

A FIXED DATE IN THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL.

THE extreme importance, and the extreme difficulty, of finding any fixed and certain date in the life of St. Paul are familiar to every student of that period of history. The attempt to get any such fixed date by a synchronism with Roman history has failed. The proconsulship of Sergius Paulus in Cyprus, and of Gallio in Achaia, the procuratorship of Felix and of Festus in Judæa, are all uncertain in point of chronology. There is, however, one date which, if I am not mistaken, can be fixed not merely to the year, but to the month and day; and yet few of the investigators take much notice of it.¹ For example, it is not even alluded to in Lightfoot's posthumous essay on the *Chronology of St. Paul's Life and Epistles* in his *Biblical Essays*, pp. 215 ff. The reason for this neglect seems to be two-fold: (1) the date depends on a belief in the minute and exact accuracy of Luke's narrative, and there has been a tendency among modern scholars to distrust his accuracy; (2) it gives a scheme of dates earlier by one year than the majority of modern scholars desire or think probable.

The intention of this paper is to concentrate attention and criticism on the evidence of time furnished by the narrative of Acts xx. 5 ff. for the voyage of St. Paul to Jerusalem. In that passage we learn that the Passover was celebrated and the Days of Unleavened Bread were spent in Philippi. Thereafter the company started for Troas; and their voyage continued into the fifth day. In Troas they stayed seven days; the last complete day that they spent there was a Sunday, and they sailed away early on a Monday morning. Now, on the system common in ancient usage and followed by Luke, a part of a day, or of

¹ Wieseler and Lewin recognise its importance; but, as I think, they do not estimate its meaning correctly.

any other unit of time, is always reckoned as a complete unit in making a numerical statement of the duration of any action. The seven days in Troas, then, began with a Tuesday and ended with a Monday. Further, the Tuesday of the arrival in Troas must be also counted as the fifth day of the voyage. The voyage was evidently unusually protracted (contrast xvi. 11 f.); and hence the peculiar and unique expression, "we came until five days,"¹ where the Bezan reviser, according to his usual custom, substitutes the commoner and more easily understood term, "on the fifth day."² The journey had dragged out from the Friday morning until the Tuesday morning had set in. It follows, therefore, that the party started from Philippi on a Friday.

The only question that remains is whether the company started on the first morning after the Days of Unleavened Bread. Considering that the plan was to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost, and that time was therefore precious, we need not hesitate as to this point. On the first morning after the Days of Unleavened Bread, Paul³ and Luke started from Philippi to go down to Neapolis and take ship there.

The conclusion, then, is unavoidable: the slaying of the Passover in that year fell on the afternoon of a Thursday, and the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread continued till the following Thursday. That was the case in A.D. 57, but not in any of the years immediately around it. For example, in A.D. 58, when the great majority of modern scholars date the journey, the Passover was slain on a Monday, and the last Day of Unleavened Bread was the

¹ ἤλθομεν ἄχρι ἡμερῶν πέντε, xx. 6.

² ἤλθομεν πεμπταίοι.

³ I cannot agree with the inference drawn by some (including Blass) from xx. 4, that Paul was in Asia, and that Luke the Greek attached such importance to the Jewish festival as to wait in Philippi over it; nor does it seem in keeping with Luke's conception of the relative importance of events that he should chronicle so minutely the movements of the party, if Paul was not in it.

Monday following. In that case the journey from Philippi would have begun on Tuesday morning; Troas would have been reached on Saturday; and the stay in Troas must have lasted until the second Monday thereafter, continuing through eight complete days and parts of two other days. Lewin, in his *Fasti Sacri* (one of the most useful books¹ on this whole subject that have ever been written), states this clearly; and he proceeds to reconcile it with the words of *Acts* by a method which seems to me no reconciliation, but a mere statement of discrepancy.

To this date, which is assumed in my *St. Paul the Traveller* as a fixed point from which to reckon the whole chronology of the period before and after, the following objections are likely to be made, and may therefore be briefly considered.

(1) Our dating implies that Felix vacated office, and Festus entered upon office as procurator of Judæa in the summer of A.D. 59. It is held by many that Festus came to Palestine either in 60 or 61 (the date 60 being regarded by them as much more probable than 61); but, as Schürer (who leans to the date 60) concedes, in the end of his careful and judicious note, the facts recorded about Felix and Festus are not inconsistent with any date from 58 to 61.² The most important argument for the view that Felix continued to hold office later than A.D. 59 lies in the statement made by Paul, *Acts* xxiv. 10, that Felix had acquired familiarity with the Jews during a government of many years; but, as Tacitus says that in A.D. 52 Felix had been already for a long time governor over Judæa,³ those who agree with

¹ I mean *useful* in practice, though there is hardly a single point of chronology, where doubt could exist, in which I agree with him. He has strained all to suit a very artificial theory.

² Lightfoot and others have said that the events mentioned by Josephus after the accession of Nero under Felix's administration would require longer time than from 54 to 59: this argument does not convince Schürer, and I see no strength in it.

³ Jampridem Judæa impositus, *Annals*, xii. 54: one of those interesting

Mommsen in preferring the authority of Tacitus to that of Josephus on this point will find the words of Paul entirely justified.¹

There is therefore no reason possessing even the smallest cogency to force us to date the end of Felix's government later than 59; and some excellent authorities have even placed it earlier. The argument from *Acts* xx. 5 ff., which leads us to date it exactly in that year, may therefore have full weight.

(2) Reckoning backward from 57 as the date of Paul's fifth journey to Jerusalem, we are obliged to date the proconsulship of Gallio in Achaia as beginning in the summer of 52. If the statement made by Lightfoot² that Gallio must have been consul before he became proconsul of Achaia were correct, it would be conclusive against our date; for it is practically impossible to date Gallio's consulship early enough to admit of his governing Achaia in 52. But the statement is not correct, and is doubtless a mere slip of the pen or of the memory on the part of Lightfoot, who is remarkably accurate on all matters of Roman antiquities. Achaia was a province of the inferior senatorial class, governed by ex-prætors with the title of proconsul. The rule acted upon by Augustus, and observed by all later emperors (with the rarest exceptions), was that not less than five years must elapse between the holding of the magistracy in Rome and the proconsulship of a province.³

pieces of evidence from Tacitus, which justify the theory of early history for which I contend.

¹ Even if Josephus were right in making Felix's government of Judæa begin in 52, the remark has been often made that in comparison with the rapid change of procurators since A.D. 36, the years of Felix's rule might in 57 be fairly called "many."

² Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, ed. II., vol. i., p. 35, col. 2, art. "Acts of the Apostles."

³ Mommsen, *Staatsrecht*, ii. p. 248 f. Lewin, *Fasti Sacri*, p. 300, is wrong on this point, and his whole reasoning about the date of Gallio's proconsulship is vitiated thereby. It in some cases happened that the ex-prætor became consul before his turn came for a proconsulship. Lightfoot identifies Gallio's voyage

Gallio's prætorship, therefore, must have been earlier than A.D. 47. His brother Seneca was prætor in A.D. 50; but Gallio seems to have been older than Seneca, who speaks of him as *dominus meus Gallio*, in the respectful language of a younger brother about the older;¹ and it is therefore quite natural that Gallio should have held the prætorship before his younger brother. If we may assume that Gallio shared in the disgrace of his more famous brother Seneca from 41 to 49, the prætorship of Gallio would have to be dated at latest in 41.² At any rate there seems no more difficulty in dating his proconsulship in 52 than in 53 (the date preferred by Lightfoot, Renan, and others); for even the later date demands that Gallio was prætor before 48.

This date, and the date of the famine which began in the second half of A.D. 45, give us, according to my view, two points in the life of Paul.³ Now Luke, while loose in his expression as to lapse of time, shows great accuracy and art in regard to the chronological sequence of events; and my contention is that he has put in our hands the means of fixing with great precision the entire chronology of the early Christian history. This is, of course, true only on the "South-Galatian theory": the chronology remains uncertain on the "North-Galatian theory," but that is, in our view, the unavoidable consequence of a wrong theory. There seems to be no ground for doubt except on one point. It might plausibly be argued that the party sailed from

from Achaia in search of health (see *Ep.*, 104) with his voyage to Alexandria after his consulship (Pliny, *N.H.*, xxxi. 33); but the latter was apparently undertaken from Italy (see my *St. Paul*, p. 261).

¹ *Ep.*, 104, 1: As a title of courtesy, *dominus* was very freely used, cp. Sueton., *Claud.*, 21 (where, however, it had an obvious purpose); but it would probably not ordinarily be used by an elder brother about a younger. That Gallio was the elder brother is certain on other grounds.

² It may be inferred probably from *Consol. ad Helviam*, 18, 2, that Gallio had attained the prætorship before Seneca's exile.

³ The date of his visit to Jerusalem varies within certain limits (*St. Paul*, p. 51); I would now fix it to near November, 45; but no confidence can be felt, as yet, on that point.

Troas so early in the morning that Luke does not reckon the Monday as part of the stay in Troas, but makes the Sunday the last of the seven days; in that case the slaying of the Passover would have taken place in that year on a Wednesday afternoon. But I cannot accept that view, both because it violates the general principle which Luke observes in making such reckonings of time, and because it happens that in the years 56-59 (which are the only ones that need be taken into account) the Passover was never slain on a Wednesday: the days were in 56 Friday,¹ in 57 Thursday, in 58 Tuesday, and in 59 Sunday.

It is assumed in this paper that Luke reckoned the twenty-four hours Civil Day² from midnight to midnight, according to the common practice of Roman imperial time, and did not follow the Jewish and the religious custom of counting from sunset to sunset; but our reasoning would not be affected (in reality it would be strengthened against the doubt stated in the preceding paragraph), if we suppose him to have reckoned from sunset to sunset.

The question as to Paul's and Luke's reckoning of years may be touched on here, as connected with our present subject. I think that both Luke and Paul, at least when writing to Gentile congregations like those of Galatia or Achaia, reckoned the years according to the Asian, Macedonian, and Seleucid fashion as beginning from the autumn equinox, not from the spring equinox, according to the fashion of Damascus³ and of the Jews, nor from 1st January, according to Roman custom. Hence the fourteenth year before 56 might possibly be 44;⁴ for the year 1 would end

¹ According to Lewin, Friday, 19th March,* but according to Wieseler, *Chronol.*, p. 115, Sunday, 18th April, was the 14th Nisan in A.D. 56.

² See *EXPOSITOR*, vol. vii., 1893, p. 219 f., a paper "About the Sixth Hour."

³ See Clermont Ganneau, *Revue Archéolog.*, 1884, ii. p. 268, and *Statement Palest. Expl. Fund.*, 1896, January.

⁴ The statement to that effect in *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 60, has roused some suspicion that I had made a wrong reckoning.

Sept. 22, A.D. 44, and the year 14 would begin Sept. 23, A.D. 56. Similarly the fourteenth year after an event which occurred about August, A.D. 33, would begin on Sept. 23, A.D. 45. Probably Barnabas and Saul went up to Jerusalem in the late autumn or winter of 45, after the failure of harvest in Palestine and the southern parts of Syria in the summer of 45 was being felt in growing famine. The journey to Damascus and the appearance of Jesus to Paul might have occurred in the year ending 22 Sept., 33 A.D.

But is it not possible to find some external evidence by which to test our theoretical results about the chronology and history of the period? That further knowledge will be discovered soon, when investigators cease to confine themselves to theorizing on the old evidence and turn their attention to the discovery of new evidence, is in the highest degree probable. In the meantime it deserves notice that the views which are here set forth place in a new light the statements of some early and good authorities. In the *EXPOSITOR*, May, 1895, p. 391, I quoted the evidence, precise and explicit, given by Asterius, bishop of Amaseia, about 400 A.D., in favour of the South-Galatian theory. It would not be easy to find a better authority, for the geography of central Asia Minor must have been in a general way familiar to him; and when he interprets "the Galatic Territory" in *Acts* xviii. 23 as Lycaonia, it is difficult to see any other explanation except that he repeats unbroken tradition, according to which Derbe and Lystra were two of the Pauline "Churches of Galatia."

I would now refer to another piece of evidence, which appears also to possess good claim to trustworthiness. In an oration on Peter and Paul ascribed to Chrysostom,¹ it is stated in an incidental way that Paul suffered martyrdom in the sixty-eighth year of his age and the thirty-fifth

¹ It is ranked among the spurious orations by Montfaucon, vol. viii, p. 621,

of his Christian career. The writer says nothing about the age of Peter, and we may therefore conclude that he believed himself to have authority for stating the age of the one Apostle and not of the other: in other words, he had access to a tradition (which he accepted as trustworthy) about the age of Paul, while he knew no good tradition about the age of Peter. The question then remains, What was the value of the tradition about Paul's age? We might answer the question by putting some other questions—(1) Is it probable that such a tradition would be a pure invention? To me it seems very improbable. A Pauline legend undoubtedly grew in the centuries that followed the Apostle's death; but facts of that kind are not the stuff of which such legends were usually made. The most natural and easy explanation of its origin is that it was a tradition dating back to the memory of Paul's own circle. (2) Does the statement disagree with any of the known facts of Paul's life? On the contrary, it agrees excellently with the dates which we have deduced from an examination of the evidence given by Paul himself and by Luke. We may safely say that (to those who accept the argument that Paul was acquitted on his first trial) there can hardly be any doubt that his martyrdom took place about 67 A.D. It is improbable that the many events and journeys implied in the Pastoral Epistles could have occurred in so short a time as to permit us to place his execution so early as 66. Our dates then place his death in the thirty-fifth year of his Christian career.

Further, it seems clear that the public career of Paul began after the Crucifixion, *i.e.*, not earlier than the summer of A.D. 30. He was still a young man at the time of Stephen's death (*Acts* vii. 58); but yet he was then old enough to be taking a prominent part in public business

second edition, Paris, 1836; it probably belongs to the period following Chrysostom, and to the circle of the Asia Minor Church.

(xxvi. 10 f., ix. 1 f.).¹ It is a fair and probable view that he would begin public life shortly after entering on his thirtieth year, according to the regular Jewish custom. If, then, he were born in A.D. 1, he would complete his twenty-ninth year in A.D. 30, not long after that he would enter public life, and by A.D. 33 he would naturally be in a position to play a prominent part. The year beginning 23 Sept. 67, might be called his sixty-eighth year. Thus we have good reason to accept as in itself probable the statement of this ancient authority. But it is certainly an advantage in the theory which we have set forth, that it takes up these ancient witnesses, and justifies them, while at the same time its own strength is thereby increased. These various independent witnesses mutually support and corroborate each other.

In conclusion, I may be permitted a word of explanation as to my attitude in this question towards the late Bishop Lightfoot. If, in the opinion of dispassionate scholars, after the present storms of controversy have died away, I should be judged to have shown some small degree of the same spirit in seeking after truth as that great scholar, I should be well content. For his genius, for his scholarship, I have entertained the highest admiration since my undergraduate days; ² for his personal kindness to me as a beginner I feel gratitude that grows stronger and warmer as the years pass by. But his immense and well-earned influence is now supporting an error that could only have arisen about an unknown land. Our position in regard to the *Acts* may be illustrated from another subject. Lightfoot rightly caught the ring of genuineness in the traditional epitaph of Avircius Marcellus, amid all the corruptions that defaced it. Rightly

¹ In A.D. 61 he calls himself an old man, according to the generally accepted reading of Philem. 9. The Greeks had a broad distinction between "young men" and "old men."

² See *Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 6, 8, etc.

maintaining its authenticity, he attempted to disprove the arguments which seemed to older scholars, like Tillemont and Garrucci, to be conclusive proof of its spuriousness; but his discussion of the evidence was wrong throughout.¹ Fortunately he lived to recognise the complete change which better knowledge of the country necessitated; and in the latest edition he cut out the whole of his erroneous discussion, and substituted a brief reference to the real facts. Had he died a few years earlier, I should still have been struggling against the almost universal belief in England that his discussion of the subject must be correct. On the other hand, had his life been prolonged a few years more, he would have been the first to see (long before I saw) the bearing of the new information about Phrygia, Lycaonia, and Galatia, on the foundation of the early Church in Asia Minor; he would have himself corrected the errors about the history and geography of these countries that were inevitable, when his earlier works were written; I should never have been compelled to assume the position of criticising him, but have been free to be in external appearance, as I always have been in reality, his humble admirer; and, finally, I should have been spared the pain of seeing that my friend Dr. Sanday says that I have "held up to ignominy" as either "intellectually or morally discreditable" the mistakes which Lightfoot's untimely death has left for me to point out. I have pointed out the plain and simple facts: evidence will accumulate, and new discoveries will be made, and the truth will become apparent to all in time.

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¹ See his edition of *Colossians*, pp. 54 ff.