

# ST. PAUL IN MACEDONIA<sup>1</sup>

By F. F. BRUCE, M.A., D.D., F.B.A.

EMERITUS PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

## I

MACEDONIA was an ancient kingdom in the Balkan peninsula, to the north of the Greek states. When the Persians invaded Europe in the early fifth century B.C., the Macedonian kings collaborated with them and so preserved their position<sup>2</sup>; nevertheless Alexander I gave covert aid to the Greeks who were attacked by Xerxes in 480 B.C.<sup>3</sup> He and his successors patronized Greek art and letters, and by the fourth century Macedonia was for all practical purposes part of the Greek world.<sup>4</sup> Philip II made himself master of the city-states of Greece; after his assassination in 336 B.C. his son Alexander III (the Great) made this united Graeco-Macedonian dominion the base for his conquest of Western Asia and Egypt. With the division of Alexander's empire after his death (323 B.C.), Macedonia soon became a separate kingdom once again.

The Macedonian kingdom first clashed with the Romans when Philip V (221-179 B.C.) made a treaty with Hannibal during the Second Punic War.<sup>5</sup> The Romans, however, stirred up sufficient trouble for him east of the Adriatic to keep him occupied, and his treaty with Hannibal remained ineffective. When the Second Punic War was over, and Hannibal safely out of the way, the Romans remembered Philip and found a pretext for declaring war on him. This Second Macedonian War, as it is called

<sup>1</sup> A lecture delivered in the John Rylands University Library on Wednesday, 18th October 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Herodotus, *History*, v. 17 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vii. 173, ix. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Even in the early part of the fifth century B.C. Alexander, crown prince of Macedonia, was allowed to compete in the foot race at Olympia, as being of Argive descent (*ibid.* v. 22, viii. 137).

<sup>5</sup> Polybius, *History*, vii. 9.

(200–197 B.C.), ended with Philip's defeat at Cynoscephalae.<sup>1</sup> He was obliged henceforth to confine his rule to Macedonia, and Rome proclaimed herself the liberator and protector of the city-states of Greece.<sup>2</sup>

Philip's son Perseus in his turn excited Rome's suspicions, which were further fomented by his enemy the king of Pergamum, Rome's ally. The ensuing Third Macedonian War (171–168 B.C.) ended with the Roman victory at Pydna.<sup>3</sup> The royal dynasty of Macedonia was abolished; the kingdom was divided by the Romans into four republics.<sup>4</sup> But in 149 B.C. an adventurer named Andriscus, claiming to be a son of Perseus, reunited Macedonia under his rule for a short time.<sup>5</sup> When Andriscus was put down in 148 B.C., the Romans decided that the only course to take with Macedonia was to annex it as a province.<sup>6</sup> The four republics set up twenty years before remained as geographical divisions, but retained little political significance. To consolidate their hold on the new province, the Romans built the Via Egnatia from Apollonia and Dyrrhachium on the Adriatic to Thessalonica<sup>7</sup>; it was in due course extended eastward to Philippi and its port Neapolis, and later still to Byzantium. As we may gather from First Maccabees, the story of the overthrow of the Macedonian kings, losing nothing in the telling, made a deep impression on the inhabitants of Syria and Palestine as they learned more and more about those invincible Romans from the distant west.<sup>8</sup>

Macedonia thus became a base for the further expansion of

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. xviii. 22–28.

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, *Flaminius*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Polybius, *History*, xxxi. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Livy, *History*, xlv. 29. 5 ff.; cf. J. A. O. Larsen, *Greek Federal States* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 295 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Diodorus, *History*, xxxii. 9b, 15; Florus, *Epitome*, i. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Florus, *Epitome*, i. 32. 3; cf. M. G. Morgan, "Metellus Macedonicus and the Province Macedonia", *Historia*, xviii (1969), 422 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, vii. 7. 4; cf. N. G. L. Hammond, "The Western Part of the Via Egnatia", *Journal of Roman Studies*, lxiv (1974), 185 ff. A good popular account of recent date is F. O'Sullivan, *The Egnatian Way* (Newton Abbott, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> I Maccabees viii. 1 ff.; cf. F. F. Bruce, "The Romans through Jewish Eyes", *Mélanges offerts à M. Simon*, ed. M. Philonenko (Paris, 1978), pp. 3 ff.

Roman power. It was made a senatorial province by Augustus in 27 B.C. It was transferred to imperial control in A.D. 15 but was handed back to the senate in A.D. 44.<sup>1</sup>

## II

Christianity reached Macedonia less than twenty years after the death of Christ. One of the earliest New Testament documents—Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians—was sent, probably late in A.D. 50, to the Christian community in Thessalonica, the principal city of Roman Macedonia. It appears from the contents of the letter that the community owed its existence as such to a visit which Paul had paid to the city not long before. That visit had been preceded by a visit to Philippi, where Paul had been "shamefully treated" (1 Thess. ii. 2). His sojourn in Thessalonica also had evidently been attended by trouble, and Paul's converts had had to endure some measure of persecution (1 Thess. i. 6). He himself had gone on from Thessalonica to Athens (1 Thess. iii. 1).

The account of Paul's movements which can be gathered from 1 Thessalonians agrees so well with the fuller record of Acts xvi. 6—xviii. 5 that that record, though it is substantially later than 1 Thessalonians, may confidently be accepted as providing a historical framework within which the references in 1 Thessalonians can be read with greater understanding.

When Paul set out with his colleague Silas (called Silvanus in 1 and 2 Thess.) to traverse Asia Minor from the Cilician Gates westward, after the Council of Jerusalem, Macedonia played no part in their planned itinerary. So far as can be inferred from Luke's narrative, they were making for Ephesus. But they were prevented from continuing their journey in that direction and found themselves (accompanied now by Timothy, who had

<sup>1</sup> From A.D. 15 to 44 Macedonia and Achaia were combined with Moesia to form one imperial province (Tacitus, *Annals*, i. 76. 4; 80. 1). See further F. Papazoglu, "Macédoine comme province romaine", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase, II. 7 (Berlin/New York, forthcoming).

joined them at Lystra) obliged to turn north-west from Iconium or Pisidian Antioch until they reached the Aegean Sea at the port of Alexandria Troas.<sup>1</sup> Here the first of the "we" passages of Acts begins: the narrative continues in the first person plural. "A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'. And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts xvi. 9 f.).

To those who ask how Paul knew the man he saw in his dream to be a Macedonian, it should be a sufficient answer that he heard him saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us". As T. W. Manson said in this place twenty-six years ago, "If someone comes to me and says 'Come over into Scotland and help us', I shall assume that he is a Scot, without requiring that he wear a kilt and play a selection on the bagpipes to prove his identity."<sup>2</sup>

The missionary party, now increased to four, it appears, by the addition of the narrator or diarist himself, crossed by sea from Alexandria Troas to Neapolis (modern Kavalla), and travelled along the Via Egnatia for about ten miles to Philippi. Philippi bore the name of Philip II of Macedonia, who founded it in 356 B.C. Luke describes it as "a city of the first district of Macedonia"<sup>3</sup> (that is to say, the first of the four districts into which Macedonia was divided by the Romans in 167 B.C.) and adds that it was a Roman colony (Acts xvi. 12). Antony and Octavian made it a colony after their victory at Philippi (42 B.C.) and settled a number of their veterans there; twelve years later Octavian, having disposed of Antony at the battle of Actium, settled several of Antony's disbanded troops in Philippi and renamed the colony after himself: Colonia Iulia Philippensis

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 40-xvi. 8; see BULLETIN, lii (1969-70), 255-8.

<sup>2</sup> BULLETIN, xxxv (1952-3), 430; reprinted in *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (Manchester, 1962), p. 261.

<sup>3</sup> This reading, which is probably original (*πρώτης μερίδος Μακεδονίας πόλις*), is not found in the Greek manuscripts (which have the nominative *πρώτη*, agreeing with *πόλις*); it is preserved in some Vulgate codices and in medieval Provençal and German versions based on the Latin; see F. Blass, *Philology of the Gospels* (London, 1898), pp. 67 ff.; F. Field, *Notes on the Translation of the New Testament* (Cambridge, 1899), p. 124; H. Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1963), p. 91; E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, E.T. (Oxford, 1971), p. 474.

(the title Augusta was inserted after Iulia three years later when Octavian assumed the style of Augustus).<sup>1</sup>

### III

The record in Acts of Paul's first visit to Macedonia provides an admirable example of Luke's accuracy with regard to the political constitution of the successive cities mentioned in the course of his narrative. As a Roman colony, Philippi had a constitution modelled on that of the mother-city, with two collegiate magistrates at the head of it. In most colonies those collegiates were officially known as *duo uiri* (the "two men" or duumvirs), but in some they preferred to be called praetors.<sup>2</sup> Sure enough, this is the title by which Luke refers to them, using the Greek equivalent *στρατηγοί* (Acts xvi. 22, 35 f., 38). Like the chief magistrates of Rome, those of Roman colonies were attended by lictors, bearing the *fasces* or bundles of rods which were their badges of office. The lictors of the Philippian praetors appear in Luke's narrative under their Greek designation *ῥαβδοῦχοι*, "rod-bearers" (Acts xvi. 35, 38)—and it is plain that their rods had a practical as well as a symbolic purpose, for it was with them that Paul and Silas received a summary beating before being locked up overnight in the town jail.

It seems that there was not a sufficient number of Jewish residents in Philippi to constitute a regular synagogue congregation.<sup>3</sup> But there was an informal meeting-place for prayer outside the city, by the river Gangites, where some women assembled on the sabbath to go through the appointed prayers for the day. Paul and his companions met those women, some of whom formed the nucleus of the church of Philippi. Their leader was Lydia, a native of Thyatira, who traded in the purple

<sup>1</sup> For the full title see the Latin inscription from Philippi reproduced by M. N. Tod in *Annual of the British School at Athens*, xxiii (1918-19), 95, no. 21; cf. *Revue Archéologique* (5ème série), xiv (1921), 450, no. 4.

<sup>2</sup> As at Capua: "cum ceteris in coloniis duo uiri appellentur, hi se praetores appellari uolebant" (Cicero, *De lege agraria*, ii. 93).

<sup>3</sup> The traditional quorum (*minyān*) is ten men.

dye, manufactured from the juice of the madder root, for which her native region had long been famed.<sup>1</sup>

Trouble was stirred up for the missionaries in Philippi because of Paul's exorcizing from a slave-girl a "pythonic spirit" which possessed her and enabled her to tell fortunes.<sup>2</sup> The spirit appears to have been a pale reflection of the spirit which empowered the Pythian prophetess at Delphi to speak as the mouthpiece of Apollo. As a result of the exorcism, the girl was no longer able to tell fortunes, and her owners were annoyed at this interference with their property. Paul and Silas (the two full Jews in the missionary quartette) were brought before the magistrates, who ordered them to be beaten and locked up overnight. When the lictors arrived at the jail next morning to expel the two unwanted visitors from Philippi, they were met with a protest which they had to take back to their masters. Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, and should not have been subjected to such treatment as they had received. The magistrates had listened to the accusation—"These Jews are upsetting<sup>3</sup> our city, inculcating doctrines and practices intolerable to Roman citizens like us" (Acts xvi. 20 f.)—without troubling to investigate it or to pay any heed to the two men's reply. Now they had to apologize for having beaten Roman citizens without a fair trial.<sup>4</sup> They probably could not expel Roman citizens from a Roman city, but they did earnestly beg them to leave; they felt unequal to the responsibility of protecting them from public resentment.

The story of the singing prisoners and the earthquake at midnight is detachable from its narrative context and presents literary affinities of its own. In 1914 W. K. Lowther Clarke drew attention to similarities between the account of Paul and Silas's imprisonment and the first-personal account in the Greek

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Homer, *Iliad*, iv. 141 f: *ὡς δ' ὅτε τις τ' ἐλέφαντα γυνή φοίνικι μίγη Μηρονίς ἢ ἐ Κάειρα.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the slave-girl in Menander's *Theophoroumene*, who "discovers and laments the loss of her gifts . . . the cymbals and the tambourine (or perhaps rather the gift of prophecy which depends on them)" (T. B. L. Webster, *An Introduction to Menander* [Manchester, 1974], p. 191).

<sup>3</sup> Gk. *ἐκταράσσουσιν.*

<sup>4</sup> Gk. *ἀκατακρίτους* (verse 37) may reflect Lat. *re incognita*, "without investigating our case"; so W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (London, 1912), pp. 224 f.

*Testament of Joseph* viii. 4 f. : " the Egyptian ", says Joseph, " threw me into prison in his house, and next day he flogged me and sent me into Pharaoh's jail. When then I was in fetters, the Egyptian woman heard how in the house of darkness I sang hymns to the Lord and glorified my God, rejoicing with cheerful voice ".<sup>1</sup> There is no question of direct literary dependence by the one document on the other (it is impossible to say, in any case, whether the *Testament of Joseph* is earlier or later than Acts); but both clearly draw upon a common stylistic convention. The general conception appears later in Epictetus: " Then we shall be emulators of Socrates, when we can write paeans in prison. " <sup>2</sup>

As for the earthquake at midnight, Origen in the mid-third century<sup>3</sup> suggested a parallel between this Philippian narrative and the description of the escape of the Bacchanals and Dionysus from Pentheus's prison in the *Bacchae* of Euripides: " the bonds were loosed from their feet of their own accord, and the keys undid the doors without mortal hand ".<sup>4</sup> The historicity of the episode is not in question; but the literary tradition in which it is recorded cannot fail to be recognized.

#### IV

Paul, Silas and Timothy had to leave Philippi; the praetors' polite request was no more to be ignored than the lictors' forceful eviction could have been. But they left behind them a young church, comprising ardently committed converts whose affection for their apostle was shown by material gifts which they sent him on two occasions within a few weeks of his departure.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. K. L. Clarke, " St. Luke and the Pseudepigrapha ", *JTS*, xv (1914), 599; " The Use of the Septuagint in Acts ", *The Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake, I. ii (London, 1922), 77 f.

<sup>2</sup> Epictetus, *Dissertationes*, ii. 6. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Origen, *Against Celsus*, ii. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Euripides, *Bacchae*, 447 f.; cf. 586 ff. See R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Wundererzählungen* (Leipzig, 1906), pp. 120 ff., on a recurring pattern followed in accounts of escapes from prison.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Phil. iv. 15 f.

Luke may have been left behind in Philippi; it is noteworthy that it is there that the first "we" section of Acts comes to an end (Acts xvi. 11) and the second one begins (Acts xx. 5). If the fourth chapter of Philippians (or part of it) can be dated in the interval between these two sections, Luke might be the "true yokefellow" of Philippians iv. 3 whom Paul urges to help Euodia and Syntyche, two Philippian women who, he says, "have laboured side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers".<sup>1</sup>

The three missionaries continued their journey along the Via Egnatia, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, until they reached Thessalonica (about ninety miles distant from Philippi).<sup>2</sup>

Thessalonica, founded about 315 B.C. by Cassander, King of Macedonia, and named after his wife (a half-sister of Alexander the Great),<sup>3</sup> was made the seat of provincial administration when Macedonia was annexed outright by Rome in 167 B.C. From 42 B.C. it enjoyed the status of a free city, under its own politarchs. This term is well attested epigraphically as the designation of the chief magistrates of Macedonian cities, but Acts xvii. 6 is the only place where it occurs in Greek literature.<sup>4</sup>

In Thessalonica, unlike Philippi, there was a sizeable Jewish colony with its synagogue, which Paul and his friends, according to their custom, attended on three successive sabbaths. Paul participated animatedly in the services, especially in the exposition of the scripture lessons, arguing (according to Luke) that the scriptures foretold a suffering Messiah and that this Messiah had come in the person of Jesus. Some members of the congregation were persuaded—Jason, for example, whose hospitality the missionary group enjoyed in Thessalonica, and Aristarchus, later to be Paul's travelling companion and fellow-prisoner.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See W. D. Thomas, "The Place of Women at Philippi", *Expository Times*, lxxxiii (1971-2), 117 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Its original residents were the former inhabitants of Therme and some twenty-five neighbouring towns or villages, whom Cassander forcibly settled in this new foundation.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. E. D. Burton, "The Politarchs", *American Journal of Theology*, ii (1898), 598 ff. The number of politarchs in Thessalonica varied from five to six.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Col. iv. 10; Philem. 24; Acts xix. 29, xx. 4, xxvii. 2.



Among the fringe of God-fearing Gentiles who believed, were several ladies of good family, wives of leading citizens.

These adherents formed the nucleus of the church in Thessalonica, and their number was augmented by an even greater body of converts from paganism when Paul was forbidden the further use of the synagogue and seized every opportunity to present the gospel direct to the rank and file of the citizens. When, some weeks later, he was forced to leave Thessalonica, the church comprised, in the main, people who had very recently been pagans: Paul could remind them shortly afterwards how they "turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i. 9 f.).<sup>1</sup>

Paul, I said, was forced to leave Thessalonica. This is evident from the contents of 1 Thessalonians, from which it appears in addition that he was prevented from going back to see his converts, much as he would have liked to do so. The circumstances of his forced departure are described by Luke. The first-century counterparts of our modern "Rentacrowd"—"certain lewd fellows of the baser sort", in the delightful idiom of the King James Version<sup>2</sup>—were incited by interested parties to stage a demonstration against the missionaries. Unable to lay hands on them, they seized Jason and some of their other friends and dragged them before the politarchs, charging them with sheltering "these men who have turned the world upside down".<sup>3</sup> "Turning the world upside down" has become a cliché in our religious vocabulary; it no longer conveys the seriousness of the charge. The phrase denotes seditious or subversive activity: "the men who have upset the civilized world have arrived here, and Jason has harboured them. Their practices are clean contrary to Caesar's decrees: they are proclaiming a rival emperor, Jesus" (Acts xvii. 5-7).

<sup>1</sup> It has been pointed out that these words would have been quite applicable to pagans converted through Barnabas and Paul's protest at Lystra (Acts xiv. 15-17) or Paul's address to the Athenian Areopagus (Acts xvii. 22-31).

<sup>2</sup> Gk. τῶν ἀγοραίων ἄνδρας τινας πονηροῦς (Acts xvii. 5).

<sup>3</sup> Gk. οἱ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀναστατώσαντες (the verb is used of the Egyptian agitator in Acts xxi. 38).

This charge must be set in its historical context to be properly appreciated. A militant messianism was spreading among the Jewish communities throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup> It was just about this time that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome because of their persistent rioting. If the *Chrestus* at whose instigation, according to Suetonius, this rioting had broken out,<sup>2</sup> was identical with the Jesus whom Paul proclaimed, the case against Paul was clear; if he was some other messianic figure, possibly alive and active in Rome at the time,<sup>3</sup> the custodians of law and order in the Roman world were not likely to see any material difference between him and the one for whom Paul made messianic claims. The trouble in Rome had not been spontaneously generated there; it had been carried by visitors from the east. It was from the east, too, that these alleged trouble-makers had come to Thessalonica, carriers of what the emperor himself had described a few years before as "a general plague which infests the whole world".<sup>4</sup> (The charge brought against Paul and Silas at Philippi may have had similar implications, although it is more vaguely worded.)

The fact that the rival emperor or king whom Paul and the others were proclaiming had been sentenced to death by a Roman judge on a charge of sedition—as any one could discover who took the trouble to enquire—spoke for itself. The "decrees (*δόγματα*) of Caesar" which they were accused of contravening formed the subject of a study seven years ago by Professor Edwin Judge of Macquarie University.<sup>5</sup> He points out that while the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. R. Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation", *New Testament Studies*, xvii (1970-1), 198 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25. 4; cf. BULLETIN, xlv (1961-2), 315 ff.

<sup>3</sup> E. A. Judge and G. S. R. Thomas suggest that it was Simon Magus ("The Origin of the Church at Rome: A New Solution", *Reformed Theological Review*, xxv [1966], 81 ff., especially p. 87). This identification had been ventilated earlier by R. Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist* (London, 1931), p. 581.

<sup>4</sup> Claudius, *Letter to the Alexandrines* (P. Lond. 1912), line 99 (*editio princeps* in H. I. Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt* [London, 1924], pp. 1 ff.; cf. *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* ii. 153; E. M. Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero* [Cambridge, 1967], pp. 99 ff.). See the discussion in BULLETIN, xlv (1961-2), 311 ff.

<sup>5</sup> E. A. Judge, "The Decrees of Caesar at Thessalonica", *Reformed Theological Review*, xxx (1971), 1 ff.

demonstrators had intended to bring Paul and the other missionaries before the popular assembly (*δημος*), it was before the politarchs that they dragged Jason and his friends, and suggests that the charges before the one body need not have been identical with those pressed before the other. (Professor Judge assumes, probably rightly, that Luke is using his terms with customary precision and does not simply mean that the demonstrators wished to expose the missionaries to the violence of the mob.)

Evidently the proclamation of another emperor was the most serious point in which the missionaries were accused of contravening the decrees of Caesar. But sedition (*maiestas*) in general was an offence against public law and required no specific decree of Caesar to make it illegal.<sup>1</sup> It is plain, however, from the two letters to the Thessalonians, written not long after Paul's departure from Thessalonica, that there was a prominent eschatological note in Paul's preaching in that city. He not only affirmed that the Messiah foretold by the prophets had appeared in the person of Jesus; he affirmed that this same Jesus—crucified, risen and exalted—would reappear on earth as universal judge.<sup>2</sup> "It would not have been hard to interpret such announcements as predictions of a change of ruler."<sup>3</sup> Both Augustus and Tiberius had been very sensitive about the activities of astrologers and other prognosticators of the future. Augustus in A.D. 11 issued a decree forbidding, among other things, the forecasting of anyone's death<sup>4</sup>; five years later this prohibition was reaffirmed and extended by Tiberius.<sup>5</sup> The practice of astrology, magic and divination in general was banned. In particular, consultation about the health of the emperor or about high matters of state appears to have been forbidden under the severest penalties.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See for the *lex Julia maiestatis* R. A. Bauman, *The Crimen Maiestatis in the Roman Republic and Augustan Principate* (Witwatersrand, 1967), pp. 266 ff.; cf. also his *Impietas in principem* (Munich, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> As in 2 Thess. i. 7 ff.

<sup>3</sup> E. A. Judge, "The Decrees of Caesar . . .", p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Dio Cassius, *History*, lvi. 25. 5 f.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* lvii. 15. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, ii. 27 ff. (the case of M. Scribonius Libo Drusus); Paulus, *Sententiae*, v. 21.

There is also, of course, the possibility that Claudius's disapproval of Jewish militancy, which found expression in his letter to the people of Alexandria at the beginning of his principate,<sup>1</sup> found further expression in an official decree. If so, the terms of the indictment against Paul and his party would obviously imply their disobedience to such a decree.

Professor Judge argues moreover that city magistrates and other authorities throughout the provinces were responsible (possibly under oath) to enforce the decrees of Caesar and to take appropriate action in the event of any threat to his personal or political well-being.<sup>2</sup>

## V

In these circumstances, one can only admire the wisdom of the Thessalonian politarchs in keeping cool heads and refusing to take any panic action. Possibly Jason and the others brought before them were known to be men of substance who would not readily encourage trouble-makers. At any rate the politarchs contented themselves with "taking security"<sup>3</sup> from them—making them stand bail for Paul's good behaviour, which meant their guaranteeing that he would leave the city quietly.

Paul's hands were thus tied; he could not expose his friends to danger, whether or not he approved of the action they had taken. He probably recognized that they had no more option in the matter than he had, but he left Thessalonica and its newly-formed church most unwillingly. On other occasions when obstacles presented themselves in the way of carrying out his plans, he accepted them as tokens of negative divine guidance<sup>4</sup>; but on this occasion he traced the obstacles to quite a different source. Not only was he prevented from remaining in Thessalonica to complete the instruction he judged necessary for his converts but successive attempts to return there were thwarted: "we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but

<sup>1</sup> See p. 346, n. 4.

<sup>2</sup> E. A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of the Christian Groups in the First Century* (London, 1960), pp. 34 f.; "The Decrees of Caesar . . .", pp. 5 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Gk. λαβόντες τὸ ἱκανόν (Acts xvii. 9), a Latinism (*satis accipientes*).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Acts xvi. 6 f.

Satan hindered us " (1 Thess. ii. 18). If it be asked how he could tell which prohibitions came from the Spirit of God and which from Satan, the answer may be that those which seemed to work for the detriment of the gospel were judged by him to be satanic in origin.

He knew very well the kind of treatment that his converts would have to put up with, and he felt for them acutely. What would the leading citizens say to their wives who had joined this new and suspect society? " A fine lot these Jewish spell-binders are! They come here and entice you to attach yourselves to them, but as soon as trouble arises, off they go and leave their dupes to face the music! " That was hard enough to bear, but both Paul's letters to the Thessalonians make it plain that some of his converts had to endure worse than ridicule : he commends them for their " steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring " (2 Thess. i. 4).

Paul's Thessalonian friends got him and Silas out of the city quietly by night, and escorted them to Beroea, a city lying some way south of the Via Egnatia—*oppidum deiium*, " off the main road ", as Cicero calls it.<sup>1</sup> There was a Jewish synagogue in Beroea, and Paul and Silas visited it and used the reading of the scripture lessons as an occasion for communicating the gospel to the congregation. The Beroean Jews gave them unprejudiced attention and showed themselves willing to study the sacred text carefully to see if it could reasonably be interpreted along the lines indicated by Paul. A number of them were convinced. One of these is known to us by name—Sopater the son of Pyrrhus, who seven years later accompanied Paul to Judaea with other delegates from his Aegean mission-field who were taking their respective churches' contributions to the Jerusalem relief fund.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the converts at Beroea, as at Thessalonica, included several " Greek women of high standing " (Acts xvii. 12).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *In Pisonem*, 89.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Acts xx. 4 ; it is probably the same man to whom Paul refers as Sosipater in Rom. xvi. 21.

<sup>3</sup> The Western text, playing down the prominence which Luke, like Paul, gives to women, reads " many men and women of the Greeks and of those of high standing believed ".

Throughout Paul's Macedonian mission, then, women of substance appear to have played an influential part among his converts, beginning with Lydia, his first convert in Philippi. This is in keeping with the traditional status of women in Macedonian society :

If Macedonia produced perhaps the most competent group of men the world had yet seen, the women were in all respects the men's counterparts; they played a large part in affairs, received envoys and obtained concessions for them from their husbands, built temples, founded cities, engaged mercenaries, commanded armies, held fortresses, and acted on occasion as regents or even co-rulers.<sup>1</sup>

This example, set by women of the ruling classes, was evidently followed by their freeborn sisters in lower social ranks.

But some of Paul's opponents in Thessalonica, learning of his activity in Beroea, made their way there and stirred up the same kind of agitation as they had done in Thessalonica. Once again Paul had to be got away for his own safety and that of his converts. His Beroean friends conveyed him as far as Athens, and from Athens, after a few days, he went on to Corinth, where he arrived, as he says, "in weakness and in much fear and trembling" (1 Cor. ii. 3).<sup>2</sup>

He had been virtually expelled as a trouble-maker from one Macedonian city after another. He and his companions had crossed from Asia Minor to Macedonia under what seemed to have been clear divine guidance. Had they been mistaken? Had the Macedonian mission proved abortive? In each Macedonian city that he visited Paul had established a community of believers, but he had had to leave them abruptly, quite inadequately equipped with the instruction and encouragement necessary to enable them to stand firm in the face of determined opposition. Would their immature faith prove equal to the challenge? In the event it did, outstandingly so; but Paul could not have foreseen this. His first Macedonian campaign, in the light of the sequel, could be recognized as an illustrious success, but at the time when Paul was forced to leave the province it must have looked like a dismal failure.

<sup>1</sup> W. W. Tarn and G. T. Griffith, *Hellenistic Civilisation* (London, <sup>3</sup>1952), pp. 98 f.

<sup>2</sup> For an analysis of the movements of Paul and his companions from Thessalonica to Corinth see K. Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul* (London, <sup>2</sup>1914), p. 74.

## VI

Had Paul any definite plan of action when he landed in Macedonia? It may be that he had—that his intention was to press on westward along the Via Egnatia. He and his companions began to follow it at Neapolis, and continued along it to Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia and Thessalonica. It was not by Paul's own choice that he left it and went south to Beroea. If no obstacles had been placed in his path he could have gone on to the western terminus of the Via Egnatia on the Adriatic. But that would have been no goal in itself: the Via Egnatia was the road to Rome. A short sea-crossing over the Straits of Otranto would have taken him to Brundisium (Brindisi), and from there the Via Appia led to Rome.

Here it is relevant to recall a remark made by Paul several years later at the beginning of his letter to the Christians of Rome. "I want you to know", he tells them, "that I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented" (Rom. i. 13). Then, towards the end of his letter, he tells them why he has "so often been hindered" from visiting them (Rom. xv. 22). If we try to discover at what points in his recorded career he might have planned to visit Rome, the occasion when he first began to move west along the Via Egnatia might certainly be one. So Günther Bornkamm judges: "We can be perfectly sure that, at the latest, in Asia Minor and on the journey through Macedonia to Thessalonica, Rome was present in Paul's mind as a far-off objective."<sup>1</sup> But he was "hindered", partly by the agitation in Thessalonica which dictated his turning south, partly by his involvement in the formation and building up of Christian communities in Corinth and other centres of Achaia after his enforced departure from Macedonia, and partly, perhaps, because news of Claudius's recent expulsion of Jews from Rome showed him that he need not think of going to Rome just then. He certainly learned of the expulsion edict at latest when he came

<sup>1</sup> G. Bornkamm, *Paul*, E.T. (London, 1971), p. 51; cf. A. Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, E.T. i (London, 1908), 74 f.; H. J. Cadbury, *The Book of Acts in History* (New York, 1955), pp. 60 f.; E. A. Judge and G. S. R. Thomas, "The Origin of the Church at Rome . . .", p. 90.

to Corinth and met Priscilla and Aquila, who had had to leave Rome because of that edict.<sup>1</sup> But he may have learned of it earlier. If Jews, expelled from Rome, headed for the east, the Via Egnatia offered itself as a major highway along which they might travel. If the edict is to be dated in A.D. 49, news of it, and possibly some who had been evicted because of it, might have reached Thessalonica while Paul was there. In that case, some more of the background against which the charge against Paul must be evaluated could be filled in.

Moreover, if it was about this time that Paul first made up his mind to see Rome, he may not have known that the gospel had already reached the imperial city. Rome would naturally suggest itself to him as the goal of his Gentile mission. When, however, he came to Corinth and met Priscilla and Aquila there, he would learn then, if not earlier, that Christianity had already gained a foothold in Rome.<sup>2</sup> He had therefore to give up any thought of engaging in pioneer missionary work there: nevertheless, he still planned to visit it, no longer as the goal of his mission but as a staging-post for pioneer ministry in "regions beyond"—more specifically, as his plans took firmer shape, in Spain.<sup>3</sup>

## VII

Paul's continuing relations with the churches of Macedonia can be followed to some extent in his letters to the Thessalonians and the Philippians; he alludes to them further in writing to the Corinthians and the Romans. From what he says in writing either to the Macedonian churches or about them to others we gather that his relations with those churches were outstandingly happy. He commends them for the steadfastness of their faith and witness even under severe persecution and for their consistently generous giving—not only to himself personally but also to the Jerusalem relief fund—in circumstances of deep

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 2; cf. p. 346, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See A. Harnack, "Probabilia über die Adresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefs", *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, i (1900), 16 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xv. 24, 28.



poverty.<sup>1</sup> Into the critical questions raised by his letters to the Macedonian churches, however, we shall not enter in this lecture.<sup>2</sup>

Five years after Paul's enforced departure from Macedonia he was able to re-visit the province, and this time no great difficulties appear to have arisen for him. With the accession of Nero in October, A.D. 54, some of the hindrances imposed in the preceding principate may have lapsed. Towards the end of his Ephesian ministry (in the spring of A.D. 55) Paul planned to pass through Macedonia and travel south to see his friends in Corinth (1 Cor. xvi. 5), and although troubles in the Corinthian church caused some modification in his plans, he did spend a considerable time in Macedonia. Luke's narrative also indicates that Paul visited Macedonia at this time (Acts xix. 21, xx. 1 f.), but a careful reading of the evidence suggests that his stay in Macedonia was longer than might appear on the surface of Luke's narrative—that, in fact, he was able on this occasion to travel farther west along the Via Egnatia than he had been allowed to do on his first visit.

This conclusion is dictated by the passing reference in Romans xv. 19 where Paul, at the end of his apostolic work in the eastern Mediterranean, says that he has completed the preaching of the gospel "from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum".<sup>3</sup> The mention of Illyricum, as the most westerly area where he has preached hitherto, implies that he has travelled to the western end of the Via Egnatia and then turned north to the provincial frontier between Macedonia and Illyricum, probably crossing that frontier.

It was not his intention on this occasion to take ship across the Straits of Otranto and continue the journey to Rome. He hoped to visit Rome on his way to Spain in the near future, but

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. viii. 1 ff., xi. 9; Rom. xv. 26.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. the authenticity of 2 Thess., the chronological order of 1 and 2 Thess. (on which see T. W. Manson in BULLETIN, xxxv [1952-3], 436 ff., reprinted in *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, pp. 268 ff.), and the date, provenance and integrity of Philippians.

<sup>3</sup> Illyricum began to come under Roman control towards the end of the third century B.C. It was made part of Julius Caesar's proconsular province in 59 B.C. In A.D. 9 the northern part was detached and became the separate province of Pannonia; the southern part retained the name Illyricum but was also known as Dalmatia (as in 2 Tim. iv. 10).

before he did that he planned to go to Jerusalem in the company of representatives of the Gentile churches which he had planted in the past ten years, who were carrying their respective churches' contributions to the relief fund for the mother church.

If we look for a special reason for a visit to Illyricum at this juncture in Paul's career, one lies ready to hand. It was now Paul's purpose to evangelize a province where his fluency in Greek would not be of much use: the language of administration and culture in Spain was Latin. Hitherto Paul had not lived in a Latin-speaking environment. He had no doubt heard Latin spoken in Roman colonies such as Philippi and Corinth, but the people with whom he had most to do in those cities spoke Greek. Illyricum, however, was Latin-speaking, and by spending a few weeks there he could familiarize himself with the sound of Latin and perhaps give himself some practice in speaking it, so that, when at last he reached Spain, he would be able to begin his apostolic ministry there without delay.<sup>1</sup>

Paul returned from Illyricum in (probably) the late summer of A.D. 56 and travelled back east along the Via Egnatia; then he moved south from eastern Macedonia to Corinth to spend the following winter there. About the beginning of the navigation season in A.D. 57 he was joined by the delegates from the Gentile churches, who were to sail with him from Cenchreae to Palestine.<sup>2</sup> They did indeed set sail from Cenchreae, but Paul, learning of a plot against his life, changed his travelling plans, went north to Macedonia and took ship from Philippi to Alexandria Troas, where he found his fellow-travellers waiting for him. At Philippi he was rejoined by the author of the "we" narrative, who journeyed to Jerusalem with him.<sup>3</sup> This brief and unplanned visit to Philippi was the last occasion spent by Paul on Macedonian soil. But his friends there never forgot him, and his apostolic achievement in the province has endured in vigour to the present day.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Souter, "Did St. Paul speak Latin?" *Expositor* (series 8), i (1911), 337 ff.

<sup>2</sup> A list of these is given in Acts xx. 4; they are probably the representatives of "all the churches of Christ" whose greetings are sent to the Roman Christians in Rom. xvi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xx. 5 ff.; see p. 344.