

TYNDALE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 11

TNTC

PHILIPPIANS

For
MARK CHARLES
and
KRISTIN JOY
With the hope
that in due time
they too will 'stand
firm in the Lord'
(Phil. 4:1)

TYNDALE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 11

GENERAL EDITOR: LEON MORRIS

PHILIPPIANS

AN INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY

RALPH P. MARTIN



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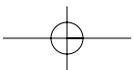
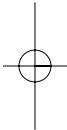
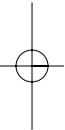
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GENERAL PREFACE

The original Tyndale Commentaries aimed at providing help for the general reader of the Bible. They concentrated on the meaning of the text without going into scholarly technicalities. They sought to avoid 'the extremes of being unduly technical or unhelpfully brief'. Most who have used the books agree that there has been a fair measure of success in reaching that aim.

Times, however, change. A series that has served so well for so long is perhaps not quite as relevant as when it was first launched. New knowledge has come to light. The discussion of critical questions has moved on. Bible-reading habits have changed. When the original series was commenced it could be presumed that most readers used the Authorized Version and one could make one's comments accordingly, but this situation no longer obtains.

The decision to revise and update the whole series was not reached lightly, but in the end it was thought that this is what is required in the present situation. There are new needs, and they will be better served by new books or by a thorough updating of the old books. The aims of the original series remain. The new commentaries are neither minuscule nor unduly long. They are exegetical rather than homiletic. They do not discuss all the critical questions, but none is written without an awareness of the problems that engage the attention of New Testament scholars. Where it is felt that formal consideration should be given to such questions, they are discussed in the Introduction and sometimes in Additional notes.

But the main thrust of these commentaries is not critical. These

books are written to help the non-technical reader to understand his Bible better. They do not presume a knowledge of Greek, and all Greek words discussed are transliterated; but the authors have the Greek text before them and their comments are made on the basis of the originals. The authors are free to choose their own modern translation, but are asked to bear in mind the variety of translations in current use.

The new series of Tyndale Commentaries goes forth, as the former series did, in the hope that God will graciously use these books to help the general reader to understand as fully and clearly as possible the meaning of the New Testament.

Leon Morris

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

'Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.' In no other sphere is the Lord's word to his disciples more applicable than in the task of biblical commentating. The present writer would acknowledge his great debt to his predecessors in the field, and place on record his appreciation of the works on which he has been glad to draw. Whereas in many places where opinions differ he has sought to make up his own mind as regards the varying interpretations which these earlier commentators offer, in some matters (in particular the vexed problem of the dating of the Epistle) he has been content to state the possibilities and to leave the reader to draw his own conclusions.

He would also like to express his gratitude to past teachers and present friends who have helped him in the preparation of this small work. The late Professor T. W. Manson was kind enough to give advice and encouragement in the initial stages of the work; and his lectures at Manchester and his assistance in post-graduate study have left an indelible mark. Mr R. F. Broadfoot, BA, of Dunstable Grammar School, has read the MS, and has often helped in the elucidation of turgid German sentences in commentaries which have been consulted. Professor A. M. Hunter of Aberdeen has been helpful in answering queries, especially in the field of pre-Pauline Christianity, a study to which he has made his own distinctive contribution. Both he and the librarians of the Bedfordshire County Library and Dr Williams's Library in London have assisted with the loan of an

occasional *recherché* volume, while a grant from the Particular Baptist Fund made possible the purchase of a number of important reference works which otherwise might not have been obtained.

The writing of the Commentary, together with the preparation of a special study on the Hymn of Philippians ii. 5-11,¹ has occupied most of the author's leisure time during the last two years. He can find no more fitting way of acknowledging the co-operation and help received from his church, where he has served as minister for six happy years, than to offer this work as a tribute to their loyalty and friendship. In the bond which has joined pastor and people at West Street Baptist Church, Dunstable, 'fellowship in the gospel', which, as we know from this Epistle, meant so much to the apostle Paul, has been a very real and memorable experience.

Ralph P. Martin
September, 1959

1. Given as the 1959 Tyndale New Testament Lecture and published as a monograph by the Tyndale Press under the title *An Early Christian Confession: Phillipians ii. 5-11 in Recent Interpretation* (London, 1960).

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Over a quarter of a century has elapsed since this commentary appeared in its first edition. During that time several notable studies of Paul's Philippian letter have been written, and I have drawn gratefully on these resources which are listed and acknowledged in the revised bibliography.

In particular Paul's relations with the church at Philippi have been investigated with a view to showing the nature of the opposition to the gospel against which he warns in chapter 3. Also prominent in recent research has been the detailed study on the 'Christ hymn' in 2:6-11, with its portrayal of the way taken by the incarnate Lord to the cross and his enthronement as universal ruler of all life. Students of the apostle have helped us to see in clearer focus how the first believers hailed Jesus, at the dawn of apostolic history, as worthy of worship and the rightful Lord of the cosmos. These are matters of timely significance in the final decades of the twentieth century.

The revised commentary represents a rethinking of many other matters of exegetical and practical significance in the letter, and references to recent discussion have been added. At the same time, I have tried to keep the commentary as clear and readable as possible, so all who use it may be assisted and not mystified. The use of the New International Version has helped to this end, but whether I have in fact succeeded in these improvements must be left to the reader's judgment. The revised edition is sent out with the author's hope that

it may indeed promote ‘fellowship in the gospel’ and enhance ‘joy in Christ’, twin ideas so dear to Paul as he wrote this letter in the first place.

Thanks are expressed to J. David Jackson, my doctoral student in the Graduate Studies Program, who read the typescript, expertly prepared by Janet M. Gathright, also a student in the doctoral program.

Ralph P. Martin

CHIEF ABBREVIATIONS

General

Abbott-Smith	<i>A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament</i> by G. Abbott-Smith, 1937.
AV/KJV	English Authorized Version (King James).
BAGD	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i> by W. Bauer. Translated and edited by W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, 2nd edn, 1979.
<i>BJRL</i>	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library.
BZNTW	Beihefte to <i>ZNTW</i> .
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> .
ET	English Translation.
<i>EQ</i>	<i>The Evangelical Quarterly</i> .
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>The Expository Times</i> .
GNB	<i>Good News Bible (Today's English Version)</i> , 1976.
<i>IBD</i>	<i>Illustrated Bible Dictionary</i> , eds. J. D. Douglas and N. Hillyer, 1980.
JB	<i>The Jerusalem Bible</i> , 1966.
LXX	Septuagint Version.
Moffatt	<i>A New Translation of the Bible</i> by James Moffatt, 1935.
Moulton-Milligan	<i>The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament</i> by J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, 1914–1930.
NCB	New Century Bible, London and Grand Rapids.
NEB	<i>The New English Bible</i> , 1970.

NIV	<i>The New International Version</i> , 1978.
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i> .
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i> .
Phillips	<i>Letters to Young Churches</i> by J. B. Phillips, 1947.
RSV	Revised Standard Version, Old Testament, 1952; New Testament, ² 1971,
RV	English Revised Version, 1881.
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, Cambridge.
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , eds. G. Kittel & G. Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 1964–75.
<i>ZNTW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> .
1QS	<i>Rule of the Community</i> at Qumran.
1QM	<i>War Scroll</i> at Qumran.

Commentaries in English

Beare	<i>A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians</i> by F. W. Beare, 1959.
Bruce	<i>Philippians</i> by F. F. Bruce (A Good News Commentary), 1983.
Caird	<i>Paul's Letters From Prison</i> by G. B. Caird (New Clarendon Bible), 1976.
Collange	<i>The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Philippians</i> by J. F. Collange, 1979.
Craddock	<i>Philippians</i> by Fred B. Craddock (Interpretation), 1985.
Getty	<i>Philippians and Philemon</i> by Mary Ann Getty (New Testament Message 14), 1980.
Grayston	<i>The Epistles to the Galatians and to the Philippians</i> by Kenneth Grayston (Epworth Preacher's Commentaries), 1957.
Hawthorne	<i>Philippians</i> by Gerald F. Hawthorne (Word Biblical Commentary), 1983.
Hendriksen	<i>A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians</i> by W. Hendriksen (Geneva Series), 1962.
Houlden	<i>Paul's Letters from Prison</i> by J. L. Houlden (Pelican

- New Testament Commentaries), 1970.
- Kennedy *The Epistle to the Philippians* by H. A. A. Kennedy (Expositor's Greek Testament), 1903.
- Lightfoot *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* by J. B. Lightfoot, 1896 edn.
- Martin *Philippians* by Ralph P. Martin (New Century Bible) 1976, revised 1980.
- Michael *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians* by J. H. Michael (Moffatt New Testament Commentaries), 1928.
- Motyer *The Message of Philippians* by J. A. Motyer (The Bible Speaks Today), 1984.
- Moule *The Epistle to the Philippians* by H. C. G. Moule (Cambridge Greek Testament), 1906.
- Müller *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon* by J. J. Müller (New London/International Commentary on the New Testament), 1955.
- Scott *The Epistle to the Philippians* by E. F. Scott (Interpreter's Bible), 1955.
- Synge *Philippians and Colossians* by F. C. Synge (Torch Bible Commentaries), 1951.
- Vincent *The Epistles to the Philippians and Philemon* by M. R. Vincent (International Critical Commentaries), 1897.
- Wilson *Philippians. A Digest of Reformed Comment* by Geoffrey B. Wilson, 1983.

Commentaries in other languages

- Barth *Erklärung des Philipperbriefes* by Karl Barth, 1928.
ET *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 1962.
- Bengel *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* by J. A. Bengel, 1742.
ET *Gnomon of the New Testament*, 1862.
- Benoit *Les Épîtres de Saint Paul aux Philippiens*, etc. by P. Benoit (La Bible de Jérusalem), 1949.
- Bonnard *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Philippiens* by P. Bonnard (Commentaire du Nouveau Testament), 1950.
- Dibelius *An die Thessalonicher, i, ii; an die Philipper* by M. Dibelius (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament), 1937.

- Gnilka *Der Philipperbrief* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum NT) by J. Gnilka, 1968.
- Heinzelmann *Die kleineren Briefe des Apostels Paulus*, 8 (Das Neue Testament Deutsch); *Der Brief an die Philipper* by G. Heinzelmann, 1955.
- Lohmeyer *Der Brief an die Philipper* by E. Lohmeyer, ed. W. Schmauch (Meyer series), 1956.
- Michaelis *Der Brief des Paulus an die Philipper* by W. Michaelis (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament), 1935.

INTRODUCTION

1. The church at Philippi

The establishment of the church at Philippi, marking, as it does, the entrance of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ into Europe, is described in Acts 16:12–40 with great fullness of detail. As a frontispiece to the narrative of Paul's coming and ministry Luke describes the city as 'a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia' (Acts 16:12). This probably means that Philippi was the first city of the region or sub-province of Macedonia rather than the capital city, an honour which belonged to Thessalonica.¹ This statement is confirmed by what is known of Philippi from other sources.²

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1. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 93ff.
 2. For a full description of the archaeology of Philippi the works of P. Collart are authoritative: *Philippes, ville de Macédoine* (Paris, École Française d'Athènes, Travaux et Mémoires, Fasc. v, 1937) and his article

Luke's full designation has been taken to mean that he had a special interest in the city, and even that it reflects his civic pride in his own place of origin.

The history of the site goes back at least to Philip II of Macedon about the year 360 BC. He gave the town its name (Philip's city) and fortified it. In 167 BC it became part of the Roman Empire, but its real importance was not achieved until after 31 BC. After Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium, Philippi 'received a settlement of Italian colonists who had favoured Antony and had been obliged to surrender their land to the veterans of Octavian'.³ The full title of the city now appears as *Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis*. The dignity of Philippi as a Roman *colonia* is specially mentioned in Acts 16:12 and is important for the background of the epistle.

Of all the benefits of this title, which included the use of Roman law in local affairs and sometimes exemption from tribute and taxation, the possession of the *ius Italicum* was the most coveted. This is defined as the privilege 'by which the whole legal position of the colonists in respect to ownership, transfer of land, payment of taxes, local administration, and law, became the same as if they were on Italian soil; as, in fact, by a legal fiction, they were'.⁴ Consequently Philippi had cause for civic pride and its favoured position is reflected by many allusions in the letter.

The narrative in Acts bears witness to the presence of a Jewish community before the coming of the Christian missionaries (Acts 16:13);⁵ and to these Jewish women who met for prayer the apostle addressed his message and received the response of faith as the Lord opened the heart of a woman named Lydia, who is described in terms which can mean that she was almost a proselyte of Judaism. It is interesting to recall the appeal of the Jewish faith to women,⁶

in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, 14/1, 1939, pp. 712–741.

3. K. Lake and H. J. Cadbury (eds.), *The Beginnings of Christianity*, 4 (Macmillan, 1933), p. 187.
4. Lake and Cadbury, *ibid.*, p. 190.
5. For the archaeological details here cf. Collart, *Philippes, ville de Macédoine*, pp. 321ff., 458ff.
6. 'In the case of Jewish propagandism, it was found that it was the female

and also the high status of women in Macedonia.⁷ The church at Philippi also contained a proportion of women as we know from the mention of feminine names in 4:2–3.⁸

The two conversion stories which are reported in the remaining verses of Acts 16 make it clear that the gospel was not restricted to Jews or Jewish adherents. ‘To the Jew first and also to the Greek’ (Rom. 1:16, RSV) was the motto of the apostle’s evangelistic procedure; and two notable conversions from the world of paganism are graphically recorded, the slave-girl (16:16–18) and the Roman jailer (vv. 19–34).

Both these incidents provide interesting background and information about the citizens of a city in which the infant Christian community was formed. The practice of soothsayers under the control of an oracular spirit, the yearning for ‘salvation’ (vv. 17, 30) and the intolerance shown towards the monotheism and morality of the Jews (v. 20) are evidence of the prevailing tendencies in the religious climate of this Graeco-Roman city.⁹ Added to this, we observe their intense loyalty to the Roman ethos both as an occasion of proud conviction (v. 21) and also as a confession of disturbing fear when they realized that they had actually beaten and bound men who were Romans (v. 38). Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, should be consulted for the issue of Roman patriotism which lies in the background of Paul’s mission preaching at Philippi and the subsequent letter.

heart that was most impressionable’, E. Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the time of Jesus Christ*, 2.2 (T. & T. Clark, 1893), p. 308

7. Cf. W. Tarn and G. T. Griffith, *Hellenistic Civilization* (E. Arnold, 31952), pp. 98, 99, ‘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 concession 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.’
8. W. D. Thomas, ‘The Place of Women at Philippi’, *ExpT*, 83, 1971–72, pp. 117–120.
9. See J. N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World* (Brill, 1975).

In such an atmosphere ('in a crooked and depraved generation', Phil. 2:15), a church was founded in circumstances which left an indelible mark on Paul's mind. His letter harks back to the 'first day' when God's good work began in the converts' lives (1:3–6). The time of his first visit was 'in the early days of ... the gospel' (4:15), and since then he had known a continuance of the church's fellowship across the years. He looks upon them as his 'joy and crown' (4:1) and boasts of them to other churches (2 Cor. 8:1ff).¹⁰

As to the composition of the church at Philippi, in spite of the explicit reference to the Lydian woman who had attachment to Judaism, it seems clear that the main influx into the fellowship was from the Gentile world. Although the church was based on Lydia's house (Acts 16:40) the names of the church members in the letter (2:25; 4:2–3) show that the later converts were former pagans. Luke himself appears to have remained in Philippi after the apostle and his companions moved on – the 'we' section of Acts is not resumed until 20:6 when 'we sailed from Philippi' – and no doubt the presence of a Christian leader such as Luke was a powerful aid to evangelization and consolidation in the days which followed.

2. Date and place of composition

a. A Roman origin

The traditional dating of the epistle is associated with the apostle's captivity at Rome (Acts 28:16, 30) and it is customary still to speak of Philippians as one of the Prison Epistles. As this imprisonment lasted for 'two whole years' the question arises: To which part of the captivity does the epistle belong? The view of Lightfoot¹¹ is that the letter is, in fact, the earliest of the Prison Epistles. His grounds

10. See Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians*, 11:3, which refers to the apostle's praise for the Philippians: 'For about you he boasts in all the churches.' Cf. The 'Marcionite' Prologue to the Epistle: 'The Philippians are Macedonians. They persevered in faith after they had accepted the word of truth and they did not receive false prophets. The apostle praises them writing to them from Rome in prison by Epaphroditus.'

11. J. B. Lightfoot, *St Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, ch. 2.

are first, the linguistic affinity of Philippians with Romans; and second, its marked difference, on the grounds of content and language, from Colossians and Ephesians which are placed nearer the close of the period of Roman captivity.

Among the writers who champion the Roman dating, this relative placing of Philippians is almost universally rejected, on the following main grounds:

1. The journeys and communications between Rome and Philippi demand a reasonable interval of time.
2. The legal issue of the trial is still in the balance at the time of writing, and this points to the end of the captivity when Paul was tried and acquitted, or executed,¹² or exiled.¹³
3. Little weight of importance can be attached to the variations in the apostle's vocabulary and style. The use of different words in the other Prison Epistles may be explained largely on the score of different subject-matter, and we must bear in mind that the character of Philippians is more informal and personal than that of the other letters. The literary affinity with Romans is impressive, as Lightfoot has demonstrated, but here again this close agreement betokens merely a common author whose mind is addressed to similar topics in both letters.¹⁴

The dating of the epistle at the close of the Roman captivity rests upon the following grounds:

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12. Or possibly the case against him went by default. Cf. H. J. Cadbury's Note xxvi: 'Roman Law and the Trial of Paul' in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, 5, pp. 297ff., and J. J. Gunther, *Paul: Messenger and Exile* (Judson, 1972) ch. 6.
 13. On balance, the most likely in my view: see R. P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations*, 2 (Paternoster/Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 298–300 incorporating the evidence in the Pastoral Epistles.
 14. Cf. G. S. Duncan's warning, *ExpT*, 67, 1956, p. 163: 'Theories of doctrinal development, like arguments based on literary affinities, ought not to have more than a secondary place in determining questions of historical sequence, and may, if applied without due caution, yield dangerously misleading results'; also W. Michaelis, *Die Datierung des Philipperbriefes* (Mohn, 1933), p. 17, for the view that the dating of the letter must be fixed independently of language and style.

1. The writer is a prisoner¹⁵ (see 1:7, 13–14, 17) and his imprisonment is serious (1:20ff.; 1:30; 2:17) because the issue of life or death is uncertain. It may result in Paul's release, which is his fervent hope for the sake of the Philippians (1:19, 23–24), or it may be a fatal issue which will be the sentence of death (1:20–23; 2:17) and the martyr's crown (3:11).

2. From the information given in the book of the Acts we know of only three imprisonments. These are Acts 16:23–40, at the time of Paul's first visit to Philippi; Acts 21:33 – 23:30, the arrest at Jerusalem, followed by two years' detention at Caesarea (24:27); and Acts 27 – 28:16, the voyage to Rome as a prisoner, followed by a further imprisonment of two years' duration (28:30). The epistle to the Philippians cannot have been written during the first; the case for a Caesarean origin (it is said) is weak and unconvincing; therefore it must have been written during the Roman imprisonment.

3. This is confirmed by references to the scene of Paul's captivity in 1:13: 'it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard ... that I am in chains for Christ'. The original word *praetōrion* is taken by the NIV, which follows Lightfoot's conclusion here, to be the 'praetorian guard' at Rome; but for a difficulty in regard to the vast number of such praetorian soldiers, see the Commentary at 1:13.

A closing greeting is conveyed to the readers from those 'who belong to Caesar's household' (4:22). This is taken by Lightfoot and others to be an allusion to the imperial slaves or freedmen in the service of the emperor at the capital city.

There are, however, certain reservations which have made scholars pause before regarding the above conclusion as certain and indisputable. These difficulties may be enumerated as follows:

1. The menacing situation reflected in such verses as 1:20–23, 30;

15. T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (Manchester University Press, 1962), pp. 149–167, finds indications in the letter that Paul was at liberty when he wrote it. He regards the trial as already past. The apostle is now a free man, and his 'chains' are his continuing experiences of hardship in every place. This reading of 1:7, 12ff., 16f., 30 can hardly be correct. These verses indicate that Paul's imprisonment is still going on at the time of writing.

2:17 with their indication that death was an imminent possibility for Paul hardly tallies with the comparative freedom and relaxed atmosphere at the close of Acts. If Philippians was written at Rome it is necessary to postulate an unfavourable development in the apostle's relations with the authorities which led to a change for the worse in his conditions and prospects: his circumstances would have altered from those of the 'free custody' (*libera custodia*), as it was called, in Acts 28 (cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2:22, 1) to those of strict confinement and the impending danger of Philippians 1:2off., 30; 2:17.

To this obvious difference between the two situations there may be added the difference between the charge levelled at the apostle according to Philippians and that on which he was remitted to Rome. In the first case, the gravamen was the preaching of the word (1:13, 16); but in Jerusalem he was arrested because of his supposed violation of the temple (Acts 21:28; 24:6; 25:8) and he is sent to Rome on this charge (cf. Acts 28:17).¹⁶ So it is conjectured¹⁷ that, while the charge of temple violation (Acts 24:12) could be rebutted, there would be more serious charges levied against him, e.g. that he was a social offender (Acts 24:5), and there was no way of his knowing how the verdict would go.

2. Much has been made, chiefly by Deissmann,¹⁸ who first elaborated the point, of the great distance and frequent journeys and communications between Philippi and Rome which are required by the internal evidence of the letter itself. He gives a list of no less than five journeys to and from the place of Paul's confinement, together with an extra four trips envisaged in the future plans of Paul. These are given as follows:

- a. The journey of Timothy to Paul's side at the place of his

16. Cf. P. Benoit, *Les épîtres de Saint Paul aux Philippiens*, etc., pp. 11, 12.

17. Bruce, *Philippians*, p. xxiv.

18. A. Deissmann, 'Zur ephesinischen Gefangenschaft des Apostels Paulus', in *Anatolian Studies presented to Sir W. M. Ramsay*, ed. W. H. Buckler and W. M. Calder (Manchester University Press, 1923), pp. 121-127.

captivity. He is not mentioned in the journey to Rome (Acts 26–28) but was with the apostle when the letter was composed (1:1).

- b. A message from the scene of captivity to Philippi to say that Paul is a prisoner and is in need (4:14).
- c. After the collection of a love gift at Philippi it is brought by Epaphroditus who travels from Philippi to the place of the imprisonment (4:18).
- d. Epaphroditus falls sick, and news of this somehow¹⁹ reaches the church at (Philippi 2:26).
- e. Paul now receives a message that the Philippians have heard of their messenger's sickness, and he is able to report that this news has had a painful effect upon Epaphroditus himself (2:26).

The journeys which are planned according to inferences in the letter are:

- a. Epaphroditus' journey to bring the letter to Philippi (2:25, 28).
- b. Timothy's journey in the near future from the place of Paul's confinement to Philippi (2:19).
- c. Journey b. will mean that when Timothy fulfils his mission he will return to Paul so that he 'may be cheered' when he learns of their state (2:19).
- d. Paul's journey in the near future (2:24).

Deissmann remarks that 'those enormous journeys' cannot be fitted into the period of Acts 28:30, that the use of the adverbs 'soon' (2:19, 24) and 'immediately' (2:23) gives the impression that the distance between the place of writing and the city of Philippi is not great, and that such rapid and repeated travel is more likely to

19. It has been proposed that Epaphroditus fell sick en route to Paul's prison, and not when he had arrived at where Paul was. So B. S. MacKay, *NTS*, 7, 1960–61, pp. 161–170 and C. O. Buchanan, *EQ*, 36, 1964, pp. 157–166. This suggestion is based on 2:30, but it is weak, as we shall see.

be possible, in the time of the imprisonment, if the apostle is captive at a place nearer to Philippi than Rome. He names Ephesus as the most likely alternative.

In reply to this argument based on distance and travel time which is used by those who oppose the traditional dating of the epistle, it may be said that a lot depends upon the approximate calculation of the time taken to make the journey from Philippi to Rome.²⁰ Lightfoot gives this as a month,²¹ but a period of seven to eight weeks would be more accurate. Even on this longer reckoning it is a fact that there is evidence of the relative speed and dependability of travel in the world of Paul's day,²² and Dodd and Harrison feel that there is no difficulty in fitting these travel times into the two years of Acts 28:30.²³

3. We may take note of the impression which the letter has made on several scholars that, since the foundation of the Philippian church, the apostle had not been to visit it up to the time when he wrote the epistle.²⁴ References in 1:30 and 4:15f. take the reader back to the days of the first missionary journey, and appear to indicate that

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20. A distance of 730 land miles plus one or two days' sea voyage across the Adriatic.
21. Lightfoot, p. 38, note 1. P. N. Harrison, *Polycarp's Two Letters* (Cambridge University Press, 1936), pp. 113–116, discusses this calculation and comments: 'In order to accomplish the whole journey in 33 days ('about a month'), they would have needed to cover those 730 land miles in 31 days at an average speed rate of 23½ miles a day, with no halts' (p. 113). He shows that, using the example of Ignatius' journey, a period of forty-nine days is more feasible (p. 116).
22. See a study by L. Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Hakkert, 1974), ch. 9, for the speed and reliability of travel in New Testament times.
23. C. H. Dodd, *New Testament Studies* (Manchester University Press, 1953), pp. 96ff.; P. N. Harrison, *NTS*, 2, 1956, p. 260.
24. For example, W. Michaelis, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Philipper* (Deichert, 1935), p. 3. He finds this impression strengthened by 2:12 and 1:26. Other scholars (e.g. W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* [Cambridge University Press, 1939], p. 180) form the exactly opposite impression from 4:15f., and C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 99 is unimpressed by this argument in favour of an earlier dating than the Roman one.

Paul had not renewed acquaintance with the Philippian Christians since those days. But this cannot be so, if Paul is at Rome when he writes his letter, because he *has* visited the church since the first visit of Acts 16. Acts 20:1–6 records such return visits.

The reminiscence of 1:30 ('the same struggle you saw I had') suggests a shorter time than the eleven to twelve years which must have elapsed if Paul were writing from Rome; and a mention of the early days of their faith (1:5; 4:15) gives the impression that only a short time has intervened between Paul's first visit and preaching and the time of the letter.

4. Philippians 2:24 (cf. Phlm. 22) expresses the hope and intention of the apostle to revisit the church if his release is granted. Now earlier verses (1:24–27) suggest that what he had in mind was not just an isolated visit, but rather the continuation of his missionary and pastoral work among the Philippians. This is an important indication of the apostle's outlook, because we know that at the time of Romans 15:23–24, 28 he considered his missionary work in the east as finished, and was setting his face in the direction of the west and thinking in terms of a projected visit to Spain. Now if, some years later than the writing of Romans 15:23–24, 28, Paul is found expressing the intention of revisiting Philippi, we must suppose that a new situation has arisen which led him to change his missionary strategy.²⁵ While this

25. For the view that Paul abandoned his plan to go to Spain, see A. Schlatter, *The Church in the New Testament Period* (ET, SPCK, 1955), pp. 220, 236. But this is improbable in the light of early Christian tradition, see G. Ogg, *The Chronology of the Life of Paul* (Epworth Press, 1968; U.S. title, *The Odyssey of Paul*, Revell), ch. 21. Dodd, *New Testament Studies*, p. 96 suggests that Paul changed his mind on the ground that, as he depended for his proposed Spanish mission on support from Rome, and as Philippians shows that a large section of the Roman church was opposed to him, he decided to postpone the projected enterprise of Romans 15 and revisit Philippi in view of the Jewish opposition there. Bruce, *Philippians*, p. xxiv grants that Paul's travel plans were never inflexible, noting that a change in plans from the date in Acts and Romans is inevitable on the hypothesis of a Roman origin of Philippians.

is, of course, possible, it is also to be noted that if Philippians was brought back to a period before Acts 20, then we have a situation in which the promised visit of Philippians 1:26; 2:24 was fulfilled in Acts 19:21; 20:1ff., along with the pledge to send Timothy to the Philippians (2:19, 23) which was made good according to Acts 19:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10f. On this view, the evidence of Romans 15 for a mission in the west also stands (cf. 1 Clement 5:5–7).

This correspondence between ‘the persons concerned, the objective and the sequence of events of the journeys’ is treated as a very impressive argument for pushing back the composition of the letter to a period into which it fits like the key piece of a jig-saw; and if the events do not correspond it is necessary to suppose a remarkable duplication.²⁶ On the other hand, there is no mention of Erastus in Philippians as there is in Acts 19:22 and Harrison finds a disparity in the reasons given for the missions of Timothy recorded in Acts 19:22 and Philippians 2:19.²⁷

If the case for the Roman origin is open to criticism on the grounds which are outlined above, what better alternative is possible? Two or three suggested possibilities have been offered to overcome the difficulties which are felt, by some scholars, to stand in the way of the acceptance of the time-honoured order of the Pauline letters. One such option, that Paul wrote the letter from Corinth may be summarily mentioned – and dismissed.²⁸

b. A Caesarean origin

This was first propounded by Oeder of Leipzig in 1713, and supported more recently by Pfeleiderer, Spitta, Lohmeyer, J. A. T. Robinson²⁹ and G. F. Hawthorne and its claims re-opened for

26. W. Michaelis, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Haller Verlag, 1954), pp. 208, 209. See also G. S. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1929), pp. 77–80

27. In *loc. cit.*, pp. 258–259; but see Duncan's answer in *NTS*, 3, 1957, p. 218.

28. Details are given in Martin, *Philippians* (NCB, 1976=1980), pp. 44, 45.

29. J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (SCM, 1976), pp. 57–61. Evaluation of his arguments is in my *Philippians* (NCB, 1976=1980), pp. 45–48.

consideration. On this theory the imprisonment to which the letter refers would be located in Caesarea where Paul was detained according to Acts 23:33. Lohmeyer dates the epistle in the year AD 58 during the time of the apostle's detention at Caesarea, advancing the evidence of Acts 23:35 where Herod's 'palace' (lit. *praitōrion*: see RV margin) is named as the place of confinement.³⁰ This place he would equate with the *praitōrion* of Philippians 1:13. This identification *may* be so; but it may also be true of many other provincial cities throughout the Empire (e.g. Corinth). Certainly there is no necessity to trace this reference to Rome, but there is equally no necessity to place the *praitōrion* of Philippians 1:13 (see the Commentary on this verse) in Caesarea.

There are telling arguments against this proposed theory. The custody of Acts 23:35 (cf. 24:23) does not suggest the imminent martyrdom which Lohmeyer takes as the master theme of the entire epistle.³¹ The comparative ease of his detention contrasts sharply with the 'chains' and 'struggle' of Philippians 1, and the mention of his friends hardly corresponds with Philippians 2:20–21. Hawthorne³² calls this 'a major objection'. The size and type of Christian community at the scene of Paul's imprisonment do not favour Caesarea (1:14ff.).³³ Moreover, his outlook at the time of Acts 23–24 was bound up with a visit to Rome as we know from the Acts narrative (cf. 23:11) and of this desire there is no mention in Philippians. The desperate situation which confronted him, according to 1:20ff.; 2:17, could have been dispelled by an appeal to the emperor, and, in fact, this is just what happened according to Acts 25:10–12.

30. E. Lohmeyer, *Der Brief an die Philipper* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1929), pp. 40f. For a critical review of Lohmeyer's commentary, cf. W. K. L. Clarke, *New Testament Problems* (Macmillan, 1929), pp. 141–150. Cf. also L. Johnson, 'The Pauline Letters from Caesarea', *ExpT*, 68, 1956, pp. 24–26.

31. Lohmeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 3: 'Paul can count still on the possibility of release; but he seems rather to long for and await death which will bring him into eternal union with Christ.'

32. Hawthorne, p. xliii.

33. Bruce, *Philippians*, p. 23: 'Caesarea was a political backwater'.

This ‘trump card’, as Dodd calls it,³⁴ could have extricated him from danger if he were at Caesarea when his life was threatened by the authorities, and he seems to have been protected by those same authorities from Jewish ‘conspiracy’ against his life (Acts 23:12ff.). Paul’s financial position, according to the witness of Acts 24:26,³⁵ does not seem to be in agreement with that at the time of Philippians when his ‘need’ is relieved only by the arrival of the gift at the hands of Epaphroditus (Phil. 4:12ff.).

c. An Ephesian origin

The second possibility stems from the hypothesis that Paul suffered imprisonment at Ephesus. It is during this period of his life and against the background of the troubles which befell him ‘in the province of Asia’ (Acts 20:18f.; cf. 2 Cor. 1:8) that it is proposed to place the dating of Philippians, and to interpret many of the puzzling details of the letter.

At first glance the foundation of this theory seems very insecure inasmuch as the *fact* of an Ephesian imprisonment is without definite proof. Of this lack of evidence the leading exponents of the view are aware, and they freely admit that a captivity in Ephesus must remain an assumption.³⁶ But there is, according to these scholars, cumulative evidence which makes the hypothesis very probable, if not almost certain.

We may consider the data which are offered to support such a view as a basis for a dating of the letter.

1. The cryptic allusion in 1 Corinthians 15:32 to fighting with ‘wild beasts in Ephesus’³⁷ may be construed either literally or metaphorically; and in either case the phrase may describe either an actual or hypothetical experience. For a figurative interpretation the statement

34. Dodd, *New Testament Studies*, p. 103.

35. W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1893), pp. 310ff.

36. Michaelis, *Einleitung*, p. 207; Collange, p. 18. It is, however, going too far to dub this lack of definite evidence a ‘fatal flaw’ (Hawthorne, p. xxxix) because there are several indirect pieces of data.

37. See BAGD, *s.v. thērionacheō*.

of Ignatius (*Romans* 5) is often cited: 'From Syria to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts (*thēriomachēō*) ... bound to ten leopards, that is, a company of soldiers.' Ignatius quite clearly draws a distinction between the trials he endures at the hands of the soldiers who are escorting him and the expectation of his fate in the arena (5:2; cf. 4:1–2). In 1 Corinthians 15:32, Paul may be describing, in a vivid way, the hostility of men against him rather than his fate in which he was literally condemned *ad bestias* in the arena. Against the literal reading is also the fact that 2 Corinthians 11:23–27 fails to record it in the list of his hardships. Also his privilege as a Roman citizen would exempt him from such a punishment; but we must reckon with the possibility that, if the attack upon his life were more in the spirit of mob violence than a legal sentence of death, his plea of Roman citizenship would fall on unheeding ears as in the case of a Roman citizen who was beaten at Messina³⁸ or the Christian Attalus who escaped death in the amphitheatre one day when the governor knew he was a Roman, but the next day 'the governor, to please the crowd ... delivered Attalus too again to the wild beasts'.³⁹

But whether this terrifying experience were an actual fact (in which case the 'beasts' must be taken metaphorically: Paul did not die in the arena!) or relates to some event which seemed likely to happen but never did,⁴⁰ the term he uses implies some outstanding physical hardship endured at Ephesus in which there was a real threat upon his life (cf. 1 Cor. 15:31, 32b); and this is not the only indication there is of some danger which jeopardized the apostle's life at that time.

2. Evidence of imprisonments and severe privations prior to the Roman captivity is provided by 2 Corinthians 11:23–27, which is confirmed by the statement of Clement of Rome (5:6) that Paul 'was seven times in bonds'. Much of the Corinthian correspondence in the first and second canonical letters to the church in that place appears to reflect a great trial or series of trials he had to endure in the vicinity of Ephesus where 1 Corinthians was written. We may

38. Cicero, *in Verrem*, 5:62, 63, 66.

39. Eusebius, *H. E.*, 5:1, 44, 50.

40. See A. J. Malherbe, *JBL*, 87, 1968, pp. 71–80.

instance 1 Corinthians 4:9–13, and especially the sombre tones of 2 Corinthians 1:8–10 where he confesses that in (proconsular) Asia he was crushed down by some fearful burden which made him despair even of life itself. ‘In fact I told myself it was the sentence of death’ (2 Cor. 1:9, Moffatt); but in the mercy of God he was rescued from this fate, ‘so terrible a death’ (v. 10, Moffatt). The same anxious mood is to be detected also in 2 Corinthians 4:8–12; 5:1–10; 6:4–10 (cf. Acts 20:18–19) written while the memory of his days at Ephesus was still vivid.⁴¹

With these perilous experiences Romans 16:3ff. is thought to be in close agreement. C. R. Bowen comments:⁴² ‘The language can scarcely mean anything else than that the apostle had been in danger of execution (cf. Rom. 16:3: “Prisca and Aquila . . . who have risked their lives for me”, Moffatt) but had somehow been saved by Prisca and her husband at the hazard of their own lives.’ He connects this with the exposure to the wild beasts of 1 Corinthians 15:32, whereas Dodd relates it to the troubles described in Acts 19:23–40. The former crisis may be too hypothetical for a firm identification, and the latter too mild for the language of Romans 16:3–4 (cf. 16:7: ‘Andronicus and Junias . . . have been in prison with me’). All we can say is that at this period of his life at Ephesus (Romans 16 may have been written to the community there) or nearby, the apostle was in mortal peril and rescued only by divine interposition and the fearless co-operation of his friends.

3. The extra-biblical witness to an Ephesian imprisonment is admittedly of limited value. It consists of the local tradition of a watch-tower in Ephesus which is known as ‘Paul’s prison’; and in the

41. See M. J. Harris, ‘2 Corinthians 5:1–10: Watershed in Paul’s Eschatology’ *Tyndale Bulletin*, 22, 1971, pp. 32–57, for the possible effect of his Ephesian trial on Paul’s outlook. A. Deissmann, *Bible Studies* (T. & T. Clark, 1901), p. 257, gives the meaning of ‘the sentence of death’ as an official decision of the verdict of death, but this is challenged by C. J. Hemer, ‘A Note on 2 Corinthians 1:9’, *Tyndale Bulletin*, 23, 1972, pp. 103–107.

42. ‘Are Paul’s prison letters from Ephesus?’ in *The American Journal of Theology*, 24/1, Jan. 1920, p. 116.

'Marcionite' Prologues, the prologue to Colossians reads: 'After he had been arrested he wrote to them (the Colossians) from Ephesus.'⁴³ There is also the apocryphal story of Paul and the lion in the Ephesian arena.⁴⁴

The most obvious and cogent objection against the presupposition of an imprisonment at Ephesus is *the silence of the book of Acts*. At this point, G. S. Duncan's chapter which seeks to explain the lacunae in the Acts narrative may be referred to,⁴⁵ and if his case is held to be convincing or, at least, plausible, the Ephesian dating of Philippians may be tested. Does its origin in the Ephesian period against the background of the apostle's strained predicament of those days explain or relieve the difficulties that have been earlier noted? The following are the main attractions of this novel suggestion:

1. The 'enormous journeys' between Philippi and the place of Paul's writing (which Deissmann found to be so much of an obstacle to the Roman dating) are considerably reduced. We are able to calculate with fair precision the journey time from Ephesus to Philippi. Acts 20:13ff. gives the time for the journey from Troas to Miletus as five days; to Ephesus, then, we may estimate a time of four days. Acts 16:11ff. gives three days from Troas to Philippi, and, with a contrary wind, five days (Acts 20:6). Thus the entire distance between Ephesus and Philippi would be covered in seven to nine days, and in favourable circumstances the outgoing and return journeys could be done in two weeks. So the five journeys which Deissmann regards as required by the internal evidence of the letter would be covered in not more than six weeks' travelling, and the four extra journeys which are envisaged and planned in the letter in not more than four or five weeks.

This contrasts so sharply with the lengthy distances and times required by communication between Philippi and Rome that

43. Deissmann, *Anatolian Studies*, p. 127.

44. G. S. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry*, pp. 69, 70 referring to one version of the tale given in R. McL. Wilson (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha* (ET, Lutterworth, 1963), pp. 338f.

45. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry*, ch. 9, pp. 95ff.

Deissmann offers this factor as strongly supporting the Ephesian provenance of the epistle.

2. There is inscriptional evidence to satisfy the requirement of Philippians 1:13; 4:22. See these verses in the Commentary. Ephesus was the site of the proconsular headquarters, and there would be a *praitōrion* there.⁴⁶ 'Caesar's household' may well refer to the imperial fiscal staff in that city; and there are certain advantages in this view, e.g. it reduces the number of praetorian guard (about 9,000 in Rome) all of whom (1:13) had heard that the apostle was a prisoner for Christ's sake.

3. At the time of Acts 19 Paul had been to Philippi only once and references to 'the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel' (4:15) read more naturally if the period between the founding of the church and the time of the letter were a short one than if it were a longer one. (So Gnilka 'it is unlikely that Paul had seen the church in the interval since its foundation'.⁴⁷) The plans of Philippians 2 also relate with precision to the missionary itinerary of the Acts narrative: Philippians 2:19 (the mission of Timothy) will be that of Acts 19:22 (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10) and Paul's hoped-for visit of 2:24 (and 1:26) will have been fulfilled in Acts 20:1 (cf. 19:21).

On the other hand, this neat identification has been challenged by Harrison who says that the movements of Paul following his experience of Acts 19 betray such a lack of urgency to leave Ephesus (cf. 1 Cor. 16:5–9) that they cannot reflect the outlook of the man who wrote of hoping 'soon' (Phil. 2:24) to revisit Philippi. But we do not know the reason for Paul's delay in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:9), which may have been a situation which developed subsequent to his release from the imprisonment in that city and, therefore, later than the writing of Philippians. The crisis at Corinth with all its ramifications for Paul's apostolic mission may well have prompted him to defer a visit

46. This is questioned by Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles*, pp. 178, 180; and by B. Reicke, 'Caesarea, Rome and the Captivity Letters', in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, eds. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin (Paternoster/Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 277–286. See later p. 77.

47. Gnilka, *Der Philipperbrief*, p. 101.

to Macedonia, especially as we do know that he did change his travel plans (2 Cor. 1:15–17, 23).

Other items of an incidental character fall into place on the assumption of an earlier dating. Acts 19:22 confirms the presence of Timothy with Paul at Ephesus, whereas there is no sure knowledge from Acts that Timothy came to Rome. Yet he was with the apostle according to Philippians 1:1.

Philippians 4:10 refers to the Philippians' desire to send help to Paul; but they had not been able to do so because they 'had no opportunity'. This can hardly have been the case if the date is some time in the years of the Roman captivity, because 4:16 will then refer to a period twelve years earlier and in that interval Paul had revisited Macedonia (Acts 20:3) and Philippi (20:6). That it must have been the first gift to the apostle that is mentioned in 4:15–16 is shown by the historical allusion to 'the early days of ... the gospel' in 4:15. And yet Paul harks back to that time in spite of at least two visits to Philippi and recalls the lack of opportunity for further gifts! As T. W. Manson says, 'If Philippians was written from Rome, Paul's remarks on the subject of the gift sent from Philippi cannot be construed except as a rebuke, and a sarcastic rebuke at that.'⁴⁸

If, however, only three or four years have elapsed since the first gift, it will be quite true that the Philippians have had no opportunity to send a further contribution, for in that time Paul had been in the east or in the 'interior' of Acts 19:1.

To this argument Dodd raises the objection that, at the time of the Ephesian ministry, the Philippians lacked the opportunity to help because they were in the grip of a financial depression (2 Cor. 8:1–6).⁴⁹ Also he remarks upon the necessity which Paul felt, at a time when he was engaged in the task of collecting money for the Jewish 'poor' at Jerusalem, of not receiving personal gifts which may have laid him open to the charge of underhand dealings in financial matters. But the apostle never alludes to their past economic stringency to explain their tardiness to come to his help, and 4:10 suggests that

48. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, p. 157.

49. Dodd, *New Testament Studies*, p. 98. See, on this and related matters, B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power* (Fortress, 1983), especially pp. 88–95.

they had the money in spite of their poverty but could not get it to the apostle. 2 Corinthians 8:3 records how that, even in their extreme necessity, they supported the collection 'beyond their ability'. The care with which Paul avoids the charge of covetousness (2 Cor. 12:14–19) can hardly be used as an objection to Paul's receiving the Philippians' gift in view of 4:17, and the objection overlooks the special bond of affection which made the church at Philippi something of a favourite in his eyes (see 4:15: 'not one church ... except you only').

The criterion of an affinity of language and ideas with other epistles is one which we have regarded as secondary, but many scholars buttress their advocacy of an earlier dating of Philippians by a demonstration of its literary connections and theological associations with 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans. In this way Lightfoot's linguistic parallels with Romans are justified by another route as Duncan places the two epistles to the Corinthians in close juxtaposition with Philippians immediately *before* Romans and not vice versa, as does Lightfoot.⁵⁰

There are, nevertheless, at least two factors which militate against the proposed reconstruction of a crisis at or near Ephesus leading to Paul's arrest and mortal peril and forming the background of the hopes and fears expressed in Philippians.

1. The singular absence of any mention of the collection for the poverty-stricken Jerusalem churches is an objection which J. Schmid calls 'a chief argument' against the suggested origin of the letter.⁵¹ We know that this matter filled Paul's thoughts and controlled many of his movements at this time (cf. 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans), and yet in a letter putatively set in the context of the third missionary journey there is not a word about it.

Against this omission it is said that Timothy's mission (in Acts 19:22) which is promised in 2:19 may have been for this purpose,⁵² and Paul was hopeful that he would himself soon be with them.

50. Cf. Duncan, 'Were Paul's Imprisonment Epistles written from Ephesus?', *ExpT*, 67, No. 6, March 1956, p. 164.

51. *Zeit und Ort der paulinischen Gefangenschaftsbriefe* (Herder, 1931), p. 114.

52. Cf. Harrison's discussion, *NTS*, 2, 1956, pp. 258, 259.

Michael and Gnlika proffer the suggestion that instructions concerning the collection may have been given orally through Epaphroditus.

2. The second objection which has been launched against the Ephesian hypothesis is one which Schmid calls 'the decisive argument against any other dating but the Roman'.⁵³ In brief, the question is this: If Paul found himself in the hands of the authorities at Ephesus or elsewhere, why did he not exercise the right and privilege of his citizenship and appeal to Caesar⁵⁴ against any sentence of condemnation which may have been brought against him? Philippians 1:20; 2:17 reckons with an unfavourable issue of his trial (1:17) and the grim prospect of death looms large before him. If Paul was in such a desperate situation and threatened by the death sentence, why did he not do what he did at Caesarea and insist that all local proceedings be quashed and the case transferred to Rome? There are three explanations possible in answer to this question.

First, the language of 1:20 and 2:17 may be taken to describe a situation of less peril and gravity than one which would have arisen if Paul feared judicial condemnation and death. This is Michaelis' interpretation which holds that, at the time of his writing, the apostle was *not* seriously in danger because he can contemplate the possibility of both life and death in 1:20ff.; and he interprets 2:17 in a general way as referring to Paul's apostolic service in which he was daily spending his life for the gospel's sake. (Hawthorne has recently supported this view.) But a more definite danger than the hourly peril of his apostolic ministry (1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 4:10; 11:23) seems in view in the light of the cumulative weight of such verses as 1:20, 30; 2:27–28 and 3:11. 2 Timothy 4:6 which repeats the metaphor of

53. *Zeit und Ort*, p. 107.

54. By the use of *provocatio*, i.e. a request to be tried by the emperor's court, a right which was given to Roman citizens by the *lex Iulia*, or *appellatio*, i.e. a request to obtain a revision of a judgment already given. For these technical terms in Roman law, see Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, p. 68 and in other places of his book.

sacrifice and offering is a later confession of a specific, serious danger to his life.⁵⁵

Secondly, Paul may have been in danger, not from the result of formal legal procedure, but from an unofficial attempt upon his life. If the peril were from Jewish opponents (Acts 20:19) or mob violence, a protest of his Roman citizenship would be of no value, and this possibility is strengthened if the language of 1:30 is taken literally. His present conflict (*agōn*) is the 'same' as that which he endured at Philippi (Acts 16), *viz.* a lawless outburst in which his citizenship did not save him from the lash, the stocks and the indignity of the prison.

Thirdly, Romans 16:7 speaks of Andronicus and Junia(s) as those 'in prison with me', and it has been suggested that their imprisonment with the apostle was the result of anti-Christian riots promoted by unbelieving Jews (cf. Acts 20:19) and that Paul did not claim his rights as a citizen because, as they were not Roman citizens, he would not leave them in the lurch.⁵⁶

We are here in the realm of conjecture. If Paul was in danger of his life at Ephesus and for some reason refused to use his privilege to extricate himself from that peril, we can only say with Michaelis that his circumstances there are unknown to us and that, as we know too little about the courts in Ephesus, we cannot say what weight his Roman citizenship would have carried there.⁵⁷

We come back to the traditional reading of the situation underlying the letter. The reason why he does not mention an appeal to

55. Dodd (op. cit., p. 103, note 2) writes, 'That it is a "life and death" matter is clear from Phil. i. 20, and Paul's confidence that his life will be spared (i. 25) is not based on a calculation of probabilities, but on a conviction that his life is so important to his churches that he must escape, even though by a miracle.'

56. F. J. Badcock, *The Pauline Epistles* (SPCK, 1937), p. 63. But there are those who take 'fellow-prisoners' as metaphorical, meaning 'prisoners of Christ'. See C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistle to the Colossians and Philemon* (Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. 136, 137, 140; cf. W.-H. Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter* (Neukirchener, 1979), p. 77.

57. Michaelis, *Einleitung*, p. 209.

Caesar is that just such an appeal has brought him before his judges at Rome. His grave danger is before the imperial court, and there is no more, humanly, that he can do. The threat upon his life is a very real one, but he knows that he is in God's hands; and amid the oscillation of feelings, hopes and fears reflected in the epistle (e.g. 2:23–24) he awaits his destiny which will be a divine opportunity for Christ to be magnified, whether by life or death (1:20).

The wheel of our investigation has, then, turned a full circle, and we are back with the possibility of a dating of the epistle in the days of the Roman imprisonment. The question must, therefore, be left as 'open'. Duncan, we feel, speaks too confidently of the Ephesian dating that 'this argument is so strong that the Ephesian origin of that letter (Philippians) ought to remain no longer a matter of dispute'.⁵⁸ The case which Duncan presents is an impressive one, but falls short of full conviction and certainty. Most scholars treat the issue as undecided but with a slight balance weighted on the side of Ephesus, with less confidence of Caesarea. Nonetheless, some such as Bruce have recently come over to the traditional location for the origin of our letter. In that state of virtual indecision,⁵⁹ it must be admitted that all sides are arguable and not one option is absolutely certain.

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58. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry*, p. 6. A lot depends here on the placing of the Pastorals in Paul's 'mid-career', an expedient that does not please all commentators (e.g. Houlden, p. 42).
59. Shared by D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Tyndale, ³1970), p. 535; A. H. McNeile and C. S. C. Williams, *An Introduction to the Study of the New Testament* (Oxford University Press, ²1953), p. 183; Moule, *Colossians and Philemon*, pp. 24, 25. The closing sentence of Dibelius' commentary repeats this indecision. He concludes: 'Therefore a definite solution of this problem can hardly be reached because, even if we consider it difficult to imagine its having been composed at Rome, the Ephesian hypothesis still rests on mere supposition' (3rd edition, p. 98). But recent German scholarship (seen in Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter* and G. Luedemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles*, Fortress, 1984) has taken a much more positive attitude to Paul's Ephesian trial and the close relation of Philippians to 2 Corinthians.

The choice, therefore, is between an earlier dating at the end of the winter of AD 54/55 which Michaelis proposes and with which Duncan agrees,⁶⁰ while Paul was a prisoner in or near Ephesus, or the later Roman dating in the captivity of Acts 28:30 with dates ranging from AD 61 (Kennedy) to the early part of AD 63 (Schmid).

3. Authenticity and unity

By *authenticity* we are to understand the claim that the letter is a genuine production of the apostle Paul; and the clear answer may be supplied that the letter bears upon it most vividly the impress of the apostle's personality and character. There is no serious objection to its genuineness, except the section 2:5–11, on which see the Additional note, pp. 114–118.

The attestation of Philippians in the early literature of the Christian church is sufficient and convincing. There are indubitable echoes of the epistle in Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* (early second century),⁶¹ with earlier allusions in the letters of Ignatius and 1 Clement. From that time onwards there is ample attestation in Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian; and in early heretical circles.

The *unity* of the epistle is confirmed by unbroken textual tradition in which the letter is always known as a complete whole. But there are various suggestions which contest the unity of the letter mainly on the ground of an abrupt change in tone, style and content at the beginning of chapter 3. Also the sentence (3:1b): 'It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again' has long puzzled commentators. To which 'same things' is the apostle alluding? His vitriolic attack upon the Jewish Christian schismatics of 3:2ff. and, later in the chapter, another condemnation of the 'enemies of the cross of Christ' (3:18ff.) who may be Jewish or Gentile Christians who had

60. *ExpT*, 67, 1956, p. 163; *NTS*, 5, 1958, p. 43.

61. For the references cf. J. Moffatt, *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament* (T. & T. Clark, 31918) p. 176. The texts of early witnesses to the Pauline epistles are quoted in full by A. E. Barnett, *Paul becomes a Literary Influence* (University of Chicago Press, 1941).