

## Paul's Journey to Rome

The following is Chapter 24 of *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, by W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson\*\*

### The Appian Way

The last Chapter began with a description of the facilities possessed by the ancients for travelling by sea: this must begin with a reference to their best opportunities of travelling by land. We have before spoken of some of the most important roads through the provinces of the Empire: now we are about to trace the Apostle's footsteps along that road, which was at once the oldest and most frequented in Italy, and which was called, in comparison with all others, the "Queen of Roads." We are no longer following the narrow line of compact pavement across Macedonian plains and mountains, or through the varied scenery in the interior of Asia Minor: but we are on the most crowded approach to the metropolis of the world, in the midst of prætors and proconsuls, embassies, legions, and turns of horse, "to their provinces hastening or on return," which Milton,—in his description of the City enriched with the spoils of nations,—has called us to behold "in various habits on the Appian road."

Leaving then all consideration of Puteoli, as it was related to the sea and to the various places on the coast, we proceed to consider its communications by land with the towns of Campania and Latium. The great line of communication between Rome and the southern part of the peninsula was the Way constructed by Appius Claudius, which passed through Capua, and thence to Brundisium on the shore of the Adriatic. Puteoli and its neighbourhood lay some miles to the westward of this main road: but communicated with it easily by well-travelled cross-roads. One of them followed the coast from Puteoli northwards, till it joined the Appian Way at Sinuessa, on the borders of Latium and Campania. It appears, however, that this road was not constructed till the reign of Domitian. Our attention, therefore, is called to the other cross-road which led directly to Capua. One branch of it left the coast at Cumæ, another at Puteoli. It was called the "Campanian Way," and also the "Con-

sular Way." It seems to have been constructed during the Republic, and was doubtless the road which is mentioned, in an animated passage of Horace's Epistles, as communicating with the baths and villas of Baïæ.

The first part then of the route which Julius took with his prisoners was probably from Puteoli to Capua. All the region near the coast, however transformed in the course of ages by the volcanic forces, which are still at work, is recognised as the scene of the earliest Italian mythology, and must ever be impressive from the poetic images, partly of this world and partly of the next, with which Virgil has filled it. From Cumæ to Capua, the road traverses a more prosaic district: the "Phlegræan fields" are left behind, and we pass from the scene of Italy's dim mythology to the theatre of the most exciting passages of her history. The whole line of the road can be traced at intervals, not only in the close neighbourhood of Puteoli and Capua, but through the intermediate villages, by fragments of pavement, tombs, and ancient milestones.

Capua, after a time of disgrace had expiated its friendship with Hannibal, was raised by Julius Cæsar to the rank of a colony: in the reign of Augustus it had resumed all its former splendour: and about the very time of which we are writing, it received accessions of dignity from the Emperor Nero. It was the most important city on the whole line of the Appian Way, between Rome and Brundisium. That part of the line with which we are concerned, is the northerly and most ancient portion. The distance is about 125 miles: and it may be naturally divided into two equal parts. The division is appropriate, whether in regard to the physical configuration of the country, or the modern political boundaries. The point of division is where Terracina is built at the base of those cliffs, on which the city of Anxur was of old proudly situated, and where a narrow pass, between the mountain and the sea, unites the Papal States to the kingdom of Naples.

The distance from Capua to Terracina is about seventy Roman miles. At the third mile, the road

crossed the river Volturnus at Casilinum, a town then falling into decay. Fifteen miles further it crossed the river Savo, by what was then called the Campanian Bridge. Thence, after three miles, it came to Sinuessa on the sea, which in St. Paul's day was reckoned the first town in Latium. But the old rich Campania extended further to the northward, including the vine-clad hills of the famous Falerian district through which we pass, after crossing the Savo. The last of these hills (where the vines may be seen trained on elms, as of old) is the range of Massicus, which stretches from the coast towards the Apennines, and finally shuts out from the traveller, as he descends on the farther side, all the prospect of Vesuvius and the coast near Puteoli. At that season, both vines and elms would have a wintery appearance. But the traces of spring would be visible in the willows; among which the Liris flows in many silent windings—from the birthplace of Marius in the mountains—to the city and the swamps by the sea, which the ferocity of his mature life has rendered illustrious. After leaving Minturnæ, the Appian Way passes on to another place, which has different associations with the later years of the Republic. We speak of Formiæ, with its long street by the shore of its beautiful bay, and with its villas on the sea side and above it; among which was one of Cicero's favourite retreats from the turmoil of the political world, and where at last he fell by the hand of assassins. Many a lectica, or palanquin, such as that in which he was reclining when overtaken by his murderers, may have been met by St. Paul in his progress,—with other carriages, with which the road would become more and more crowded,—the cisium, or light cabriolet, of some gay reveller, on his way to Baiæ,—or the four-wheeled rheda, full of the family of some wealthy senator quitting the town for the country. At no great distance from Formiæ the road left the sea again, and passed, where the substructions of it still remain, through the defiles of the Cæcuban hills, with their stony but productive vineyards. Thence the traveller looked down upon the plain of Fundi, which retreats like a bay into the mountains, with the low lake of Amyclæ between the town and the sea. Through the capricious care, with which time has preserved in one place what is lost in another, the pavement of the ancient way is still the street of this, the most northerly town of the Neapolitan kingdom in this direction. We have now in front of us the mountain line, which is both the frontier of the Papal states, and the natural division of the Apostle's journey from Capua to Rome. Where it reaches the coast, in bold lime-

stone precipices, there Anxur was situated, with its houses and temples high above the sea.

After leaving Anxur, the traveller observes the high land retreating again from the coast, and presently finds himself in a wide and remarkable plain, enclosed towards the interior by the sweep of the blue Volscian mountains, and separated by a belt of forest from the sea. Here are the Pomptine marshes,—“the only marshes ever dignified by classic celebrity.” The descriptive lines of the Roman satirist have wonderfully concurred with the continued unhealthiness of the half-drained morass, in preserving a living commentary on that fifteenth verse in the last chapter of the Acts, which exhibits to us one of the most touching passages in the Apostle's life. A few miles beyond Terracina, where a fountain, grateful to travellers, welled up near the sanctuary of Feronia, was the termination of a canal, which was formed by Augustus for the purpose of draining the marshes, and which continued for twenty miles by the side of the road. Over this distance, travellers had their choice, whether to proceed by barges dragged by mules, or on the pavement of the way itself. It is impossible to know which plan was adopted by Julius and his prisoners. If we suppose the former to have been chosen, we have the aid of Horace's Satire to enable us to imagine the incidents and the company, in the midst of which the Apostle came, unknown and unfriended, to the corrupt metropolis of the world. And yet he was not so unfriended as he may possibly have thought himself that day, in his progress from Anxur across the watery, unhealthy plain. On the arrival of the party at Appii Forum, which was a town where the mules were unfastened, at the other end of the canal, and is described by the satirist as full of low tavern-keepers and bargemen,—at that meeting-place where travellers from all parts of the Empire had often crossed one another's path,—on that day, in the motley and vulgar crowd, some of the few Christians who were then in the world, suddenly recognised one another, and emotions of holy joy and thanksgiving sanctified the place of coarse vice and vulgar traffic. The disciples at Rome had heard of the Apostle's arrival at Puteoli, and hastened to meet him on the way; and the prisoner was startled to recognise some of those among whom he had laboured, and whom he had loved, in the distant cities of the East. Whether Aquila and Priscilla were there it is needless to speculate. Whoever might be the persons, they were brethren in Christ, and their presence would be an instantaneous source of comfort and strength. We have

already seen, on other occasions of his life, how the Apostle's heart was lightened by the presence of his friends.

#### Appii Forum and the Three Taverns

About ten miles farther he received a second welcome from a similar group of Christian brethren. Two independent companies had gone to meet him; or the zeal and strength of one party had outstripped the other. At a place called the Three Taverns, where a cross road from the coast at Antium came in from the left, this second party of Christians was waiting to welcome and to honour "the ambassador in bonds." With a lighter heart, and a more cheerful countenance, he travelled the remaining seventeen miles, which brought him along the base of the Alban Hills, in the midst of places well known and famous in early Roman legends, to the town of Aricia. The Great Apostle had the sympathies of human nature; he was dejected and encouraged by the same causes which act on our spirits; he too saw all outward objects in "hues borrowed from the heart." The diminution of fatigue—the more hopeful prospect of the future—the renewed elasticity of religious trust—the sense of a brighter light on all the scenery round him—on the foliage which overshadowed the road—on the wide expanse of the plain to the left—on the high summit of the Alban Mount,—all this, and more than this, is involved in St. Luke's sentence,—“when Paul saw the brethren, he thanked God, and took courage.”

The mention of the Alban Mount reminds us that we are approaching the end of our journey. The isolated group of hills, which is called by this collective name, stands between the plain which has just been traversed and that other plain which is the Campagna of Rome. All the bases of the mountain were then (as indeed they are partially now) clustered round with the villas and gardens of wealthy citizens. The Appian Way climbs and then descends along its southern slope. After passing Lanuvium it crossed a crater-like valley on immense substractions, which still remain. Here is Aricia, an easy stage from Rome. The town was above the road; and on the hill side swarms of beggars beset travellers as they passed. On the summit of the next rise, Paul of Tarsus would obtain his first view of Rome. There is no doubt that the prospect was, in many respects, very different from the view which is now obtained from the same spot. It is true that the natural features of the scene are unaltered. The long wall of blue Sabine mountains, with Soracte in the distance, closed in the Campagna, which stretched far across to the sea and

round the base of the Alban hills. But ancient Rome was not, like modern Rome, impressive from its solitude, standing alone, with its one conspicuous cupola, in the midst of a desolate though beautiful waste. St. Paul would see a vast city, covering the Campagna, and almost continuously connected by its suburbs with the villas on the hill where he stood, and with the bright towns which clustered on the sides of the mountains opposite. Over all the intermediate space were the houses and gardens, through which aqueducts and roads might be traced in converging lines towards the confused mass of edifices which formed the city of Rome. Here no conspicuous building, elevated above the rest, attracted the eye or the imagination. Ancient Rome had neither cupola nor campanile. Still less had it any of those spires, which give life to all the landscapes of Northern Christendom. It was a wide-spread aggregate of buildings, which, though separated by narrow streets and open squares, appeared, when seen from near Aricia, blended into one indiscriminate mass: for distance concealed the contrasts which divided the crowded habitations of the poor and the dark haunts of filth and misery—from the theatres and colonnades, the baths, the temples and palaces with gilded roofs, flashing back the sun.

The road descended into the plain at Bovillæ, six miles from Aricia, and thence it proceeded in a straight line, with the sepulchres of illustrious families on either hand. One of these was the burial-place of the Julian gens, with which the centurion who had charge of the prisoners was in some way connected. As they proceeded over the old pavement, among gardens and modern houses, and approached nearer the busy metropolis—the “conflux issuing forth or entering in” in various costumes and on various errands,—vehicles, horsemen, and foot-passengers, soldiers and labourers, Romans and foreigners,—became more crowded and confusing. The houses grew closer. They were already in Rome. It was impossible to define the commencement of the city. Its populous portions extended far beyond the limits marked out by Servius. The ancient wall, with its once sacred pomœrium, was rather an object for antiquarian interest, like the walls of York or Chester, than any protection against the enemies, who were kept far aloof by the legions on the frontier.

#### Entrance into Rome

Yet the Porta Capena is a spot which we can hardly leave without lingering for a moment. Under this arch—which was perpetually dripping with the wa-

ter of the aqueduct that went over it—had passed all those who, since a remote period of the republic, had travelled by the Appian Way,—victorious generals with their legions, returning from foreign service,—emperors and courtiers, vagrant representatives of every form of Heathenism, Greeks and Asiatics, Jews and Christians. From this point entering within the city, Julius and his prisoners moved on, with the Aventine on their left, close round the base of the Cœlian, and through the hollow ground which lay between this hill and the Palatine: thence over the low ridge called Velia, where afterwards was built the arch of Titus, to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem; and then descending, by the Sacra Via, into that space which was the centre of imperial power and imperial magnificence, and associated also with the most glorious recollections of the republic. The Forum was to Rome, what the Acropolis was to Athens, the heart of all the characteristic interest of the place. Here was the Milliarium Aureum, to which the roads of all the provinces converged. All around were the stately buildings, which were raised in the closing years of the Republic, and by the earlier Emperors. In front was the Capitoline Hill, illustrious long before the invasion of the Gauls. Close on the left, covering that hill, whose name is associated in every modern European language with the notion of imperial splendour, were the vast ranges of the palace—the “house of Cæsar” (Phil. 4:22). Here were the household troops quartered in a prætorium attached to the palace. And here (unless, indeed, it was in the great Prætorian camp outside the city wall) Julius gave up his prisoner to Burrus, the Prætorian Præfect, whose official duty it was to keep in custody all accused persons who were to be tried before the Emperor.

This doubt, which of two places, somewhat distant from each other, was the scene of St. Paul's meeting with the commander-in-chief of the Prætorian guards, gives us the occasion for entering on a general description of the different parts of the city of Rome. It would be nugatory to lay great stress, as is too often done, on its “seven hills:” for a great city at length obliterates the original features of the ground, especially where those features were naturally not very strongly marked. The description, which is easy in reference to Athens or Edinburgh, is hard in the instance of modern London or ancient Rome. Nor is it easy, in the case of one of the larger cities of the world, to draw any marked lines of distinction among the different classes of buildings. It is true, the contrasts are really great; but

details are lost in a distant view of so vast an aggregate. The two scourges to which ancient Rome was most exposed, revealed very palpably the contrast, both of the natural ground and the human structures, which by the general observer might be unnoticed or forgotten. When the Tiber was flooded, and the muddy waters converted all the streets and open places of the lower part of the city into lakes and canals, it would be seen very clearly how much lower were the Forum and the Campus Martius, than those three detached hills (the Capitoline, the Palatine, and the Aventine) which rose near the river; and those four ridges (the Cœlian, the Esquiline, the Viminal, and the Quirinal) which ascended and united together in the higher ground on which the Prætorian camp was situated. And when fires swept rapidly from roof to roof, and vast ranges of buildings were buried in the ruins of one night, that contrast between the dwellings of the poor and the palaces of the rich, which has supplied the Apostle with one of his most forcible images, would be clearly revealed,—the difference between structures of “sumptuous marbles, with silver and gold,” which abide after the fire, and the hovels of “wood, hay, stubble,” which are burnt (1 Cor. 3:10–15).

#### Description of Rome

If we look at a map of modern Rome, with a desire of realising to ourselves the appearance of the city of Augustus and Nero, we must in the first place obliterate from our view that circuit of walls, which is due in various proportions, to Aurelian, Belisarius, and Pope Leo IV. The wall, through which the Porta Capena gave admission, was the old Servian enclosure, which embraced a much smaller area: though we must bear in mind, as we have remarked above, that the city had extended itself beyond this limit, and spread through various suburbs, far into the country. In the next place we must observe that the hilly part of Rome, which is now half occupied by gardens, was then the most populous, while the Campus Martius, now covered with crowded streets, was comparatively open. It was only about the close of the Republic that many buildings were raised on the Campus Martius, and these were chiefly of a public or decorative character. One of these, the Pantheon, still remains, as a monument of the reign of Augustus. This, indeed, is the period from which we must trace the beginning of all the grandeur of Roman buildings. Till the Civil War between Pompey and Cæsar, the private houses of the citizens had been mean, and the only public structures of note were the cloacæ

and the aqueducts. But in proportion as the ancient fabric of the constitution broke down, and while successful generals brought home wealth from provinces conquered and plundered on every shore of the Mediterranean, the City began to assume the appearance of a new and imperial magnificence. To leave out of view the luxurious and splendid residences which wealthy citizens raised for their own uses, Pompey erected the first theatre of stone, and Julius Cæsar surrounded the great Circus with a portico. From this time the change went on rapidly and incessantly. The increase of public business led to the erection of enormous Basilicas. The Forum was embellished on all sides. The Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, and those other temples the remains of which are still conspicuous at the base of the Capitoline, were only a small part of similar buildings raised by Augustus. The triumphal arch erected by Tiberius near the same place was only one of many structures, which rose in rapid succession to decorate that busy neighbourhood. And if we wish to take a wider view, we have only to think of the aqueducts, which were built, one by one, between the private enterprises of Agrippa in the reign of Augustus, and the recent structures of the Emperor Claudius, just before the arrival of the Apostle Paul. We may not go further in the order of chronology. We must remember that the Colosseum, the Basilica of Constantine, and the baths of other emperors, and many other buildings which are now regarded as the conspicuous features of ancient Rome, did not then exist. We are describing a period which is anterior to the time of Nero's fire. Even after the opportunity which that calamity afforded for reconstructing the city, Juvenal complains of the narrowness of the streets. Were we to attempt to extend our description to any of these streets,—whether the old Vicus Tuscus, with its cheating shopkeepers, which led round the base of the Palatine, from the Forum to the Circus,—or the aristocratic Carinæ along the slope of the Esquiline,—or the noisy Suburra, in the hollow between the Viminal and Quirinal, which had sunk into disrepute, though once the residence of Julius Cæsar,—we should only wander into endless perplexity. And we should be equally lost, if we were to attempt to discriminate the mixed multitude, which were crowded on the various landings of those insulæ, or piles of lodging houses, which are perhaps best described by comparing them to the houses in the old town of Edinburgh.

If it is difficult to describe the outward appearances of the city, it is still more difficult to trace the dis-

tinctive features of all the parts of that colossal population which filled it. Within a circuit of little more than twelve miles more than two millions of inhabitants were crowded. It is evident that this fact is only explicable by the narrowness of the streets, with that peculiarity of the houses which has been alluded to above. In this prodigious collection of human beings, there were of course all the contrasts which are seen in a modern city,—all the painful lines of separation between luxury and squalor, wealth and want. But in Rome all these differences were on an exaggerated scale, and the institution of slavery modified further all social relations. The free citizens were more than a million: of these, the senators were so few in number, as to be hardly appreciable: the knights, who filled a great proportion of the public offices, were not more than 10,000: the troops quartered in the city may be reckoned at 15,000: the rest were the Plebs urbana. That a vast number of these would be poor, is an obvious result of the most ordinary causes. But, in ancient Rome, the luxury of the wealthier classes did not produce a general diffusion of trade, as it does in a modern city. The handicraft employments, and many of what we should call professions, were in the hands of slaves; and the consequence was, that a vast proportion of the Plebs urbana lived on public or private charity. Yet were these pauper citizens proud of their citizenship, though many of them had no better sleeping-place for the night than the public porticos or the vestibules of temples. They cared for nothing beyond bread for the day, the games of the Circus, and the savage delight of gladiatorial shows. Manufactures and trade they regarded as the business of the slave and the foreigner. The number of the slaves was perhaps about a million. The number of the strangers or peregrini was much smaller; but it is impossible to describe their varieties. Every kind of nationality and religion found its representative in Rome. But it is needless to pursue these details. The most obvious comparison is better than an elaborate description. Rome was like London with all its miseries, vices, and follies exaggerated, and without Christianity.

#### Population of Rome

One part of Rome still remains to be described, the "Trastevere," or district beyond the river. This portion of the city has been known in modern times for the energetic and intractable character of its population. In earlier times it was equally notorious, though not quite for the same reason. It was the residence of a low rabble, and the place of

the meanest merchandise. There is, however, one reason why our attention is particularly called to it. It was the ordinary residence of the Jews—the “Ghetto” of ancient Rome: and great part of it was doubtless squalid and miserable, like the Ghetto of modern Rome, though the Jews were often less oppressed under the Cæsars than under the Popes. Here then—on the level ground, between the windings of the muddy river and the base of that hill from the brow of which Porsena looked down on early Rome, and where the French within these few years have planted their cannon—we must place the home of those Israelitish families among whom the Gospel bore its first-fruits in the metropolis of the world: and it was on these bridges,—which formed an immediate communication from the district beyond the Tiber to the Emperor’s household and the guards on the Palatine,—that those despised Jewish beggars took their stand, to whom in the place of their exile had come the hopes of a better citizenship than that which they had lost.

The Jewish community thus established in Rome, had its first beginnings in the captives brought by Pompey after his eastern campaign. Many of them were manumitted; and thus a great proportion of the Jews in Rome were freedmen. Frequent accessions to their numbers were made as years went on—chiefly from the mercantile relations which subsisted between Rome and the East. Many of them were wealthy, and large sums were sent annually for religious purposes from Italy to the mother country. Even the proselytes contributed to these sacred funds. It is difficult to estimate the amount of the religious influence exerted by the Roman Jews upon the various Heathens around them; but all our sources of information lead us to conclude that it was very considerable. So long as this influence was purely religious, we have no reason to suppose that any persecution from the civil power resulted. It was when commotions took place in consequence of expectations of a temporal Messiah, or when vague suspicions of this mysterious people were more than usually excited, that the Jews of Rome were cruelly treated, or peremptorily banished. Yet from all these cruelties they recovered with elastic force, and from all these exiles they returned; and in the early years of Nero, which were distinguished for a mild and lenient government of the Empire, the Jews in Rome seem to have enjoyed complete toleration, and to have been a numerous, wealthy, and influential community.

The Roman Church

The Christians doubtless shared the protection

which was extended to the Jews. They were hardly yet sufficiently distinguished as a self-existent community, to provoke any independent hostility. It is even possible that the Christians, so far as they were known as separate, were more tolerated than the Jews; for, not having the same expectation of an earthly hero to deliver them, they had no political ends in view, and would not be in the same danger of exciting the suspicion of the government. Yet we should fall into a serious error, if we were to suppose that all the Christians in Rome, or the majority of them, had formerly been Jews or Proselytes; though this was doubtless true of its earliest members, who may have been of the number that were dispersed after the first Pentecost, or, possibly, disciples of our Lord Himself. It is impossible to arrive at any certain conclusion concerning the first origin and early growth of the Church in Rome; though, from the manifold links between the city and the provinces, it is easy to account for the formation of a large and flourishing community. Its history before the year 61 might be divided into three periods, separated from each other by the banishment of the Jews from Rome in the reign of Claudius, and the writing of St. Paul’s letter from Corinth. Even in the first of these periods there might be points of connection between the Roman Church and St. Paul; for some of those whom he salutes (Rom. 16:7, 11) as “kinsmen,” are also said to have been “Christians before him.” In the second period it cannot well be doubted that a very close connection began between St. Paul and some of the conspicuous members and principal teachers of the Roman Church. The expulsion of the Jews in consequence of the edict of Claudius, brought them in large numbers to the chief towns of the Levant; and there St. Paul met them in the synagogues. We have seen what results followed from his meeting with Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth. They returned to Rome with all the stores of spiritual instruction which he had given them; and in the Epistle to the Romans we find him, as is natural, saluting them thus:—“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my sake laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the Church that is in their house.” All this reveals to us a great amount of devoted exertion on behalf of one large congregation in Rome; and all of it distinctly connected with St. Paul. And this is perhaps only a specimen of other cases of the like kind. Thus he sends a greeting to Epænetus, whom he names “the first-fruits of Asia” (ver. 5), and who may have had

the same close relation to him during his long ministration at Ephesus (Acts, 19), which Aquila and Priscilla had at Corinth. Nor must we forget those women, whom he singles out for special mention,—“Mary, who bestowed much labour on him” (ver. 6); “the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord” (ver. 12); with Tryphæna and Tryphosa, and the unknown mother of Rufus (ver. 13). We cannot doubt, that, though the Church of Rome may have received its growth and instruction through various channels, many of them were connected, directly or indirectly, with St. Paul; and accordingly he writes, in the whole of the letter, as one already in intimate relation with a Church which he has never seen. And whatever bonds subsisted between this Apostle and the Roman Christians, must have been drawn still closer when the letter had been received; for from that time they were looking forward to a personal visit from him, in his projected journey to the West. Thenceforward they must have taken the deepest interest in all his movements, and received with eager anxiety the news of his imprisonment at Cæsarea, and waited (as we have already seen) for his arrival in Italy. It is indeed but too true that there were parties among the Christians in Rome, and that some had a hostile feeling against St. Paul himself; yet it is probable that the animosity of the Judaizers was less developed, than it was in those regions which he had personally visited, and to which they had actually followed him. As to the unconverted Jews, the name of St. Paul was doubtless known to them; yet were they comparatively little interested in his movements. Their proud contempt of the Christian heresy would make them indifferent. The leaven of the Gospel was working around them to an extent of which they were hardly aware. The very magnitude of the population of Rome had a tendency to neutralise the currents of party feeling. For these reasons the hostility of the Jews was probably less violent than in any other part of the Empire.

#### Interview with the Jews

Yet St. Paul could not possibly be aware of the exact extent of their enmity against himself. Independently, therefore, of his general principle of preaching, first to the Jew and then to the Gentile, he had an additional reason for losing no time in addressing himself to his countrymen. Thus, after the mention of St. Paul's being delivered up to Burrus, and allowed by him to be separate from the other prisoners, the next scene to which the sacred historian introduces us is among the Jews. After three days he sent for the principal men among

them to his lodging, and endeavoured to conciliate their feelings towards himself and the Gospel.

It was highly probable that the prejudices of these Roman Jews were already roused against the Apostle of the Gentiles; or if they had not yet conceived an unfavourable opinion of him, there was a danger that they would now look upon him as a traitor to his country, from the mere fact that he had appealed to the Roman power. He might even have been represented to them in the odious light of one who had come to Rome as an accuser of the Sanhedrin before the Emperor. St. Paul, therefore, addressed his auditors on this point at once, and shewed that his enemies were guilty of this very appeal to the foreign power, of which he had himself been suspected. He had committed no offence against the holy nation, or the customs of their fathers; yet his enemies at Jerusalem had delivered him,—one of their brethren—of the seed of Abraham—of the tribe of Benjamin—a Hebrew of the Hebrews—into the hands of the Romans. So unfounded was the accusation, that even the Roman governor had been ready to liberate the prisoner; but his Jewish enemies opposed his liberation. They strove to keep a child of Israel in Roman chains. So that he was compelled, as his only hope of safety, to appeal unto Cæsar. He brought no accusation against his countrymen before the tribunal of the stranger: that was the deed of his antagonists. In fact, his only crime had been his firm faith in God's deliverance of his people through the Messiah promised by the Prophets. “For the hope of Israel,” he concluded, “I am bound with this chain.”

Their answer to this address was reassuring. They said that they had received no written communication from Judæa concerning St. Paul, and that none of “the brethren” who had arrived from the East had spoken any evil of him. They further expressed a wish to hear from himself a statement of his religious sentiments, adding that the Christian sect was everywhere spoken against. There was perhaps something hardly honest in this answer; for it seems to imply a greater ignorance with regard to Christianity than we can suppose to have prevailed among the Roman Jews. But with regard to Paul himself, it might well be true that they had little information concerning him. Though he had been imprisoned long at Cæsarea, his appeal had been made only a short time before winter. After that time (to use the popular expression), the sea was shut; and the winter had been a stormy one; so that it was natural enough that his case should

be first made known to the Jews by himself. All these circumstances gave a favourable opening for the preaching of the Gospel, and Paul hastened to take advantage of it. A day was fixed for a meeting at his own private lodging.

They came in great numbers at the appointed time. Then followed an impressive scene, like that at Troas (Acts, 21)—the Apostle pleading long and earnestly,—bearing testimony concerning the kingdom of God,—and endeavouring to persuade them by arguments drawn from their own Scriptures,—“from morning till evening.” The result was a division among the auditors—“not peace but a sword,”—the division which has resulted ever since, when the Truth of God has encountered, side by side, earnest conviction with worldly indifference, honest investigation with bigoted prejudice, trustful faith with the pride of scepticism. After a long and stormy discussion, the unbelieving portion departed; but not until St. Paul had warned them, in one last address, that they were bringing upon themselves that awful doom of judicial blindness, which was denounced in their own Scriptures against obstinate unbelievers; that the salvation which they rejected would be withdrawn from them, and the inheritance they renounced would be given to the Gentiles. The sentence with which he gave emphasis to this warning was that passage in Isaiah, which is more often quoted in the New Testament than any other words from the Old, —which recurring thus with solemn force at the very close of the Apostolic history, seems to bring very strikingly together the Old Dispensation and the New, and to connect the ministry of Our Lord with that of His Apostles:— “Go unto this people and say: Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing

ye shall see and shall not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”

A formal separation was now made between the Apostle of the Gentiles and the Jews of Rome. They withdrew, to dispute concerning the “sect” which was making such inroads on their prejudices (ver. 29). He remained in his own hired house, where the indulgence of Burrus permitted him to reside, instead of confining him within the walls of the Prætorian barrack. We must not forget, however, that he was still a prisoner under military custody,—chained by the arm, both day and night, to one of the imperial bodyguard,—and thus subjected to the rudeness and caprice of an insolent soldiery. This severity, however, was indispensable, according to the Roman law; and he received every indulgence which it was in the power of the Præfect to grant. He was allowed to receive all who came to him (ver. 30), and was permitted, without hindrance, to preach boldly the kingdom of God, and teach the things of the Lord Jesus Christ (ver. 31).

Thus was fulfilled his long cherished desire “to proclaim the Gospel to them that were in Rome also” (Rom. 1:15). Thus ends the Apostolic History, so far as it has been directly revealed. Here the thread of sacred narrative, which we have followed so long, is suddenly broken. Our knowledge of the incidents of his residence in Rome, and of his subsequent history, must be gathered almost exclusively from the letters of the Apostle himself.

See also [Rome](#), an article in Wikipedia.