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Three MSS of the University of Paris (Ω):

Sorbonicus. Parisin. lat. 15467, saec XIII.

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CORINTH IN ST. PAUL'S TIME

by THE REV. W. REES, M.A., B.Litt.

II.—ITS PEOPLE AND RECENT HISTORY.¹

IT is impossible to understand the Corinth of St. Paul's time if we ignore the chasm of a hundred years in the city's history, as some writers appear to do. Cities with such a broken history are few but renowned. Troy, Carthage, and London are among them. But in other cases nobody forgets the chasm.

The foundation of the new Corinth in 45 B.C. was resented by the Greeks, partly no doubt because it was to be a Roman city, an outpost of the "barbarian" masters of the world, but partly also because many of its inhabitants had started life as slaves. The Greek poet Crinagoras wrote these lines at the time: "Unhappy city, what a change of tenants thou hast seen! Oh, the black day for Greece! Better for thee, O Corinth, to lie lower than the earth, better to be more forsaken than the deserts of Africa, than to be delivered up to this scum of the slave-market."

The new colony seems to have had other troubles too. During its first fifteen years it could hardly have received much of that watchful care which a new city needs. The leaders of the Roman world were preoccupied with wars and rivalries among themselves. Augustus could not in any case have done much for Corinth as it lay in Antony's portion of the empire. It must have been a hard time for the colonists, probably poor, certainly without civic traditions, and cold-shouldered by their neighbours. It may well have been dire distress that induced them to use a source of wealth which their neighbours would certainly regard as unhallowed. The ancient Greek graves, which had been spared by

¹ The first part of this article appeared in the July number.

Mummius's plundering soldiers in 146 B.C. were found to contain many finely-wrought objects of bronze and terracotta. These were exported to Italy, and the curio-shops of Rome were flooded with "Corinthian grave-goods" as they were called, which were eagerly bought by the newly-risen Roman gentry. When the supply gave out, it seems likely that the Corinthians or others produced imitations which at first deceived the Italians and finally brought the whole trade into disrepute. These proceedings did not endear the new Corinthians to their neighbours.

When Greece passed in 31 B.C. into the power of Augustus, a better period began for Laus Julia Corinthus, as the colony was officially styled. The emperor could not fail to take a close interest in a city founded by his adoptive father and bearing the name of the imperial family. There is one unmistakable proof of his interest. A few years later, perhaps about 20 B.C., he decided to make Greece into a separate province (hitherto it had been subordinate to the governor of Macedonia) and for the capital of this new province he chose, not Athens, but the half-formed city of Corinth. This was in itself a pledge of future help, for it would be many years before Corinth could acquire the outward grandeur worthy of such a position, and the help was no doubt liberally given. Other wealthy benefactors appeared, following Augustus's example. One was Julius Eurycles, the most important person in the province, a clever but utterly unscrupulous man, who on a later occasion succeeded in fleecing Herod the Great, no small achievement. Augustus had found Eurycles useful and had allowed him to enrich himself and to assume the position of a dynast (or prince) at Sparta. He built the luxurious Baths at Corinth, and very likely made other gifts to the city. A relation of his, Julius Heraclanus, appears in our incomplete list of the chief magistrates of Corinth before Christ, and no doubt Eurycles himself filled the same office. Another benefactor was Antonius Theophilus, the rich freedman of Mark Antony's, who with his son Hipparchus had gone over to Augustus in time to save their wealth and influence. Both settled at Corinth and are among the chief magistrates of the city in the first generation.

Corinth was now learning to exploit the advantages of its situation—the lucrative through-trade between Rome and the East, and the great crowds that gathered on the Isthmus every alternate year for the celebration of the Isthmian Games. We may suppose that during the last part of the century the citizen-body became an efficient, well-disciplined unity and acquired the civic spirit which it could hardly have possessed originally. The chief outward sign of the new prosperity was the town-planning and building which went on busily around about the beginning of the Christian era. The Lechaëum road, the great new approach to the city, seems to date from this time, so does the basilica, and the Forum

colonnades, and doubtless the construction or restoration of many other buildings. It proved however beyond the power of the new citizens (if they ever attempted it) to revive the ancient artistic manufactures. We hear of "Corinthian bronze" being produced in this period: the Beautiful Gate of Herod's Temple was adorned with it, between 20 and 10 B.C. But no doubt the term now meant any fine bronze work in accordance with the old Corinthian style, not bronze cast at Corinth, which never seems to have been remarkable in the Roman period and would hardly be so at a time when the city was scarcely past its infancy. In the same way the pottery and terracotta of Roman Corinth, to judge by the numerous remains, were nondescript.

By 20 or 30 A.D. Corinth must have become a thriving city of splendid or at least imposing appearance, and well-populated, though still smaller than old Corinth. None but Roman citizens could be full citizens of Corinth, but by this time Greeks and Asiatics in good numbers were probably settling there. These would be in an inferior position both politically and socially. The Italian element with its Roman traditions and healthier moral standards was still dominant, and Corinth must have been among the better and cleaner of the cities visited by St. Paul. It was certainly a cleaner place than Antioch, and probably cleaner than Ephesus and Tarsus. Perhaps the Macedonian cities were the ones that most resembled it. We have no evidence that the Roman colonists had revived the abominations which once surrounded the worship of Aphrodite at Corinth. Augustus would not be likely to tolerate such things in a Roman colony.

Some Jews may well have settled at Corinth from an early date, and in time they seem to have become fairly numerous. An inscription which stood over the door of a synagogue has been found, with the words "Synagogue of the Hebrews," badly spelt and in very rudely cut letters. This may have been the first poor synagogue erected by them. No doubt there were one or two others, in time, for otherwise we should have to conclude that they were few and uneducated. In any case most of the Jews would not be citizens of Corinth. In such a Roman city we should expect to find that they were looked down upon and disliked, and Acts xviii, 17 seems to confirm this. They certainly were not recognized as a semi-autonomous community as they were in some Asiatic cities.

The municipal constitution was doubtless of the form usual in Italian country towns—a city-council whose members held their position for life, and four chief annual officials, namely the two *duoviri* (joint mayors with judicial powers), an *aedile* (a sort of chief constable), and a *quaestor* (treasurer). The officials were no longer elected by the citizen-body but by the council, and thenceforward remained members of the council. The municipal government therefore was an oligarchy, and in effect a plutocracy, for the officials were not only unpaid but were expected

and practically compelled to disburse considerable sums of their own money for various public expenses, especially the construction or repair of public works and buildings, and the cost of festivals and free amusements and entertainments. About half the money which in a modern city would be furnished by the rates came from the pockets of the city-officials, and this expenditure was often made an express condition of their appointment. This meant that only the wealthy citizens could hold these offices and become members of the council. Every five years the *duoviri* were invested with special power and dignity for the purpose of taking a municipal census, and this position of *Duovir Quinquennalis* was the highest that the city could bestow. Another high honour at Corinth (how conferred we do not know) was the presidency of the Isthmian Games and of the Caesarian Games held regularly in honour of the emperor. Official inscriptions in the first century A.D. are in the Latin language, and so are the inscriptions on the bronze coins which Corinth was allowed to issue, bearing the names but not the heads of the *duoviri*.

Towards the end of Augustus's reign the province felt the Roman taxation burdensome, and may have suffered from some rapacious governors. Eurycles tried to take advantage of the discontent to form a party for himself and to increase his own importance. In consequence Augustus deprived him of his princely power at Sparta and banished him from Greece. The next emperor, Tiberius, decided to solve the problem by bringing the province more directly under his own control, and subordinated it to the governor of Moesia on the Danube, who was his own legate. This arrangement lasted nearly thirty years (15-44 A.D.) during which Greece was governed by deputies responsible to the governor of Moesia. Corinth lost much of its dignity as a provincial capital, and probably disliked the change. It was only a few years before St. Paul's arrival that it regained its former status and became again the seat of a proconsul. St. Paul's first visit (of eighteen months at least) comes somewhere within the three years 50-2 A.D. He was pretty certainly there during a good part of 51. His next visit (three months) comes somewhere between the autumn of 54 and the spring of 57.

We should like to know more about the city's aristocracy in St. Paul's time, the men whose faces were familiar to everybody at Corinth including the Apostle, the men who occupied the place of honour at public functions and lived in pleasant houses on the high hillside of Craneum. These were the men who became *duovirs* between, let us say, 40 and 70 A.D. About fifteen of their names are known to us, but in most cases nothing beyond the names. Concerning three or four of them some meagre facts can be added.

In St. Paul's time the greatest man at Corinth and in the whole province was Julius Spartiatius. He was a grandson of Eurycles, prince of Sparta, whom I have mentioned above. Eurycles had ended his life in

exile and the Emperor Tiberius distrusted the family and kept them out of Greece. After his death in 37 A.D. they regained their authority at Sparta and their influence throughout the province. Spartiaticus must have had a house at Corinth and probably spent much of his time there. He twice held the highest dignity in the city (*Duovir Quinquennalis*) and was President of the Isthmian Games either in 47 or 51. If he held the office in 51, St. Paul who was then at Corinth may well have seen him discharging his duties. Paul had never before had an opportunity of seeing such a time-honoured athletic event, and curiosity may for once have tempted him to spend a day at the Isthmus. Or failing that, he may yet have seen the solemn procession which escorted Spartiaticus, leaving Corinth or returning to the city. Spartiaticus remained the first man in Achaëa till at least 55 A.D. Sometime during the next ten years he incurred the displeasure of the Roman government and suffered banishment and confiscation. His descendants gained a high position among the Roman nobility of the next century, but Spartiaticus was the last who held the princely dignity at Sparta.

Another prominent citizen, Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, may well have been a descendant of one of the original freedmen-colonists. As a young man he had held a commission in the Roman army as *tribunus militum* (company-commander). The legion in which he served was the Legio Sexta Victrix, which throughout this period was stationed in Spain. An officer appointed to that legion must have *already* acquired a perfect command of Latin, for Greek would be useless for his position. This is one of several indications that the civic aristocracy of Corinth at this time was bilingual and still kept up a good knowledge of Latin. After returning to Corinth Dinippus had a long and honourable public career. He was *Duovir Quinquennalis* in 52-3 A.D. just after St. Paul's first visit. At some time of dearth he held the emergency post of Food Controller (*Curator annonae*). If this was the dearth of the year 51, as many have thought, then it was during St. Paul's stay at Corinth. Moreover Dinippus was priest of Victoria Britannica, a divinity just introduced to celebrate the conquest of Britain. Probably he was the first to hold that office and had been appointed a little before Paul's first visit, and no doubt remained priest for life. During St. Paul's long stay at Corinth Dinippus must occasionally have offered sacrifice at the altar or chapel of this "goddess." One cannot help wondering whether there was any special reason for selecting Dinippus for this priesthood. Perhaps a son or nephew of his, following a family tradition, was serving as an officer in the army which had invaded Britain in 43 A.D. and perhaps took part in that fierce battle at which the power of Caractacus was broken, a battle fought somewhere in Herefordshire or Shropshire in that very year 51 when Paul was living at Corinth.

One of the leading families in the city during both this century and the next was that of the Gellii. One of them, Gellius Menander, was head

of the delegation from the province of Achaea which went to Rome in 37 A.D. carrying congratulations and assurances of loyalty to the new emperor Gaius on his accession. This Menander must at some time have been duovir at Corinth and was probably still an important man when Paul was there. It would be very desirable that the head (and spokesman) of such a delegation should have a good knowledge of Latin, and perhaps that was one reason for choosing Menander. A relation of his, Gellius Aristomenes, later in the century succeeded Dinippus as priest of Victoria Britannica.

Finally there is Julius Polyaenus, merchant and poet, who was duovir soon after St. Paul's first visit and must before that have been a well-known man. He wrote in Greek (a sign of the coming change in the character of the city) and three little poems of his, showing considerable merit, have been preserved. He was born in the island of Corcyra (Corfu) but settled at Corinth and prospered there as a merchant. He made voyages with his cargo, as ancient merchants often did, in order to dispose of it in person. He wished to make enough money to be able to retire to his native island and end his days in comfort there, and his great fear was that some storm might terminate his life before his dream could be realized. "Hope ever lures us on from year to year," he writes, "Then our last day dawns and finds us still immersed in schemes and toils." We do not know if he had his desire, but his few verses make him the most living of all the great men of Corinth.

III.—THE ERASTUS INSCRIPTION.

St. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans at Corinth sometime between 54 and 57 A.D. Near its end he says: "Erastus, the *oikonomos* of the city, greets you." What position is meant by *oikonomos* (literally "steward")? If one of the higher municipal offices, it must mean the quaestor (the treasurer), though the antiquated word *tamias* was the usual Greek equivalent. But the quaestor would be expected to be present at and even to take part in, pagan rites and could hardly be a good Christian. Perhaps *oikonomos* does not denote a regular office, but only means that Erastus was acting or had acted as agent for the city in some affair, e.g. legal business between Corinth and a city or individual. The Vulgate translates it as *arcarius* (lit. "safe-keeper"), a name which would be held by a clerk in the quaestor's office, who was often a municipal slave. In either of these two last cases the difficulty about pagan worship would be much smaller.

In 1929 a large stone slab was found near the theatre at Corinth, bearing an incomplete inscription dating *probably* from the first century A.D. The inscription reads:

..... ERASTUS PRO AED
 S P STRAVIT

The beginning of each line (probably from ten to twenty letters in each) is missing. The beginning of the first line undoubtedly contained the first part of Erastus's full Roman name. The second line contained the end of "Aed-" and one or two other words. "Pro aed-" must stand for either *pro aedile* (deputy aedile) or *pro aedilitate* (in return for the aedileship). This would be followed by something like "this street" or "this square." S.P. always means *sua pecunia* (at his own expense). The full translation therefore as far as we can guess it, would be: "----- Erastus, son of -----, of the ----- tribe, deputy aedile (or in return for the aedileship) paved this street (or square, etc.) at his own expense." The words "in return for the aedileship" would mean that the re-paving of some part of the city was made a condition of his appointment to the office of aedile, as explained on p. 107 above.

If this Erastus was the same as St. Paul's friend, the inscription is of great interest, for it is the very earliest inscription referring to a Christian. But there are difficulties. A Christian aedile would meet with exactly the same problem about pagan worship as a Christian quaestor would. Moreover, if St. Paul's Erastus was only a humble *arcarius*, he is not likely to have risen to be aedile. The identification of the two is however by no means impossible. It involves two presuppositions, neither of which can be proved or refuted: (1) That *oikonomos* in Romans xvi, 23, means "agent" and is not the name of an office but only a business relationship. (2) That *pro aed-* in the inscription means "deputy aedile." A deputy might find it much easier to avoid pagan rites than the regular aedile. He might hold the post only for two or three months during which no great festivals, etc. might occur, and there would probably be less ceremonial about the assumption and deposition of the office. It seems possible that a good Christian could, with some dexterity and tact, fill that position.

THE BIBLE IN SPAIN

by DOM ROMANUS RIOS, O.S.B.

ONE of the happiest results of the present Catholic revival in Spain has been a renewed interest in biblical studies and in everything connected with the Bible. Three new reviews have appeared since 1940 with the primary aim of fostering biblical research.

Sefarad specializes in Hebrew philology, as well as in cultural and political questions connected with the Near East. It is published twice a year in Madrid and each volume consists of some 450 to 500 octavo pages. It is now in its seventh year of publication. Its contributors include several well-known scholars, such as Maeso, Alvaro d'Ors, A. Elmaleh, etc. It is, however, a specialist review and is well above the head of the ordinary reader.