There are two main senses in which one may speak of the chronology of a historical document (or one which purports to be historical). On the one hand, one may speak of the date of its literary completion, or of the stages by which it reached completion; one may speak, on the other hand, of the dating of its contents, of the events which it records. It is with the latter sense—with the “dramatic” date of Acts, as it is called—that this lecture is concerned. All that need be said here about the date of the composition of Acts is that a sufficient time has elapsed for the author to look back in tranquillity over the course of events and present them in a more balanced perspective than would have been possible for one writing in mediis rebus. The outstanding personages of the narrative—Peter, Paul and James of Jerusalem—had all died (I think) by the time of writing, and the author was able to stress their respective contributions to the rise and progress of Christianity rather than the temporary controversies in which they had been involved one with another.

But if the author wrote a decade or two later than the last events which he records, he was acquainted with the situation that he describes. Having examined Luke’s presentation of such matters as Roman citizenship, the appeal to Caesar, judicial procedure and the tenure of magistracies, A. N. Sherwin-White insists that his work is true to its dramatic date: it does not reflect the conditions which obtained as little as a generation later. “For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming ... any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd”.

1 A lecture delivered in the John Rylands University Library on Wednesday, 6 November 1985.
2 In Arnold Ehrhardt’s opinion “much animosity, so it seems, had also died with them” (The Acts of the Apostles [Manchester, 1969], p. 50).
There are many incidental chronological data in Acts. The "we" sections or travel diaries provide a day-by-day record, so far as they go. Paul and Barnabas are said to have spent "a whole year" together in a teaching ministry in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Later, Paul is said to have spent "a year and six months" in Corinth (18:11), and between two and three years in Ephesus (19:10; 20:31). He was kept for two years in custody at Caesarea (24:27) and a further two years under house arrest in Rome (28:30).

The book as a whole, however, exhibits no explicit chronological framework. An implicit framework was postulated many years ago by C. J. Cadoux. He drew attention, as others had done, to the editorial reports of progress which punctuate the narrative of Acts, but struck out on a new line by arguing that the intervals between them, six intervals in all, represent a period of five years each, yielding a total of thirty years. That the narrative of Acts does in fact cover a stretch of some thirty years is certain, and it may well be true that each of the six intervals represents a quinquennium, more or less, but it is unlikely that the author intended them to have this chronological significance. Even more unlikely is it that, as Cadoux further argued, each interval begins and ends with a pentecostal festival. Moreover, there are one or two other progress reports in Acts which cannot be stylistically distinguished from those which Cadoux lists, but which he leaves unmentioned.

A survey of studies of the chronology of Acts must go back to C. H. Turner's magisterial article on "Chronology of the New Testament", published in 1898 in the first volume of Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible. This article, which in itself is a small monograph, filling forty-three columns of small print, includes a section on the apostolic age (c. A.D. 30-70). These forty years, said Turner, "are roughly conterminous with the labours of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the principal documents concerned are, on the one hand, their Epistles, on the other, the Acts, one half of which

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book is in effect devoted to each of the two great apostles". Modern scholars would count it to Turner for righteousness that he mentions the epistles, which provide first-hand evidence (so far as those of undoubted authenticity are concerned), before the Acts. But neither of these two bodies of literature presents any continuous system of time-notes, and we must be grateful for the help given by their references to contemporary events. Luke especially, because he sets his account of Christian beginnings in the context of world-history, supplies indirectly some valuable chronological data.

Turner lists ten chronological data from apostolic history, eight of which are mentioned in Acts. They are:

1. The reign of King Aretas, mentioned not in Acts but in 2 Corinthians 11:32, but in connection with Paul's escape from Damascus through the city wall, to which reference is made also in Acts 9:23-25.
5. The expulsion of Jews from Rome under Claudius (Acts 18:2).
9. The days of unleavened bread (Acts 20:6f.).
10. The persecution of Christians under Nero, not explicitly mentioned either in Acts or in the epistles.

II

It will be convenient to use this list of events as a basis for the next section of our study.

1. The reign of King Aretas

Aretas IV was king of the Nabataean Arabs from about 9 B.C. to A.D. 40. It is widely supposed, though on doubtful grounds,

7 HDB, i. 415.
that Damascus actually belonged to his kingdom for a few years before his death—perhaps through a change of imperial policy at the beginning of the principate of Gaius in A.D. 37.8 His ethnarch who, according to 2 Corinthians 11:32, watched the gates of Damascus in an attempt to arrest Paul, was probably the head of the Nabataean colony in that city.9 Paul’s residence in Damascus, according to Galatians 1:17f., fell within the three years or so following his conversion, and that event must certainly be dated well before A.D. 40, the year of Aretas’s death. Even if Aretas did control Damascus from A.D. 37 until his death, Paul’s escape from the city is probably to be dated before A.D. 37. It is only in a very general way that the reference to Aretas helps us in our chronological quest.

2. The reign and death of Herod Agrippa I

“Herod the king”, as he is called in Acts 12:1, was raised to royal estate by Gaius when he become emperor in A.D. 37 and presented with the former tetrarchies of Philip (his uncle) and Lysanias, east and north of the upper Jordan valley.10 Two years later he was also given Galilee and Peraea, the tetrarchy from which his uncle Antipas was deposed at that time; two years later still, the next emperor, Claudius, added Judaea to his kingdom.11 He ruled Judaea for only three years12 (A.D. 41-44), and it is within those three years that the events of Acts 12:1-23 (the execution of James the son of Zebedee and the imprisonment and escape of Peter) must be dated.

Luke’s account of Herod Agrippa’s attack on the apostles in Jerusalem is introduced by the vague phrase “about that time” (Acts 12:1). The year 42 or 43 is most probable for this attack. In A.D. 41 Agrippa was in Rome at the time of the assassination of Gaius on 24 January, and stayed there until Claudius’s position as

8 Cf. E. Schürer, History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, ii (Edinburgh, 1979), 129f.
10 Josephus, BJ, 2.181-183; Antiquities, 18.237.
12 Josephus, BJ, 2.214; Ant., 19.351.
emperor was consolidated. It took at least five weeks to travel from Rome to Jerusalem, so he would not have reached Jerusalem long before Passover. It was at Passover that Peter was imprisoned, but when Agrippa arrived in his new capital he had more pressing matters to attend to than a campaign against the apostles. As for A.D. 44, he died in that year five days after taking ill at Caesarea while presiding at games in honour of the emperor which are usually identified with those celebrated quadrennially on the dies natalis of the city — that is, on 5 March. If this identification is right, then Agrippa was dead by Passover of that year, so the Passover of Acts 12:4 must be that of an earlier year than 44.

During an earlier persecution of the Jerusalem church — that which followed the death of Stephen — the apostles were apparently immune from molestation (Acts 8:1b). If a cause be sought for their loss of popularity (apart from which Agrippa would not have ventured to move against them), it is readily found in their fraternization with Gentiles, more particularly in Peter’s paying a social visit to a Roman officer in Caesarea. It seems certain that the conversion of Cornelius must antedate the events of Acts 12, which (as we have just seen) must be placed between 41 and 44. But there is no certain indication, either in Luke’s account or anywhere else, of the relative dating of the first Christian approaches to Gentiles — Philip’s preaching Jesus to the home-bound Ethiopian (Acts 8:27-39), Peter’s preaching him in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:24-48), and the unnamed Cypriots and Cyrenaeans’ doing so to the pagan Greeks of Antioch (Acts 11:20). Probably all those approaches were made

14 News of Tiberius’s death, which took place on 16 March, A.D. 37 (Tacitus, Annals, 6.50.7), was delivered to Vitellius, legate of Syria, in Jerusalem on the fourth day after Passover (Josephus, Ant., 18.124), which in that year coincided with the full moon of 17/18 April. Such official news would travel by the fastest means. (In A.D. 41 Passover fell on 6/7 April.)
15 Josephus, Ant., 19.343. The institution of these games in 9 B.C. is recorded in BJ, 1.415; Ant., 16.136-144. When Josephus says they were celebrated quinquennially (κατὰ πενταετηρίδα), he uses inclusive reckoning. The date of Caesarea’s dies natalis (5 March) is known from Eusebius, Martyrs of Palestine, 11.30.
16 But if, as is possible, the games celebrated Claudius’s birthday, which fell on 1 August (Suetonius, Claudius, 2.1), the Passover of Acts 12:4 could have been that of A.D. 44. (In that year Passover fell on 3/4 April.)
independently around the same time, to which the reign of Herod Agrippa I provides a *terminus ante quem*.

3. **The famine under Claudius**

Some time after the establishment of the church in Antioch, it received a visit from prophets who had come from Jerusalem (Acts 11:27 f.). One of them, Agabus by name, prophesied that a great famine would beset the whole world, the whole *oikoumenē* (by which the Roman Empire is probably meant, as in Luke 2:1)—and this, adds the narrator, took place under Claudius. Agabus may have thought of an impending famine as one of the woes to be unleashed at the end-time, but Luke historicizes his prophecy because he knows that the principate of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) was, in fact, marked by serious famines—by a persistent succession of droughts (*assiduae sterilitates*), as Suetonius says. Serious scarcity is recorded at various times during those years in Rome, Greece and Egypt. More particularly, Luke’s reference should be taken along with the evidence of Josephus that under the procuratorship of Tiberius Julius Alexander (c. 45-48), and possibly also under that of his predecessor Cuspius Fadus (c. 44-45), Judaea was hard hit by a famine. At this time Helena, queen-mother of Adiabene beyond the Tigris and a proselyte to Judaism, bought grain in Egypt and figs in Cyprus for the relief of the people of Judaea, while her son King Izates, also a proselyte, sent money to the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem for distribution among the poorer citizens. It was almost certainly at the same time that the church of Antioch, as Luke records, contributed a sum of money for the relief of the Christians of Jerusalem and sent Barnabas and Paul to hand it over (Acts 11:29 f.). Attempts to make this occasion a redactional displacement of the famine-relief visit paid by Paul to Jerusalem later in his career are misconceived.

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18 In Rome, at the beginning of his principate (Dio Cassius, *Hist.*, 60.11), and again between his ninth and eleventh years (Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.43; Orosius, *Hist.*, 7.6.17); in Greece, in his eighth or ninth year (Eusebius, *Chronicle*, anno Abr. 2065); in Egypt, in his fifth year (P. Mich. 123, 127). See K. S. Gapp, “The Universal Famine under Claudius”, *HTR*, xxviii (1925), 258-265.
19 Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.101, where the manuscripts read ἐξὶ τούτων (“under these”, i.e. the two procurators mentioned above) but the Epitome reads ἐξὶ τούτου (“under him”, i.e. Alexander).
There was an urgent need in Judaea between 45 and 48; that the Antiochene Christians should have done something to help their fellow-believers there is entirely credible. It has been conjectured that the Jerusalem church found it the more difficult to pay the high price of food in those conditions of short supply because its members had been encouraged some years before to put their capital into a common pool, which was now wellnigh exhausted. Joachim Jeremias made the further point that A.D. 47-48 (probably the year after the famine) was a sabbatical year, during which the fields were required by Jewish law to lie fallow; the scarcity was thus prolonged until the harvest of 49. While this suggestion finds no explicit basis in either Luke or Josephus, it is perfectly probable; it fits in very well with the other chronological evidence.

4. The proconsulship of Sergius Paullus in Cyprus

According to Acts 13:7, when Barnabas and Paul set out from Antioch on a missionary campaign which took them first to Cyprus and then into Central Anatolia, their preaching at Paphos came to the attention of Sergius Paullus, proconsul of Cyprus, and made a deep impression on him.

Sergius Paullus belonged to a noble Roman family which had a record of public service over several generations. We know, for example, of one Lucius Sergius Paullus who was a curator of the Tiber in the principate of Claudius, and was therefore contemporary with our proconsul of Cyprus. Other members of the family held public offices in various parts of the Roman Empire until well into the second century. The Sergius Paullus of Acts has been widely identified with the curator of the Tiber (the two offices, of course, could not have been held simultaneously); but there is no evidence linking the curator of the Tiber with Cyprus. A more probable identification of our proconsul is with one Quintus Sergius Paullus, whose name appears in fragmentary form on a Greek inscription from Kythraia in North Cyprus; the name of his office is missing from the extant wording, but he is apparently said to have held it under Claudius.

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22 CIL, VI.31545.
23 IGRR, III.935, corrected reading in J. L. Myres, Handbook of the Cesnola Collection of Antiquities from Cyprus (New York, 1914), 1903 (pp. 319, 548).
Another inscription from Soloi, on the north coast of Cyprus, mentions a proconsul named Paullus who held office in some emperor's tenth year. The writing is said to be later than what we should expect under Claudius; if the reference were, nevertheless, to Claudius's tenth year, A.D. 50/51 would seem to be too late for Barnabas and Paul's evangelization of Cyprus, in the light of the more precise evidence available for Paul's evangelization of Corinth (at which we shall look later). D. G. Hogarth was inclined to identify the Sergius Paullus of Acts with the proconsul mentioned on the Soloi inscription, but few have followed him.

Thus far, then, Barnabas and Paul's evangelization of Cyprus cannot be certainly dated by external evidence.

5. Expulsion of Jews from Rome

When Paul arrived in Corinth for the first time, says Luke, he met "a Jew of Pontus, named Aquila, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome" (Acts 18:2).

Such a clearance from Rome of people deemed to be undesirable immigrants was not unprecedented. A large-scale expulsion of Roman Jews had taken place in A.D. 19, under Tiberius, in consequence of the scandalous conduct of some members of the Jewish community in the capital. Josephus juxtaposes this earlier expulsion with severe action taken about the same time against Isis-worshippers in Rome.

So far as Claudius's action is concerned, two references in classical literature are relevant. Dio Cassius, relating certain measures which Claudius took at the beginning of his rule, says that, because the number of Jews in Rome had increased unduly, "he did not indeed expel them, but forbade them to meet in their ancestral way". Suetonius says that he expelled the Jews because

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24 IGRR, III.930.
25 See T. B. Mitford, "Notes on Some Published Inscriptions from Roman Cyprus", Annual of the British School at Athens, xliii (1947), 201-206.
27 Josephus, Ant., 18.65-80 (the Isis scandal), 81-85 (the Jewish scandal).
28 Dio Cassius, Hist., 60.6.6.
they were persistently rioting "at the instigation of Chrestus". The significance of this last phrase (impulsore Chresto) was discussed in a lecture on "Christianity under Claudius" delivered in this building in 1961. What concerns us now is the chronological bearing of these references: in particular, are the two authors (Dio and Suetonius) speaking of the same occasion? On the face of it, it might appear that they are not: Dio says that Claudius did not expel the Jews of Rome, whereas Suetonius says that he did. Even so, it has been held that they do speak of the same occasion—that Suetonius is guilty of inaccuracy or exaggeration. Of those who see the same action referred to, some date it in A.D. 41 (Claudius's first year), others in 49. But it is more probable that two separate actions are in view. At the beginning of his principate Claudius tried to curb Jewish rioters in the capital by imposing limited restrictions on them; when, some years later, those limited restrictions proved to be insufficient, he took the more drastic step of banishing the Jewish community from the capital.

The restrictions of A.D. 41 may have been less severe because of Claudius's friendship with Herod Agrippa I (although friendship with Agrippa would not have been allowed to interfere with the business of maintaining law and order in the capital). But by the time of the wholesale expulsion edict not only was Agrippa dead; a new factor had entered into the situation. The riotous tendencies of Roman Jews had been fanned by the recent introduction of Christianity into their community.

If the expulsion edict is distinct from the measures mentioned by Dio, can it be dated? Orosius in his Historiae adversus paganos places it in Claudius's ninth year (A.D. 49/50). This is quite

29 Suetonius, Claudius, 25.4.
probably true, but one can place little confidence in Orosius's testimony in itself, because he claims Josephus as his authority for dating the expulsion edict in that year. Nowhere in the extant writings of Josephus is there any allusion to Claudius's edict, and there is no reason to suppose that any such allusion ever found a place in his writings. Orosius may have quoted from an interpolated text of Josephus, or he may simply have made a mistake: either way, the error robs him of all title to be cited as an authority on this incident.

Even if the expulsion edict could be dated more accurately, it would not by itself give us a precise date for Paul's arrival in Corinth. Aquila and Priscilla had arrived "lately" from Italy when Paul met them in Corinth; but what period of time is indicated by "lately"? It has also been suggested that the statement that they came to Corinth from Italy could allow for some time spent in another Italian city than Rome between their expulsion from Rome and their arrival in Corinth.

6. The proconsulship of Gallio in Achaia

A more precise chronological indicator for Paul's stay in Corinth is provided by the incident of Acts 18:12-17, in which Paul was accused at Corinth before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, of propagating an illegal religion. The record seems to imply that Gallio came to Achaia after Paul had already begun his missionary work in Corinth. When, not long after his arrival in Corinth, Paul found the synagogue doors barred against him, he was provided with a base of operations close by in the house of one Titius Justus, where he spent eighteen months "teaching the word of God" (Acts 18:11). It was while he was thus engaged that the unsuccessful attempt was made to prosecute him before Gallio's tribunal.

Since the late nineteenth century nine fragments have, from time to time, been identified of an inscription recording a rescript of Claudius to the people of Delphi. The rescript is dated from

35 Orosius's words are: "anno eiusdem [sc. Claudii] nono expulsos per Claudium urbe Iudaeos Iosephus refert" (Hist., 7.6.15).
37 SIG II^3, 801; for the text see also A. Deissmann, Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History, E.T. (London, 1926), pp. 261-284; E. M. Smallwood,
the period of Claudius’s twenty-sixth acclamation as imperator—a period known from other inscriptions to have covered the first seven months of A.D. 52. In this rescript Claudius refers to a directive issued by “my friend Gallio, proconsul of Achaia”, in terms which suggest that he was proconsul of Achaia, but is so no longer. According to Dio Cassius, Claudius made provincial governors set out from Rome, year by year, not later than mid-April; they would thus enter on their administrative duties in May. A date not later than May, A.D. 51, is indicated for Gallio’s entrance on his proconsulship. Other evidence suggests that ill health prevented him from staying in the post long; by the time of Claudius’s rescript (possibly May or June, A.D. 52) he had demitted office. The narrative of Acts implies that Paul was accused before him shortly after his arrival as proconsul and stayed on in Corinth a good while after the case against him was dismissed. It is a near certainty, then, that Paul’s eighteen months in Corinth lasted from the Fall of A.D. 50 to the Spring or early Summer of 52 (according to the Western text of Acts 18:21 he attended a festival in Jerusalem soon after leaving Corinth; probably Pentecost is meant).

7. The reign of Herod Agrippa II

When Herod Agrippa I died in A.D. 44, he left three children—a son of seventeen, Agrippa the younger, and two daughters, Berenice, aged sixteen, and Drusilla, aged six. Claudius was

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38 From CIL, III.476, VI,1256, with Frontinus, De aquis urbis Romae, 1.13, it appears that by 1 August he had been acclaimed imperator for the 27th time.


40 Dio Cassius, Hist., 60.17.3.

41 Cf. Seneca, Epistulae Morales, 104.1.

advised that it would not be wise to appoint the seventeen-year-old son as king of the Jews in his father’s place, so Judaea reverted to administration by Roman governors.43 Four years later, when his uncle Herod, king of Chalcis (in the Lebanon) died, the younger Agrippa was given that tiny kingdom; four or five years later he received from Claudius, in exchange for Chalcis, the former territories of Philip and Lysanias (which had constituted his father’s first kingdom), and this territory was augmented when Nero, at the beginning of his principate (A.D. 54), gave him further lands both east and west of Jordan, including the cities of Tiberias and Tarichaeae on the west shore of Lake Tiberias.44 He had no territory in Judaea, but as it was his privilege to appoint the Jewish high priest he was an influential person among the Jews. He figures briefly in the record of Acts when, coming to Caesarea to greet the new procurator Festus, he is invited by Festus to lend his aid in drafting the report to be sent to Rome about Paul, who has just appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:13-26:32).

His sister Drusilla figures earlier in the narrative as the wife of Felix, who was procurator of Judaea when Paul, during his last visit to Jerusalem, was charged with violating the sanctity of the temple.

At the age of fifteen Drusilla was given in marriage by her brother Agrippa to Azizus, king of Emesa in Syria, who was required to submit to circumcision in order to marry her.45 But her marriage to Azizus did not last long. Felix, procurator of Judaea, fell in love with her, and promised her every felicity if she would leave her husband and become his wife.46 She yielded to his persuasion, so we find Drusilla as Felix’s wife when Paul is brought before him at Caesarea (Acts 24:24). Her marriage to Felix cannot be dated earlier than A.D. 54, which gives us one point within his term of office as procurator of Judaea.

8. The procuratorships of Felix and Festus

But when did Felix become procurator of Judaea, and when was he recalled and replaced by Porcius Festus (Acts 24:27)? The procuratorships of Felix and Festus, taken together, probably

43 Ibid., 19.362.
45 Josephus, Ant., 20.138 f.
46 Ibid., 20.141-143.
covered a period of ten years. The duration of Festus's procuratorship is not actually stated, but from Josephus's summary account of it in BJ 2.271 (amplified in Antiquities, 20.181, 185-197), it appears not to have lasted more than two or three years when it was terminated by his death in office. His death was followed by an interregnum of three months before the arrival of his successor Albinus. It was during this interregnum that the illegal execution of James the Just took place. The procuratorships of Albinus and, after him, Gessius Florus were the last before the Jewish revolt of September, A.D. 66. Four years would not be too much to allow to these two last procuratorships, so that the generally accepted date of A.D. 62 for the death of James the Just (and therefore for the death of Festus a few weeks previously) cannot be wide of the mark.

In deciding on the date of Felix's entry on his procuratorship, we have to reckon with the discrepant evidence of Josephus and Tacitus. Josephus (who had first-hand knowledge of the course of events) makes Felix the successor of Ventidius Cumanus as procurator: Claudius apparently appointed him to this office shortly before he presented the younger Agrippa with the former tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias—and that was "when he had completed the twelfth year of his principate" (i.e. in A.D. 53). Felix's appointment as procurator of all Judaea may thus be dated in 52, the year of Cumanus's deposition, according to Tacitus.

Tacitus, however, speaks of the province as having been divided between Cumanus and Felix, so that Cumanus governed Galilee and Felix Samaria. (Then who, it might be asked, governed Judaea proper?) Tacitus's statement might be explained if Felix, before becoming procurator of Judaea, held a subsidiary post

48 Ibid., 20.137 f.
49 "Claudius sent out Felix ... as procurator of Judaea, Samaria, Galilee and Perea" (Josephus, BJ, 2.247)—a form of words compatible with his having exercised authority in one of those regions already.
50 Tacitus, Annals, 12.54.7.
51 Ibid., 12.54.3.
52 M. Aberbach, "The Conflicting Accounts of Josephus and Tacitus concerning Cumanus' and Felix' Terms of Office", JQR, xi (1949-50), 1-14, suggests that Cumanus had been procurator of Judaea and Samaria, while Felix was in charge of Galilee (but this is the opposite of what Tacitus says).
under Cumanus, with special responsibility for Samaria.\textsuperscript{53} Cumanus's procuratorship began about A.D. 48: this is implied by Josephus when he brackets the younger Agrippa's succeeding his uncle Herod as ruler of Chalcis—which he did in the eighth year of Claudius\textsuperscript{54}—with Cumanus's succeeding Alexander as governor of Judaea. When Tacitus, dealing with the events of A.D. 52, says that Felix had been set over Judaea for a long time now (\textit{iam pridem Iudaeae impositus}),\textsuperscript{55} this can only be explained if Felix held a subordinate office in the province since early in Cumanus's governorship. But one may wonder if Tacitus's sources misled him. He further says that Felix was one of the judges appointed by Ummidius Quadratus, legate of Syria, to help Claudius in reaching a decision in a quarrel between Judeans and Samaritans.\textsuperscript{56}

According to Luke, Paul began his speech of defence before Felix with a reference to the "many years" during which Felix had been judge over the Jewish nation (Acts 24:10). This was two years before Felix was recalled from office, according to the most probable meaning of Acts 24:27 ("when two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus"). The date of Felix's recall is debatable, but a change in the Judaean provincial coinage attested for Nero's fifth year (A.D. 58/59) may be a pointer: this coin issue, says Professor E. Mary Smallwood, "is more likely to be the work of a new procurator than of an outgoing one who had already minted a large issue".\textsuperscript{57}

An earlier date for Felix's recall is defended by some on the ground that, when he was recalled, he was saved from the severest penalties which his misdemeanours in office merited by the interposition of his brother Pallas.\textsuperscript{58} Pallas was one of the most

\textsuperscript{54} Josephus, \textit{Ant.}, 20.103 f.
\textsuperscript{55} Tacitus, \textit{Annals}, 12.54.1.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 12.54.7.
\textsuperscript{58} Josephus, \textit{Ant.}, 20.182.
influential of the imperial freedmen; he was head of the civil service (libertus a rationibus) under Claudius. Pallas's influence may well have had something to do with Felix's original appointment as procurator—an unprecedented honour for a freedman, normally reserved for a member of the equestrian order. (Josephus, however, says that the appointment of Felix was requested by the former high priest Jonathan, who had perhaps been impressed by his judicial handling of the quarrel between Judaeans and Samaritans.) Pallas enjoyed the favour of Agrippina, Nero's mother, but was dismissed from his influential office when Agrippina forfeited her son's good will in A.D. 55. Therefore, it is argued, he was in no position to protect his disgraced brother Felix after that year.

In fact, Pallas retained great power after his dismissal from the civil service; on that occasion, indeed, he stipulated that there should be no scrutiny of his conduct in office and that his accounts with the state should be treated as balanced. His influence, based no doubt on his exceptional wealth, lasted till 62, when he fell victim to Nero's desire to lay hands on his wealth. There is nothing in the circumstances of Pallas's career for the years following his dismissal to rule out 59 as the date of Felix's deposition.

Another argument for dating Felix's deposition in 55 is that Eusebius dates it in the second year of Nero. But this is not easily reconciled with Josephus's statement that Nero appointed Felix (that is, confirmed him) as governor of all Judaea except those areas which he had given to the younger Agrippa. It has, in fact, been argued that Eusebius was four years out in his estimate of Nero's regnal years, and that "second" here should be corrected to "sixth".

59 Ibid., 20.162.
62 Ibid., 14.65.1.
63 Eusebius, Chron., anno Abr. 2072.
64 Josephus, BJ, 2.252.
9. "The days of unleavened bread"

An attempt has been made to fix the year of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem on the basis of Acts 20:6f. There, in a "we" section, the narrator says, "we sailed away from Philippi [i.e. from Neapolis, the port of Philippi] after the days of unleavened bread, and in five days we came to ... Troas, where we stayed for seven days. On the first day of the week ... Paul conversed with them [the members of the church in Troas], intending to depart the next day".

The "days of unleavened bread" lasted from 14 to 21 Nisan. In five days (by inclusive reckoning) from 22 Nisan, Paul and his companions arrived at Troas, where they stayed seven days (26 Nisan to 3 Iyyar). The last full day they spent at Troas was a Sunday. In what year, then, around that time did 2 Iyyar fall on a Sunday—or (to put it otherwise) did 14 Nisan (Passover Eve) fall on a Thursday? The answer is A.D. 57, which (as Sir William Ramsay confidently concluded) was accordingly the year of Paul's last journey to Jerusalem.

I believe that A.D. 57 was indeed the year in question, but this cannot be established conclusively by Ramsay's argument. The party set out from Philippi "after the days of unleavened bread"—but how long after? Owing to a sudden change of plan, Paul's departure had been delayed, and he was anxious to lose no time; therefore, Ramsay argued, he and his friends must have set out immediately after the week of unleavened bread—the day after, in fact. But they would have had to wait until they could embark on a convenient ship. Further, Paul preached at Troas on the evening of the first day of the week, and "prolonged his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7); but did Luke reckon that day as having started at sunset or at midnight? We cannot be sure, but again it could make a difference to the calculation.

Ramsay may be right in making Paul leave Philippi on Friday, 15 April, and preach at Troas on Sunday, 24 April, in A.D. 57;


but the evidence is not firm enough to prove beyond question that
the year was in fact 57.

Paul wished to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost (Acts
20:16); in A.D. 57 it fell on 28/29 May. In the event, he and his
fellow-travellers reached Judaea with time in hand; they were able
to spend several days in Caesarea before going up to Jerusalem
(Acts 21:10, 15). A week after Paul's arrival in Jerusalem he was
arrested; a day or two later he was taken to Caesarea, where he
was kept in custody for two years (Acts 21:27-34; 23:23-35;
24:11, 27).

At the end of those two years he set out from Caesarea on his
voyage, under armed guard, to Italy. By the time he and his
company reached Fair Havens, on the south coast of Crete,
"sailing was now dangerous because the fast [i.e. the Day of
Atonement] had already gone by" (Acts 27:9). The dangerous
season for navigation in the Mediterranean lasted from 14 Sep-
tember to 11 November; from the latter date all navigation on the
open sea ceased for the winter. It may be inferred, then, that in
this year the Day of Atonement (10 Tishri) fell after 14 September.
In A.D. 59 it fell on 5 October, which was just about as late as it
was possible for it to fall. So, if A.D. 57 suits the requirements for
the journey from Philippi to Caesarea, A.D. 59, two years later,
suits the requirements for the voyage from Caesarea to Italy. To
that extent either date supports the other, but neither can be
demonstrated to be the right one. Apart from other considera-
tions, while the equivalences between the Jewish and the Julian
calendars can be fixed with high probability, they cannot be
determined with absolute certainty.

10. The persecution under Nero

The tenth point of comparison listed by Turner, the persecution
of Christians in Rome under Nero, need not detain us long. It is
too late to have any bearing on the record of Acts. Tacitus makes
it the sequel to the great fire of Rome, which raged for five days in
July, A.D. 64. How long after the fire the persecution broke out
we cannot be sure. J.A.T. Robinson may be right, following

68 Vegetius, De re militari, 4.39.
69 Tacitus, Annals, 15.38-44.
G. Edmundson, in dating it not earlier than the spring of A.D. 65.\textsuperscript{70}

Be that as it may, the end of the two years which Paul spent under house-arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30) cannot be dated later than A.D. 62. If the hearing of his appeal to Caesar ended in his conviction and execution, then he was not affected by the persecution. If, on the other hand, the tradition is right which makes his execution, like Peter’s, an incident in the persecution, then he may have enjoyed a few years of liberty before being brought to trial again; but on these matters the available evidence is of the scantiest, and in any case is irrelevant to the chronology of Acts.

III

There remains one body of literature which demands to be taken into consideration when the chronological data of Acts are compared with data from other sources: that is the Pauline corpus. Some comparison of these two sets of data has been offered more than once in this place.\textsuperscript{71} If our present subject were the chronology of the life of Paul, then his own letters would provide us with our primary source; and even in an assessment of the chronological evidence of Acts they are by no means irrelevant.

About half a century ago a new approach was launched to Pauline chronology, which had radical implications for the chronology of Acts. The pioneer in this study was Professor John Knox, formerly of Union Theological Seminary, New York. Although the chronological indications in the Pauline letters are only occasional, Professor Knox has found them adequate for the construction of a coherent chronology of Paul’s apostolic career, which (it is argued) deviates from that presented by Acts and must be accepted in preference to it because of its first-hand authority.\textsuperscript{72}


\textsuperscript{72} J. Knox, “‘Fourteen Years Later’: A Note on the Pauline Chronology”, Journal of Religion, xvi (1936), 341-349; “The Pauline Chronology”, JBL, lviii (1939), 15-29; Chapters in a Life of Paul (New York, 1950/London, 1954); also
The chronology constructed by Professor Knox and others is closely related to what Paul calls "the collection for the saints"—that is, the relief fund which he organized on behalf of the Jerusalem church towards the end of his ministry in the Aegean world. This fund is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 (where Paul tells the Corinthian church, as he had already told the Galatian churches, he says, how to set about collecting the money), 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15 (where he encourages the Corinthians to complete the work so well begun), and Romans 15:25-29 (where he explains that he must go to Jerusalem to take part in the handing over of the money before he can fulfil his plan to visit Rome en route for Spain). The visit to Jerusalem on which he was about to set out when he sent his letter to the Romans is plainly to be identified with that of Acts 21-23.

How long did it take to organize and complete the collection? From internal evidence, not much more than two years. In 2 Corinthians 12:2 Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that he has been boasting about them to the Macedonian churches, saying, "Achaia has been ready since last year" (but that was an instance of hope outstripping experience: Achaia—meaning Corinth—was not ready even then).

At the meeting which Paul and Barnabas had with the leaders of the mother-church on a previous visit to Jerusalem, described in Galatians 2:1-10, the Jerusalem leaders, as their final request, urged Paul and Barnabas to "remember the poor"—the poorer members of the church of Jerusalem (and that meant most of them). The view of Knox and others is that Paul's organization of the great collection (the collection mentioned in the three places already cited) was his immediate response to this request: that, as soon as the request was made, he returned from Jerusalem to

Antioch and then travelled through Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia to organize the collection, so that it was completed and delivered, probably, in four or five years after the request was made. This view telescopes the four "capital letters" (those to the Galatians, Corinthians and Romans) into a remarkably brief space of time.73 Moreover, since the conference described in Galatians 2:1-10 took place fourteen years, probably (or seventeen years at most),74 after Paul's conversion, his whole apostolic career must have been notably shorter than has been traditionally supposed, and the bulk of his activity must be assigned to the period before the conference.

When Paul says, in Galatians 1:21, that after his first postconversion visit to Jerusalem he "came into the parts of Syria and Cilicia", this (we are warned) must not be taken to mean that he remained there; in the interval between the visit of Galatians 1:18f. and that of Galatians 2:1-10 "we are at liberty to suppose that he went not only to Galatia but also to Macedonia, Greece and [proconsular] Asia before he returned to Jerusalem 'fourteen years later'", says Knox, and he goes on to argue that "he actually did so".75

In Paul's letters, mention is made of three occasions on which he visited Jerusalem in the course of his apostolic career. The first and second are referred to in the past tense ("I went up", Gal. 1:18; 2:1). The third is referred to in the future (1 Cor. 16:4; Rom. 15:25): he plans to go to Jerusalem with the representatives of the contributing churches. Further, it is maintained, the logic of his successive references to the collection rules out the possibility of any other visit to Jerusalem within that period. But where Paul mentions three visits, Acts records five: those of Acts 9:26; 11:30; 15:4; 18:22 (where Jerusalem is implied, but not expressly mentioned); 21:15. Three of these (Acts 11:30; 15:4; 18:22) must therefore be triplicate accounts of one and the same visit, which actually took place at the point indicated in the narrative of Acts by 18:22.76

74 It is disputed whether the "fourteen years" of Gal. 2:1 are reckoned from the same point of departure as Paul's earlier Jerusalem visit "after three years" (Gal. 1:18) or from that earlier visit itself.
75 J. Knox, "'Fourteen Years Later'", p. 345.
The proponents of this view agree with most students that Paul's conversion is to be dated in the early 30s, but hold that the greater part of his missionary work was done in the later 30s and the 40s, that he began organizing the collection about 47 (50 at the latest) and completed it and came to Jerusalem with it about 51 (55 at the latest). By the year 60 he may well have been condemned and executed in Rome.

But in this reconstruction what is the relevance of Luke's reference to Gallio? Are we to abandon this fixed datum which Luke provides for Paul's evangelization of Corinth? The latest answer to this question has been proposed by Gerd Lüdemann. Luke, he says, tends to place all he wants to tell us about Paul's association with any one place in the setting of his first visit to that place. We need not abandon the Gallio reference: we must simply recognize that Paul's accusation before Gallio belongs to a later visit by Paul to Corinth—in fact, to his last visit. If we were forced to this conclusion, we should, of course, have no option but to accept it. But there is no need to accept it. It is perfectly clear that, in Luke's understanding, Gallio's favourable verdict enabled Paul to prolong his evangelizing ministry in Corinth: it does not belong to the context of a later, consolidating, visit. The dating of Paul's first stay in Corinth between 50 and 52 cannot be so easily overturned.

The flaw in the argument of Knox and those who take his line is their reading too much into Galatians 2:10. Paul concludes his account of the conversations which he and Barnabas held with the Jerusalem leaders by saying, "only they would have us remember Jaren" (Kampen, 1973), pp. 40-43, 223-225; but he does not regard it as a duplicate of any other visit in Acts. The widespread identification of the visits of Acts 11:30 and 15:4 prompts a question about the historical status of Barnabas and Paul's missionary journey in Cyprus and Asia Minor, recorded in Acts 13-14. C.H. Buck derives the record of this journey from a source which begins at Acts 13:1 and (after the interruption of 15:1-33) continues further from 15:35 to 18:23; the journey took place indeed, but before the famine, not after it ("The Collection for the Saints", pp. 18 f.). H. Conzelmann takes the whole journey to be Luke's construction, "eine Modellreise" (Die Apostelgeschichte [Tübingen, 1963], p. 72).

77 G. Lüdemann, Paul, pp. 172, 262 f.; cf. J. Knox, Chapters, p. 85. This dating would go well with the Eusebian date for Felix's deposition (A.D. 55).

78 G. Lüdemann, Paul, pp. 158-173. He dates Paul's first visit to Corinth in A.D. 41, the year (he argues) of Claudius's expulsion edict.
the poor, which very thing I was eager to do”. He does not necessarily mean “I proceeded at once to organize ‘the collection for the saints’” (about which, in fact, nothing at all is said in Galatians). He may equally well mean “I made a special point of remembering ‘the poor’”—with the possible implication that he had already paid attention to this matter79 (as in the famine-relief mission from Antioch to Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 11:30).

It would not be surprising to learn that, however often or seldom Paul went to Jerusalem between receiving the leaders’ request and paying his last visit to the city, he took with him on each occasion some token of his commitment to “remember the poor”. The gift brought on his last visit was a special one, marking the completion of his ministry in the eastern Mediterranean.80 C. H. Buck agrees that “without II Corinthians a reader would naturally assume that the collection was not a single event but a regular practice in Paul’s ministry”.81 But even with the evidence of 2 Corinthians the assumption is quite a reasonable one to make. The climactic collection to which such importance is attached in 2 Corinthians (as in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and Romans 15:25-29) does not exclude earlier occasions when Paul may have had opportunity to “remember the poor” in response to the request made to him and Barnabas at the Jerusalem conference.

True, nothing is said in Acts of any delivery of money in connection with Paul’s Jerusalem visits between the famine-relief visit from Antioch and the last visit he paid to Jerusalem—but only one very general allusion is made to the delivery of money in connection with his last visit (Acts 24:17), although his letters make it plain that the handing over of the collection was a prime

79 The present tense of “remember” (μνημονεύωμεν) may have continuous force: “it is a temptation to translate here, ‘they wanted us to continue to remember the poor’” and to take the aorist ἐσπούδασα as having inceptive force, “which very thing I began to busy myself with” (C. H. Buck, “The Collection for the Saints”, p. 12, n. 15). On the continuous force of μνημονεύωμεν see also E. D. Burton, The Epistle to the Galatians (Edinburgh, 1921), p. 99. C. W. Emmet takes the aorist ἐσπούδασα as having pluperfect force, which “fits in well with the fact that Paul had actually just brought alms to Jerusalem” (“The Case for the Tradition”, Beginnings of Christianity, ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake, I.2 [London, 1922], p. 279); so also D. R. Hall, “St. Paul and Famine Relief: A Study in Galatians 2:10”, Exp. Times, 82 (1970-71), 309-311.

80 The delivery of the gift in Jerusalem would be the “seal” on this phase of his ministry (Rom. 15:28).

purpose for this visit. True, nothing is said in Paul’s letters of any delivery of money to Jerusalem before the handing over of the collection at his last visit—but the three capital letters (1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans) which mention that collection do so because they were written while it was being organized and got ready for transmission to Jerusalem. The other capital letter (Galatians) tells of the request to “remember the poor” but makes no reference to the collection as such. The Galatian Christians are not invited to contribute to it. The time came when Paul, either orally or in writing, gave directions to the Galatian Christians about their contributions comparable to those given in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4,82 but those directions were not given in the canonical letter to the Galatians, but most probably some years later. There is no need to date Galatians in such proximity to the other capital letters as is required on the interpretation of John Knox and others—an interpretation which (in George Caird’s words) “naturally avoids all the difficulties which beset those who take Acts more seriously, but ... raises some very awkward problems of its own”.83 If Galatians is some years earlier than the Corinthian and Roman correspondence (as I have argued here before),84 then we can continue to take the chronology of Acts seriously, without doing violence to the natural sense of Paul’s language.

82 The instructions to the Galatian Christians to set aside a proportion of their income week by week were given before similar instructions were given to the Corinthians.
