

“THE BROTHER WHOSE PRAISE IS IN THE
GOSPEL.”

2 CORINTHIANS viii. 18.

IT might seem useless, if not presumptuous, to add another to the many conjectures which have been made as to the identity of the person so named by St. Paul, were it not that every such conjecture, even if it does not commend itself to others, may lead to an independent examination and study of Scripture, which cannot fail to be of use. I, therefore, venture to put forward an hypothesis which I have not met with anywhere, not as likely to command universal assent, but as worthy of discussion and consideration. It will be well, first, to state shortly the data which we have to go upon, and the chief conjectures which have found favour hitherto. (1) “The brother” is mentioned as being sent by Paul with Titus and another “brother” to Corinth. (2) He is ὁ ἀδελφὸς οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ διὰ πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν. (3) He was chosen by the Churches to travel, with St. Paul, with the money collected for the Church in Judæa, in order that there might be no suspicion of malversation of the funds.

The conjectures as to his identity have been many and various, as may be seen in Alford’s note. Heumann and Rückert suppose him to have been a brother of Titus; others (Chrysostom, Theodoret, Luther, Calvin), St. Barnabas; Baronius and Estius, Silas; Lightfoot and Stier, Mark; De Wette and Wieseler, Trophimus. But perhaps the most favoured theory was that which identified him with St. Luke, and explained the words, “whose praise is in the Gospel,” as referring to the written Gospel of St. Luke (so Origen, Jerome, Ambrose, *al.*, and so Wordsworth,

Gk. Test.) : and, though later writers have pointed out the fact (which Wordsworth appears to admit) that St. Luke's Gospel was not yet written, this need not invalidate the hypothesis, as St. Luke no doubt may have greatly assisted St. Paul in preaching the Gospel, and, moreover, he undoubtedly was one of those who accompanied St. Paul on the journey to Jerusalem (Acts xx. 6), and so would answer more or less to the description of one “chosen by the churches to travel, with us, with this grace which is administered by us.” These words, indeed, have been held (as by Wordsworth (Gk. Test., *in loc.*) to exclude any excepting those mentioned (Acts xx. 4-6) as accompanying St. Paul to Jerusalem; and, if this be so, then the words will most probably apply to St. Luke. But it does not seem necessary to conclude that the “brother” mentioned in 2 Corinthians viii. 18 actually accompanied St. Paul to Jerusalem. His presence was intended to prevent any suspicion of unfairness in the administration of the fund; but this was amply provided for by the presence of the other delegates of the various Churches: so that, if need were, he might be relieved from the necessity of accompanying St. Paul to Jerusalem.

If, then, we are free to look outside the list given in Acts xx. 4-6, it seems to me that there is at any rate a possibility that the person meant was the Ἐπαίνετος, or Epænetus, mentioned in Romans xvi. 5. This would at once give a natural explanation of the expression οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ, which would be a playful allusion to the name of the person of whom the Apostle was speaking. Such a quip or play on the meaning of a name—*Praiseworthy*, whose *praise* is in all the Churches—was quite in St. Paul's manner, as we learn from his beautiful letter, or note rather, to Philemon, where (Verse 11) he speaks of a slave *Profitable* (Onesimus) who had once been *useless* to his master, but who would henceforth be *useful* to him, and

repeats the allusion in a slightly different form in Verse 20; nor would such a play of fancy or humour seem in the least forced to an age, and in one of a race, which was very apt to find an omen in names.¹

The difficulties of this view are (1) that Epænetus was in Rome when St. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, which cannot have been long after the date when the second Epistle to the Corinthians was written. But we have a parallel to this in the case of Aquila and Priscilla, who were with St. Paul when 1 Corinthians was written (1 Cor. xvi. 19), but when the Epistle to the Romans was written had gone to Rome (Rom. xvi. 3). And, besides, the interval between the date of 2 Corinthians and that of Romans must have been at least three months (cf. 2 Cor. ii. 13 with Acts xx. 3), and probably a good deal more, which would allow ample time for Epænetus to reach Rome.

A second difficulty is that which has been already alluded to, viz., that Epænetus is not mentioned amongst those who accompanied St. Paul on his journey to Jerusalem (Acts xx. 4); and, if it is necessary to suppose that the "brother whose praise is in the Gospel" accompanied St. Paul to Jerusalem, Epænetus clearly cannot be the person meant. But it is not certain that this was so; and, if Epænetus was "the brother," we can see a reason why it would not be necessary for him to go to Jerusalem; for he was the "first fruits of Asia unto Christ" (*Ἀσίας* is the true reading in Rom. xvi. 5, A B C D F **N**, etc. adapted by Lachm., Tisch., Treg.), and therefore probably a delegate of the Churches of Asia; but as there were two other delegates from Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus, one of whom at any rate (Acts xxi. 29), and probably both, did

¹ We may compare, for the Jewish practice, the play on the name of Hezekiah's wife, Hephzibah (2 Kings xxi. 1.; Isa. lxii. 4), and for St. Paul's practice of thus playing on words Phil. iii. 2, 3; Rom. xii. 3.

accompany St. Paul to Jerusalem, the presence of Epænetus would not be necessary to give a security to the Churches of Asia of St. Paul's good faith.

There seems, then, to be no insuperable objection to supposing that St. Paul, in the expression we are considering, was making an allusion to the name of Epænetus which would at once be understood by those to whom he was writing. And, if so, possibly the other "brother" may have been St. Luke; though against this it may be urged that, according to the narrative in the Acts, St. Luke seems to have stopped in Philippi on the second missionary journey (Acts xvi.-xvii. 1), and to have stayed there till St. Paul returned at the end of the third missionary journey (Acts xx. 6). Whatever the value of the view here advocated may be, it would at any rate supply a reasonable explanation of the expression used by St. Paul, and is not perhaps attended with more difficulties than any of the other theories which have found favour.

JAMES E. DENISON.
