

the Man who points to heaven, and who says, "In My Father's house are many mansions"; and who, if the vision of long ago begins to dawn again on our life and we shrink back from it so far and so fair because we feel unworthy, can take us by the hand and lead us onward, upward, towards it all, saying, "I am the Way."

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NOTE ON ACTS IX. 19-25.

IN Acts ix. 19-25, the passage which relates St. Paul's stay in Damascus after his conversion, there are two notes of time, viz., "certain days" (*ἡμέρας τινάς*, v. 19), and "many days" (*ἡμέραι ἱκαναί*, v. 23). These two expressions are commonly understood of two successive periods of time, as if the writer meant that after recovering his strength Saul was "certain days" with the disciples at Damascus, and that immediately after the end of those days he began to preach, and that then "many days were fulfilled"—that is, a second period of "many days" elapsed—before the Jews took counsel to kill him, and caused his departure from the city. This way of interpreting the passage will have attractions for those who try to find a place in it where they can fit in St. Paul's journey to Arabia (Gal. i. 17).

But Prof. Ramsay calls attention to the fact that "it is characteristic of Luke to define the entire stay before relating some incidents that occurred in it" (see his references to Acts xiv. 28, xviii. 11, xix. 10, xx. 6, 7, at pages 153, 256, and 289 of *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*). This being so, it seems probable that the correct interpretation of the passage Acts ix. 19-25 is to take the "certain days" of verse 19 as describing the whole period of Saul's stay in Damascus, during which period all the incidents which follow in the narrative took place.

It would be an argument in favour of this way of understanding the passage that it gives an intelligible sense to the word "straightway" (εὐθέως) in verse 20, namely, immediately after Saul had taken food and recovered his strength (vv. 19, 20), while, according to the ordinary interpretation, εὐθέως stands in an awkward position, coming after an indefinite statement of time. It would be intelligible if we were told that Saul was five, or ten, or fifty days with the disciples, and then immediately began to preach. But what meaning are we to attach to the statement that he was "certain days" in Damascus and then immediately began to preach? "Immediately" ought to be preceded by some definite statement as to time, either expressed or implied. It would convey no distinct meaning to say that a person lived a good many years in England and immediately went to France, which is the kind of sentence which results from the common way of understanding this passage.

When I wrote the above paragraphs I did not know that Prof. Ramsay was himself one of those who divide St. Paul's stay at Damascus into two periods corresponding to the "certain days" and "many days" respectively of the narrative in Acts, and find place for the journey to Damascus in a supposed interval between these two periods. But I have since read to the end of his book, and I find that at page 380 he says :

Luke divides Paul's stay at Damascus into two periods, a few days' residence with the disciples (ix. 19), and a long period of preaching (20-23). The quiet residence in the country for a time, recovering from the serious and prostrating effect of his conversion (for a man's life is not suddenly reversed without serious claim on his physical power), is the dividing fact between the two periods. The division is certainly very awkwardly and insufficiently indicated; but Luke everywhere shows similar weakness in indicating the temporal relations of events (*St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, p. 380).

I quite agree with Prof. Ramsay that "the division"—if

division there be—"is certainly very awkwardly and insufficiently indicated." Might we not go farther, and say that it is not indicated at all? There is no mention or suggestion of it, and the use of the word *εὐθείως* (straightway), if it be understood as Prof. Ramsay must understand it, does not permit us to suppose that St. Luke meant that there was such an interval between the end of the "certain days" and the beginning of St. Paul's preaching as would leave room for the insertion of the journey to Arabia. The passage runs:

And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway (*εὐθείως*) he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.¹

If we set aside the desire to reconcile the Acts with St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, is not the most natural reading of the whole passage that which is suggested by Prof. Ramsay's own observation that "Luke's rule is to state first the whole period of residence, and then some details of the residence" (p. 289), namely, that there are no two periods, and therefore no interval between them, but first a general statement after St. Luke's manner that St. Paul was certain days with the disciples in Damascus after his recovery, and then the statement that all this time was spent in preaching in the synagogues until the hostility of the Jews compelled the disciples to send him away?

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¹ In Westcott and Hort's Greek Testament the paragraph division at Acts ix. 19 is not uniform with that at xiv. 28, though the structure of the sentences is the same. Compare Acts ix. 19; ix. 43; xi. 26; xiv. 28; xvi. 12; xviii. 11; xix. 10; xx. 6; xxi. 4; xxi. 10.