Empire. The question is, would Paul, whose purpose was held up by two periods of imprisonment, have carried it out when released?

There are reasons for holding that he was not executed at the end of the first. The Acts ends on a note of confidence—a ringing sentence in Greek—"teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus with complete liberty of speech and without hindrance." It is hard to imagine that at the end of that period of two years not only his liberty but his life was taken away, and the event was not thought worthy of mention. That it was a pleasant and not a tragic ending we may infer from the silence. If liberty ensued, the author, who was meditating another work (Acts i. 1, meaning "the first treatise," not "the former"), need not have mentioned it; as it would be understood that he was reserving his notice; but if death followed, there would be no need for silence, and one short sentence would be sufficient. St. Luke halts, like writers of serials, at a point where the situation is pregnant with movement and interest.

Then his clear-cut period of two years—"and he abode *two whole years* in his own hired dwelling" (Acts xxviii. 30)—implies that after that time he had moved out of it. Where?—that is the question. We have other exact periods of time in the Acts, e.g. "after two full years" (xxiv. 27). In all these places the aorist denotes that the period mentioned terminated and another began. The precise measurement of the time denotes that something happened. What? What would a Roman infer? Release. In the *Hecyra* of Terence a woman exclaims, "I endured him for two complete years" (*biennium perpetuum*). She says nothing about release. But it is inferred. So here we can infer release.

It would not only have made a splendid ending to the hero's life, but also an inspiring conclusion to the Acts, if the writer had concluded the story of the doings and sufferings of the Apostolic Church with an account of Paul's martyrdom, which would have suitably followed that of Stephen and James. Such a climax would have been in harmony with the artistic sense of Luke; but the climax he offers is uncontrolled liberty of speech. What we think happened was this:

When released, conditionally upon leaving Rome, Paul would have had Luke's attendance to some port. Then Luke withdrew to Philippi, and Paul was on his way to rejoin him when he begged Timothy to remain in Ephesus (1 Tim. i. 3). This would leave time for a visit to Spain or Gaul. For we cannot believe that Paul, if he gained his freedom at the end of this precisely defined period,

would no longer have felt the urge to preach in the parts beyond, where no one had yet preached, or to lay new foundations. If he had failed to carry out this purpose how is the triumphant note of 2 Timothy iv. 17 to be explained: "So that through me the message might be completely given and all the nations might hear"? Paul was remarkable for tenacity of purpose, as in the case of the collection. He would see this plan through, and if he did not, would not speak of it as completed. The expression "all the nations" has the same force as the "race of mortals" or the "human race," which Tacitus used of the peoples of the Empire—e.g. where speaking of the fire and the massacre of the Christians, he says they were "condemned owing to the hatred of the human race for them" (Annals XV, 44), an expression which would include the western half of the empire as well as the eastern. On what principle are we to exclude the former from Paul's summary?

In his captivity there was nothing to damp his hopes. Towards its close he requested Philemon to get him a lodging. In Philippians ii. 17 he referred to his death as a remote possibility—"Even supposing<sup>1</sup> that I am offered up," which he rejects a few lines lower down. "But I am assured in the Lord that I myself shall also shortly come" (v. 24. See also chap. i, 19, 25, and Col. iv. 7). The ending of the Acts agrees with the Captivity Epistle, but not with 2 Timothy.

Again, the encouraging words of the Lord to Paul: "Cheer up, for as thou didst testify concerning me in Jerusalem, thou must *in like manner* testify in (unto) Rome." As this message in Acts xxiii. 11 implied a deliverance from the Jews, why not a similar deliverance from Romans? His first testimony was made before a tribunal; why should not his second be? The Greek phrase implies similarity of witness. This appearance of Jesus dispelled the gloom of Paul and also his anticipations. The message also discounts the argument based upon Acts xx. 25 against the second imprisonment. Surrounded by weeping friends and weeping himself Paul said, "I know that you shall no longer see my face, I mean all of you." It is argued that Paul says here that the Ephesians will never see him again. Supposing the words may be so read, why might he not have been mistaken? Would not the Lord's message have put a different expectation into his mind? In his letters to Philemon and Philippians he afterwards expresses hope of release. Which expectation was frustrated—the first ambiguously reported by another person once, or the second plainly expressed by himself and much nearer the event three times? The second is logically weightier. Furthermore, the Greek words do not mean what they are said to mean. The sentence is not precise. Compare 1 Corinthians xv. 52, "We shall not all sleep." This does not mean "None of us shall sleep" (2 Thess. iii. 2); "faith is not the gift of all" does not mean "faith is the gift of none," but of some. "Not again you all shall see my face" means "Some of you shall not see me again."

<sup>1</sup> See Jebb, *Oedipus Tyrannus* (p. 296), on this phrase.

Against this one ambiguous saying is to be set many optimistic ones—e.g. Philippians i. 19, "I know that this will turn out to my salvation"; the words in Job (LXX) xiii. 16, that express Job's certainty of the vindication of his character. So far we have seen nothing to make the apostle give up his project. He may have changed his plans in going to the east before the west, but this does not imply that his plan of visiting the west was completely dropped.

## (2) SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

The situation in 2 Timothy, however, is quite different. The apostle has no longer his personal liberty. He is in Rome, but in a different locality, where his friend Onesiphorus found him after great difficulty. He is in need of comforts, is loaded with a heavy chain, but is without his cloak and books and tablets, which he had in his first captivity, in disgrace and a public prison as a *criminal*, such as a man charged with treason would be classed. What occasioned this alteration in condition? A legal process called *endeixis*, instituted by one Alexander against him (iv. 4), which is not to be rendered, "Alexander did me much evil" (A.V., R.V.)—a mistaken interpretation based upon the LXX of Genesis i. 15; but Luke would have put that differently (see Acts ix. 13). The verb used here (*enedeixato*) is the correct term for laying information before a magistrate against a person (see Pollux VIII, 49); "the *informers* is he who lays the information before the magistrate." The similar action taken against Paul's contemporary, Apollonius, for treason and impiety to the Emperor was introduced by an *endeixis*, and his defence or trial was called *apologia*, as Paul's is here. As Apollonius was thrown into prison "among the *most criminal*," so was Paul treated as a *criminal* here. It is no wonder that he is no longer cheerful, but he shows the same philosophic spirit of resignation. "I am reconciled.<sup>1</sup> The race is ended."

Verses 14-17 of chap. iv. imply acquitted after the first trial and a second trial. Paul has been in a reminiscent mood all through. He here relates certain details of his first trial which must have been known to Timothy in order to dispel his fears regarding the second. In our letters we often comment upon incidents known to both parties. We are not always giving news. What is the meaning of "At my first trial (*apologia*) no one stood by me (as witness), but the Lord stood beside me (as advocate) and gave me power, and I was delivered from the mouth of the lion"? It surely does not refer to a preliminary *actio* of the first or second trial, but the trial at the conclusion of the two years mentioned in Acts, for a postponement of the case could not be described as a deliverance from the lion's mouth, as he would be still within the lion's reach. Here Paul stresses his isolated condition at the first trial in order to encourage himself and Timothy now when he has only Luke of the old band with him. We can set out in parallel columns the accounts of the

<sup>1</sup> See *Eurip. Bacch.*, 284. Probably used in double sense: "I am resigned" and "I am offered."

two trials Paul has already stood. They balance each other in a remarkable way. Even to the wishes.

#### THE FIRST TRIAL.

In my first trial no man stood with me (as witness), but all forsook me. May it not be laid to their account. But the Lord stood beside me (as Advocate) and strengthened me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the Lion that through me the gospel might be fully proclaimed, and all the nations might hear (*vv.* 16, 17).

#### THE SECOND TRIAL.

Demas forsook me. Only Luke is with me. Alexander the coppersmith laid many criminal charges against me. The Lord shall reward him according to his works (of whom do thou beware, for he greatly withstood our words). But the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom (*vv.* 9, 11, 14, 15, 18).

Verses 16 and 17, giving the summary of the first trial, are just another of Paul's many digressions. The present situation recalls the previous. Here, however, Luke is with him, and has assisted him at his trial—at the first trial no man stood with him—for Alexander fiercely opposed *our* (a word Paul never used of himself, and so implies Luke's advocacy) arguments. Then the Lord delivered him out of the mouth of the lion, Nero, in order that he might preach the Gospel to the whole Roman world, western as well as eastern. Now he will deliver him from every evil work of Alexander and bring him into His Kingdom. The passage contains—another of Paul's figures, noticed by Irenaeus—hyperbaton or misplacement. The words "*I was delivered* out of the mouth of the lion" (*v.* 17) have been attracted from their proper place after "the Lord gave me power" to the following "*he shall deliver me,*" both terms being used together in 2 Corinthians i. 10: "He delivered us and shall deliver." The verb "give power" is not followed by "in order that" in the New Testament, but "deliver" is. That the words "the Lord shall deliver me," etc., belong to the Alexander passage is clear from the exact *parallelismus*, even clearer in the Greek:

"The Lord will reward him according to his works." "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work." This study in contrasts belongs to the Alexander passage. Many discordant notes in the last page of the Pastorals may be resolved by this explanation of a second trial. The preliminary character of the second is required to explain other points. We have similar preliminary trials in the *Life of Apollonius* by Philostratus, for Paul has not yet been sentenced. He knew it would not be long delayed. So he added the postscript to a letter he had already written to Timothy, adding some news and comments, and urging him to "hurry," "hurry before winter." There must have been something said at the preliminary trial to convince him that the final stage would not take place before that winter. He may also have required his books and notes for that final examination.

There is, therefore, an interval of some four years between the acquittal of iv. 17, "I was delivered from the mouth of the lion," and the hour of his dictating the words "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work" (iv. 18)—an hour when Paul could truly say "my life work has been accomplished." The gospel has been fully and widely preached, and *all the nations*, that is the western as well as the eastern portions of the Roman empire, have heard. This could not have been said of his evangelistic ministry in the empire before work in the western—the predominantly Roman portion—had been undertaken.

Many other features in the Pastorals fall into line with this suggestion. Alexander's appearance on the scene shows that it was a new trial. "He fiercely opposed *our* arguments." There would be no point in referring to such hostility at "the first *apologia*," when Paul was without Luke's help, and when the apostle was tried concerning specific charges entered upon the charge sheet or *elogium*. It was through Alexander's information that Paul had been arrested, and brought a second time before the court. His activities are still to be feared. Timothy is therefore warned. It is possible that it was due to Timothy's indiscretion that Paul was in his present trouble. Timothy was rated for many things, but chiefly for his petulant tongue (1 Tim. v. 1). In his first letter Paul had said (i. 20), "Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I am handing over<sup>1</sup> to Satan, that they may be taught not to blaspheme." Some tactless remark or action of Timothy regarding that remark incensed Alexander.

That this was the man is most likely. He had the motive and soon gets the opportunity. In 1 Timothy i. 20, there was no need to mention his trade, as he is coupled with Hymenæus, a well-known leader of the opposition mentioned in both letters (1 Tim. i. 20; 2 Tim. ii. 17). But in the second passage his trade is specified to prevent confusion with another innocent Alexander. We have a parallel case in Acts x. 17 and 33. In the former reading, "the house of Simon"; in the second, "the house of Simon the Tanner." Alexander's chance came. Just before the words which provoked him was a passage which could be construed into a personal attack upon the emperor (1 Tim. i. 8-10). That contains, among many other opprobrious epithets which fitted Nero like a glove, the one word he abhorred of all words—"matricide."<sup>2</sup> There are many instances in which his anger fell heavily upon men who alluded to his crime by word or deed; even Delphi was punished severely because of the oracle's reference to it. Now if Apollonius was impeached for high treason and impiety against Nero for saying "pardon the gods for taking pleasure in buffoons," a satirical remark about Nero (Philostratus iv. 47), how much more likely would Paul be charged with that offence, for saying that the law was not made for a righteous man like him, but for an unrighteous man like Nero, who had broken every law in the Roman calendar, and yet claimed as emperor to be above the law (*lege solutus*)? In

<sup>1</sup> Epistolary aorist.

<sup>2</sup> Only here in the Bible.

the days when "no house would hold a secret," when epistolary correspondence was dangerous (Philostratus), when Tacitus declared there was no liberty even to converse, when even Apollonius was afraid to commit his thoughts to paper, the apostle courted death when he wrote that passage. Alexander the informer would not perhaps get the reward other informers got, for Paul's estate was small; but the Lord, if Nero would not, would see to it that he did get a reward—a truly Pauline remark.

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THE LIFE ETERNAL HERE AND NOW. By Alexander Nairne, D.D.  
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The Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge has done in this volume what it would be well if scholars did more frequently. He has shown the bearing of the results of philosophical and theological scholarships on the practical life and thought of the plain man who cannot enter into the deep problems of learning, but desires to live his life in the light of the best knowledge. He follows the course of Old Testament thought and shows its development in the New Testament, and its consummation in the Johanne writings. Its chief interest turns on the true significance of the words "Eternal Life" as used by St. John. To know the Father is eternal life, but "that eternal life is here and now, and always and everywhere." It is a spiritual state. We find spirit transforming the common things of experience. "We do not destroy the mansion of the senses in order to pass into the mansion of the Spirit: we only lay aside its fancies. The main reality is that the Father's house is all that is and was and ever will be, and we are, very simply, at home there." The way to this experience is indicated in the words, "No one cometh unto the Father but by Me." The Incarnation, and Sacrifice on Calvary mark steps in the ways of "going to the Father," of which the final stage is "that they may be perfected into one." This is an interpretation needed by those overwhelmed by bereavement, for it puts before us another view of death and enables us to pass out of death into life, here and now. Around this central theme are grouped a number of others, which will well repay careful thought. They may not be easy to grasp because some of them concern the ultimate problems of philosophy, but on all of them there is something interpretive drawn from many sources—the Cambridge Platonists, Shelley, and a number of modern writers.