

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

love of man to God. Now, may "the communion of the Holy Ghost" mean the liberality produced by the Holy Ghost? <sup>1</sup> Whether it may or not, at all events it is a glorious truth that, when the Spirit of God touches the spirit of man, it makes it like itself; and he who participates in the communication of the Holy Ghost thereby becomes a spiritual power, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, or, to employ the remarkable language of our Lord, out of him "shall flow rivers of living water."

JAMES STALKER.

### TARSUS.

#### XVIII. THE TARSIAN DEMOCRACY.

THE importance attached to Tarsian citizenship and expressed in the hasty words of St. Paul (Acts xxi. 39) quoted in a previous section, was greatly increased by the changes introduced during the reign of Augustus into the constitution of Tarsus. The changes were introduced through the instrumentality of Athenodorus, the only Tarsian besides Paul himself who stands out before us as a real person; and an account of them will make the municipality of Tarsus more intelligible, and will at the same time illustrate to the reader the personality of a noteworthy Tarsian.

Under the careless and corrupt rule of Antony in the East, Tarsus was exposed to suffer from the caprices and the favourites of an idle despot. A certain Boëthos, "bad poet and bad citizen," as Strabo calls him, a native of Tarsus, was patronized by Antony, whose favour he had gained by a poem celebrating the battle of Philippi. The vice of

<sup>1</sup> "Holy-Ghost-liberality" would exactly express this idea, if it were permissible to use a phrase which belongs rather to the *patois* than to the language of Canaan.

Greek democratic government was the careless readiness to embark in any new scheme that caught the popular taste and to employ any leader who suggested himself as likely to further the enterprise of the moment.<sup>1</sup> Boëthos knew well how to make use of the Tarsian democracy for his own benefit, and he allied himself with a gang of corrupt associates to plunder the municipality. After the fall of Antony in the end of 31 B.C., the personal influence of Boëthos in Tarsus was weakened; but the gang had apparently got possession of the machinery of government, and there was no great improvement in the administration. Then Athenodorus came back to Tarsus, invested with the influence that belonged to a personal friend of the Emperor Augustus, and apparently holding also in reserve a commission from the supreme ruler to reform the constitution of Tarsus as he might find expedient. The way in which Athenodorus had risen to this high position in the Imperial administration is interesting in itself, and gives a remarkable view of the character of that period and of the importance which then belonged to education: see § XIX.

As to Boëthos, nothing is known except what we can gather from the brief account in Strabo. He stands before us a type of the worst product of Greek democracy, the skilful manipulator of popular government for the benefit of a clique of corrupt and unscrupulous partisans. It is true that we know about him only from a friend and admirer of his opponent, Athenodorus; but the facts stand out so natural and so life-like in Strabo's pages that they are convincing. Tarsus fell under the control of a ring similar to that Tammany ring which long controlled New York in our own time; and the situation was the same in both cities. The influence of the more educated body of the

<sup>1</sup> ἡ εὐχέρεια ἢ ἐπιπολάζουσα παρὰ τοῖς Ταρσεῦσιν ὥστ' ἀπαύστως σχεδιάζειν παρὰ χρῆμα πρὸς τὴν δεδομένην ὑπόθεσιν (Strab. p. 674).

citizens was weakened, in the one case through the disorders of the Civil War, followed by the capricious and corrupt rule of Antony, in the other case by the absorption of the educated citizens in other pursuits and their withdrawal from the work of municipal government.

The name Boëthos might suggest the suspicion that he was a Jew. It is known to have been borne by Jews, and it was undoubtedly favoured by them as a Greek translation of the Hebrew name Ozer or Ezra.<sup>1</sup> But there is no reason to think that the name was confined to Jews; and the skill which Boëthos showed in manipulating the machinery of municipal administration was not, and never has been, confined to Jews. This bad poet is perhaps more likely to have been a Greek; and it was at any rate through clever handling of the most worthless elements of Greek city life that he obtained his position in history.

#### XIX. ATHENODORUS OF TARSUS.

Athenodorus was a citizen of Tarsus,<sup>2</sup> born not in the city itself, but in "a certain village" of its territory, as Strabo says. The name of the village must have been Kanana; and therefrom was formed the epithet Kananites, by which this Athenodorus was distinguished from another Tarsian philosopher, of slightly earlier date,<sup>3</sup> who bore the same name. Both lived long in Rome, each was the confidential friend of a noble Roman, one of Cato, the other of Augustus, both were Stoics; and confusion between them was easy.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Herzog in *Philologus*, vol. lvi. p. 45, and Th. Reinach in *Revue des Études Juives*, 1893, p. 166 f.

<sup>2</sup> The suggestion which I made in *Hastings' Dictionary*, iv. p. 687, that he might have been born at Kanna in Lycaonia, and educated in Tarsus, must therefore be set aside.

<sup>3</sup> He was living in extreme old age as late as 47 B.C., and was distinguished by the surname Kordylian.

<sup>4</sup> I was guilty of this confusion in *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 354. I noticed this slip only after the present article was nearly finished.

The village origin and the name of his father, Sandon—a thoroughly Cilician name—mark Athenodorus as belonging to the native element in the Tarsian state.<sup>1</sup>

The life of Athenodorus extended from about 74 B.C. to 7 A.D. He died in his eighty-second year, and he was the teacher of the youthful Augustus at Apollonia in Epirus. Now the residence of Augustus at Apollonia ended in the spring of 44 B.C., and it is hardly possible that Athenodorus was less than thirty years of age at that time. Eusebius, in his chronicle, says that he was famous in 7 A.D.; this statement must be understood of the culmination of his career in Tarsus (to which he returned in old age), and his death may be placed in the same or an immediately following year, 7–9 A.D. He was born, therefore, between 74 and 72 B.C.; and the earlier dates 74 B.C. and 7 A.D. are probably preferable for the limits of his life (as will appear in the sequel), and as such will be here adopted.

Athenodorus is mentioned in such close relation with Posidonius,<sup>2</sup> the leader of the Stoic school of philosophy at Rhodes, that he may be confidently called his pupil. He studied, therefore, at Rhodes under that teacher before A.D. 51, when Posidonius migrated, near the end of his long life of 84 years, to Rome. After concluding his studies Athenodorus may be presumed, according to the usual custom, to have travelled, completing his education by acquiring experience of the world and life. His writings (as we shall see) prove that his travels extended beyond the Greek world into the Eastern desert.

Although I have more than once had to write about Athenodorus since then, I did not observe that the error had infected my own work.

<sup>1</sup> The supposition of Jewish origin (above, p. 147) must probably be rejected, though the epithet Kananites (variant in Matt. x. 4, Mark, iii. 18, for *Kananaios*, see Herzog, *Philologus*, lvi. p. 51) strongly suggests Jewish race. Strabo's statement that the surname was derived *ἀπὸ κώμης τῆς* must be accepted in the case of his personal friend.

<sup>2</sup> Strab. pp. 6 and 55: in the Epitome Diog. the order of enumeration is Posidonius, Athenodorus, Antipater.

We may also confidently assume that he must have given lectures in some of the great cities of the Mediterranean lands. It was in this way that young aspirants to philosophic distinction made themselves known in educated circles, and in time found a home and a career in some part of the Greek world; and it was as one of those travelling philosophers that Paul afterwards found a hearing in those Greek cities. After some years spent in this kind of probation as a lecturer, Athenodorus settled at Apollonia on the coast of Epirus. Either there or during his *Wanderjahre* he acquired so high and widespread a reputation that Cicero, writing from Asia Minor in February, B.C. 50 to Appius Claudius, then censor in Rome, advised him to direct his attention to what Athenodorus, son of Sandon, says about nobility.<sup>1</sup> As it seems highly improbable that Athenodorus had come to Rome before 51 B.C.,<sup>2</sup> it is evident that Cicero must have learned about his opinions from his writings, and advised Claudius to study some treatise by him on moral philosophy. We can hardly suppose that this great reputation had been acquired before he was twenty-three; and therefore 74 must be assumed as the year of his birth. An earlier date is impossible, for he was living as late as A.D. 7.

Athenodorus was lecturing at Apollonia when the youthful Augustus came there to finish his education in the autumn of 45 B.C. In the six months which Augustus spent there the Tarsian philosopher acquired a life-long influence over his mind. It can have been no ordinary man who so deeply impressed a subtle and self-reliant character like Augustus. When the latter returned to Rome to take up the inheritance of his uncle Julius Caesar in March 44 B.C. Athenodorus followed him. In November of that year he was consulted by Cicero, and prepared for his use in his treatise *De Officio*

<sup>1</sup> Cicero *ad Fam.* iii. 7, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Cicero left Rome for his Cilician Province in 51.

an abstract of Posidonius's opinions on duty : it is clear from Cicero's words<sup>1</sup> that Athenodorus was then in Rome.

He remained many years in Rome, enjoying a position of trust and influence with Augustus. The relations between them were creditable to both. Augustus is said to have been guided by the wise advice of the philosopher ; and Athenodorus never abused the influence that he enjoyed. A story which is related by Dion Cassius, and more fully by Zonaras, shows that he had the courage to run serious risk in his determination to rebuke and curb the faults of his Imperial friend. He chanced one day, to enter the house of a noble Roman friend, and found the family in affliction. An order had come from Augustus that the wife of this noble must go instantly to meet Augustus in the palace, and a closely covered litter was waiting to convey her. It was not doubtful that the purpose was a dishonourable one ; but no one in this Roman high-born family dared to think of disobeying the autocrat. It was the village-born philosopher who was bold enough to do so.

Athenodorus immediately offered his services. He took his place in the litter, with a drawn sword in his hand. When he had been carried thus into Augustus's chamber and the litter was set down, he leaped out suddenly, sword in hand, exclaiming, " Are you not afraid lest some one may enter like this and assassinate you ? " Augustus was convinced, and Athenodorus's influence was increased by the Emperor's gratitude.

In this incident we recognize a man who possessed a clear insight into character, quick wit, decision and courage. He knew both what he ought to blame, and how the blame should be conveyed so as to impress the cautious and subtle mind of Augustus.

<sup>1</sup> *Ad Att.* xvi. 11, 4 ; 14, 4. Cicero asks Atticus who was in Rome to urge Athenodorus to hurry.

In his old age Athenodorus obtained permission to retire to his native city ; and, as he was taking leave and embracing his old pupil, he imparted his last piece of advice, " When you are angry, Caesar, say nothing and do nothing until you have repeated to yourself the letters of the alphabet." Here again we observe the watchful affection which noted and tried to guard against the faults of his friend. Augustus, taking his hand and saying, " I have still need of you," detained him a year longer, quoting the Greek poet's word, " Silence, too," i.e. the silence of long and trusty companionship, quite as much as military service, " brings a reward, which is unaccompanied by danger." This was a principle of Augustus's policy, expressed by Horace in the second Ode of the third book (one of a group of six thoroughly political poems), *est et fidei tuta silentio merces*.<sup>1</sup>

As Athenodorus seems to have spent his life near Augustus from 45 B.C. until he retired to Tarsus about 15 B.C., it must have been during those early years which (as we saw) he probably spent in travel, that he visited Petra, in the desert east of the Dead Sea. He related with admiration that, whereas the many strangers whom he saw there, Romans and others, were frequently engaged in lawsuits against one another or against the natives, none of the natives ever were involved in any dispute with each other, but all lived in perfect mutual harmony.<sup>2</sup> Clement of Alexandria quotes from him a statement that Sesostris the Egyptian king, after conquering many peoples among the Greeks, brought back artists with him to Egypt, and thus explained the origin of a statue of Sarapis. He may, therefore, have visited Egypt as well as Petra, and thence derived illustrations for his philosophical writings and lectures.

<sup>1</sup> ἔστι καὶ σιγῆς ἀκίδνον γέρας.

<sup>2</sup> Strabo, p. 779.



Athenodorus is called a philosopher of nature (*φυσικός*) by Eusebius,<sup>1</sup> and, with his master Poseidonios, he is twice quoted by Strabo for his opinions on the ocean and tides.<sup>2</sup> Whether he or another Athenodorus of Tarsus was the author of a work on his fatherland, quoted by Stephanus Byzantinus, is uncertain; but as the work gives a different account of the origin of Tarsus from that which is stated by Strabo, the friend of our Athenodorus, Müller infers, with much probability, that the author was a different Athenodorus.

The work by which he impressed the world was in the department of moral philosophy; and in his treatises he embodied a noble and dignified view of human life and duty. On that account he was commended by Cicero and quoted by Seneca, from whom is derived the little that we know of his teaching.

Seneca, when he mentions that in society some reckon to our account the social attentions which we pay them, as if they were putting us in their debt by admitting us to the privilege of their acquaintance, quotes the saying of Athenodorus that he would not even go to dine with a person who would not think the guest was conferring an obligation by resorting to his house.<sup>3</sup> In another place Seneca quotes at considerable length his opinion that, in a better state of society, it would be the best way of life to exercise and strengthen one's character by engaging in public life; but, as society is at present constituted, since ambition and calumny are rampant, and the simple, candid person is constantly exposed to misrepresentation, a noble

<sup>1</sup> In his *Chronica*, A.D. 7, Jerome, in his translation of the Chronicle, modifies the expression and calls him a Stoic philosopher, evidently because he knew from other sources that Athenodorus belonged to that school.

<sup>2</sup> Strabo, pp. 6, 55; and above, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> *De Tranq. Anim.* 7.

nature is bound to abstain from public life. Yet even in private life a great mind can find free scope, and be useful to private friends and to the whole body of the people by wise speech and good counsel.<sup>1</sup> This passage, with its lofty view of life, bears a distinct resemblance to that conception of life as a warfare against evil, which Seneca and Paul express in remarkably similar terms.

Again, in his *Moral Epistles*, i. 10, 5, Seneca quotes from him the striking sentiment, "Know that you are free from all passions only when you have reached the point that you ask God for nothing except what you can ask openly; and he goes on to say, in the spirit if not in the words of Athenodorus, "So live with men, as if God saw you; so speak with God, as if men were listening."

He wrote a treatise addressed to Octavia the sister of Augustus, of which nothing is known, but which may, perhaps, have been a consolation on the death of her son, Marcellus—a kind of work which was reckoned specially appropriate for philosophers in Roman society, and of which Seneca's Consolation to his own mother Helvia, may be taken as a specimen.

In this summary of the few known events of his life Athenodorus stands before us as a personage of real distinction and lofty character, no mere empty lecturer and man of words, but a man of judgment, good sense, courage and self-respect, who stooped to no base subservience to a despot, but rebuked his faults sharply, when the greatest in Rome were cowering in abject submission before him, a man of affairs who knew what were his limits and did not overstep them, and a writer every one of whose few preserved sayings is noble and generous. The opinion has been stated in *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 354, and is still maintained by the writer, that the remarkable resemblance, both verbal

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* 3.

and in spirit, which has often been observed between the sentiments expressed by Seneca and the words of St. Paul<sup>1</sup> is due at least in part to the influence exercised on both by Athenodorus ; and if this be true, every one must admit that no writer of antiquity, so far as we know, better deserved, both by his life and by his sentiments, to exercise such an influence on two of the greatest figures in the history of the first century after Christ. Paul can hardly have been more than an infant when the greatest of pagan Tarsians died. But the influence of Athenodorus did not die with him. He was long worshipped as a hero by his country,<sup>2</sup> and his teaching was doubtless influential in the University of Tarsus after his death.

This account has been strictly confined to the exact facts that are recorded. It would be possible from the analogy of other cities and from the general circumstances of contemporary history to restore something like a picture of Athenodorus in his Tarsian activity—for his retirement was merely the beginning of a new period of practical work—but that kind of imagination of what is likely to have been belongs to the province of historical romance rather than of history.

## XX. THE REFORM OF THE TARSIAN CONSTITUTION BY ATHENODORUS.

It is not possible to fix the time when Athenodorus returned to Tarsus ; but, as he was an old man (so both Plutarch and Strabo say), it cannot have been earlier than 15 B.C., when he was sixty years of age ; and it is not likely to have been much later, as he found Boëthos still influential in the city and busied with his gang in harrying the State.

<sup>1</sup> See especially Lightfoot's judicious essay "St. Paul and Seneca" in his edition of Philippians.

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch.

The terms in which Strabo describes the situation when Athenodorus returned suggest that the interval since the fall of Antony had not been very long. In Tarsus it was a case of democracy run to seed, emancipated from the limits of order and even of decency, contemptuous of obedience or principle : such was always the result of Greek institutions divorced from a general sentiment of patriotism and religion (the two were almost the same in the true Hellenic thought), which might enforce a certain standard of public action and morality.

Greek democratic government demanded a high level of education and thought among the population, and quickly resulted in anarchy when this condition was not supplied. The demand for education was strong in the democratically governed cities and the care taken to provide it was the best feature of their administration ; but the amalgamation of democratic government and the capricious autocracy of Antony had been fatal.

Athenodorus tried, first of all, the method of constitutional agitation for reform, attempting by reason and argument to restrain Boëthos and his gang, and to re-introduce a higher standard of municipal morality. After a time, finding that fair means were unavailing, and that his appeals were only met with the extreme of insult, he made use of the supreme powers<sup>1</sup> with which he had been armed by Augustus and which, at first, he had apparently kept private. He condemned the whole gang to exile and ejected them from Tarsus, and revolutionized the constitution of the city.<sup>2</sup> This event may perhaps, be dated about 10 B.C., allowing a space of five years (which is probably the extremest possible limit to the patience of the philosopher).

<sup>1</sup> *ἐξουσία* is the word used by Strabo, which illustrates the meaning that necessarily belongs to it in 1 Cor. xi. 6 (discussed above in section xvi.).

<sup>2</sup> *κατέλυσε τὴν καθεστῶσαν πολιτείαν.*

Strabo does not state the character of the new system which Athenodorus introduced, but merely describes the intense love for education which characterized the Tarsians in his time—he was writing about A.D. 19—and evidently regards the reforms of Athenodorus, who was his personal friend, as having been extremely successful.

The general character of the new constitution which was introduced into Tarsus can be determined from the tone of the Imperial policy throughout the Empire and from the slight references made incidentally in the two speeches which Dion Chrysostom addressed to the Tarsians about A.D. 112. Although the Roman Imperial system was established through the victory of the democracy, it was a democracy led by a dictator; and Augustus recognized from a very early stage in his career that he must found his autocracy on oligarchy, not on democracy. His aim was to substitute for the old oligarchy of Roman nobles, who had formerly opposed him and could not be trusted to support his rule, a new oligarchy of official service and merit.<sup>1</sup> He did not try to force this on too rapidly and he was ready and eager to admit into the new oligarchy all members of the old oligarchy, who could be induced to accommodate themselves to it; but he and the rest of the early Emperors fully recognized that their greatest danger lay in possible rivals among the old nobility, and they encouraged and developed the rise of an official class, whose career should lie within the limits of the Imperial system. A bureaucratic oligarchy is the necessary accompaniment of an autocracy, which cannot maintain itself alone without some body of devoted supporters and servants to rest upon; but an educated people is its enemy. Thus, with the triumph of the popular party under the leadership of a

<sup>1</sup> His principle was expressed in the words quoted from Horace, *Odes*, iii. 2, 25: see § XIX.

dictator, the power of the people ended ; and a narrow oligarchy aided the Imperial despot to rule over and for a people among whom education gradually died out. The saving grace of the Empire was the memory of its origin and the compelling force of that memory. Centuries elapsed before the Emperors were able quite to forget that they had been placed in power as the champions of the people, and that the theoretical expression of their authority was the Tribunician power by which the years of their reign were reckoned. In numerous edicts the Emperors expressed their conception of their prime duty, to be ever on the outlook for opportunities to benefit their people, to think for them, and to direct them for their own good ; but it was no part of the Imperial duty to educate the people up to the level of thinking for themselves and governing themselves.

In the cities of the Empire the same process was encouraged ; the power of the people was curtailed and an oligarchical régime was gradually introduced. Tarsus was one of the first examples of the new system, and Athenodorus was the instrument through whom the Emperor acted. A certain property qualification was required for citizenship. Those who had less than the requisite fortune were degraded from the roll of citizens. In the time of Dion Chrysostom these unclassed people of Tarsus were called "Linen workers," probably a cant name which had gradually established itself in common use. They were the plebeians of Tarsus, in a sense citizens, because they were inhabitants of the city, but yet not citizens (as Dion says), because they had not the rights of a citizen.

The citizens or burgesses of Tarsus, therefore, were a timocratic aristocracy, whose status rested on a property qualification, and who exercised the powers of government and held the right of election and voting generally. Within this oligarchic body, again, there was an inner aristocracy

of the Roman citizens, viz., the families which had so conspicuously raised themselves within the city, by wealth or by holding high office or, as was usually the case, by both, as to be admitted into the governing class of the Empire. In estimating the position of the young Paul, as he grew up in Tarsus, this privileged and aristocratic position which he inherited must be taken into account.

As a general rule it was from the local aristocracy that the leading figures in Anatolian history during the Roman period sprang. The lower classes were cut off by a chasm difficult to cross from the opportunity of gaining the education that was indispensable to advancement. For example, the aristocratic tone of Basil and his brother Gregory, during the fourth century, makes itself clearly felt in their writings. They belonged to the class of landed proprietors whose fortune opened to them the path of education. The scorn of Gregory for the low birth and poverty of the heretic Eunomius is quite as conspicuous as his hatred for the heterodoxy of his opponent's religious views.<sup>1</sup> Education was indispensable to advancement and influence under the Empire ; even a soldier could rarely rise without education ; a civilian practically never. The vice of the Imperial system was that the distinction of educated and uneducated became a matter of birth and caste, and that the lines of class distinction grew harder and deeper until they became impassable barriers. The able freedmen were only partially an exception ; they could make money, and a career was open to their sons ; but their opportunities were in considerable degree due to the aristocratic families of whom they were dependents.

Athenodorus was succeeded in his commanding position in

<sup>1</sup> In the *Quarterly Review*, vol. 186, p. 420 ff., there is an article on Society in the Eastern Roman Provinces during the fourth century in which this is brought out.

the Tarsian state by Nestor, another Tarsian philosopher (of the Academic, not the Stoic, school), who had risen at Rome to influence and trust in the Imperial family and had been tutor to Augustus's nephew and intended successor Marcellus about 26-23 B.C. Nestor lived to the age of ninety-two and was still living when Strabo wrote about A.D. 19. He had doubtless been recommended by Athenodorus to Augustus. Thus Tarsus was swayed in a critical period of its history by a succession of philosophers, who combined the learning of the schools with that practical sense which alone could have won the confidence of Augustus.

#### XXI. INFLUENCE OF TARSUS UPON ST. PAUL.

The late Dean Howson, in an interesting little book on the *Metaphors of St. Paul*, well described the difference between the Old and the New Testaments in regard to the range and character of figurative language. In the New Testament "we find ourselves in contact with circumstances far more nearly resembling those which surround us in modern life; we are on the borders or in the heart of Greek civilization and we are always in the midst of the Roman Empire." Especially is this the case with St. Paul. He was a master of all the education and the opportunities of his time. He turned to his profit and to the advancement of his great purpose all the resources of civilization. He draws his illustrations from the range of his thoughts and his knowledge, and reveals through them his education and his interests.

Dean Howson points out that "his metaphors are usually drawn, not from the operations and phenomena of the natural world, but from the activities and the outward manifestations of human life," and that in this respect he stands in marked contrast with most of the writers in the Bible.



“The vapour, the wind, the fountain, beasts and birds and serpents, the flower of the grass, the waves of the sea, the early and latter rain, the sun risen with a burning heat—these are like the figures of the ancient prophets, and there is more imagery of this kind in the one short Epistle of St. James than in all the speeches and letters of St. Paul put together.”<sup>1</sup>

Paul's favourite figures are taken from the midst of the busiest human society and city life, e.g. from the market—“Owe no man anything, but to love one another” (Rom. xiii. 8); “I am a debtor both to Jew” (Rom. i. 14); “Make your market to the full of the opportunity” (which the world offers (Eph. v. 16; Col. iv. 5); “wages” (Rom. vi. 23); and the word “riches” is a specially characteristic mark of his style. He is rarely interested in the phenomena of nature or the scenery of country life. Where he draws his illustrations from the country and from agriculture, he chiefly “deals with human labour and its useful results.” There are, of course, some isolated exceptions, as when he spoke to the uneducated rustic mob of Lystra, a small town dependent on agriculture and pasturage, not on commerce and exchange, about the “rain from heaven and fruitful seasons.” Yet even here we notice the idea of fruit. This is peculiarly characteristic of Paul. The idea of development, of growth culminating in fruit, a process leading to an end in riches and usefulness—this always appeals strongly to him. It occurs, e.g. in Philippians i. 11, 22, iv. 17; Galatians v. 19–23; Colossians i. 6, 10; Ephesians v. 8, 9, 11; Romans i. 13, vi. 21–23, vii. 4, 5, xv. 28; 2 Corinthians ix. 10; Titus iii. 14, etc. His philosophy rests mainly on this idea of growth and development. He looks on the world as the development of a purpose; the world is always fluid and changing, never stationary, but the change is the purpose

<sup>1</sup> Howson, p. 131.

of God, working itself out amid the errors and the wickedness, the deliberate sin, of men.

He is specially fond of expressing the same idea through a metaphor taken from the stadium. The person in whom the purpose of God works, redeeming him from his sin and setting him in the divine path, fulfils his course and runs his race. He uses this figure very often—about the word of the Lord (2 Thess. iii. 1; compare Heb. xii. 1); about John the Baptist (Acts xiii. 25); about himself (Acts xx. 24, 2 Tim. iv. 7, Phil. ii. 16, Gal. ii. 2); and in a general way, Romans ix. 16, 2 Corinthians ix. 24, 26, Galatians v. 7, etc. This figure of the runner in the foot-race is peculiar in the New Testament to him and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The latter was certainly a Hellenistic Jew. A strait and narrow Hebrew, hating all things Greek and Western, could never have compared the Divine life to the course in the stadium, and done this so persistently as to show that the thought lay in the very fabric of his mind.

The language of the athletic ground is extraordinarily frequent in Paul, and in him alone in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> In 2 Timothy iv. 7-8, "I have fought the good fight" is not a military, but an athletic metaphor: "I have played a good game" is the correspondent in modern slang; literally, "I have competed in the honourable contest, I have run the race to the finish,"<sup>2</sup> I have observed (the rules of) the faith." Similarly in 1 Timothy vi. 12, there is no reference to fighting (as the Authorized and Revised

<sup>1</sup> Classing with him the other great Hellenist of the New Testament, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who uses the word *ἀθλησις*, see below. Some of the latter's metaphors seem almost to depend for intelligibility on the familiarity of the readers with Paul's metaphors from athletics. As the writer was addressing Jews, he cannot have depended on his readers' familiarity with games. He used the metaphors because they rose naturally to his mind.

<sup>2</sup> τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἠγώισμαι· τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα· τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα, i.e. I have observed the rules which are laid down for this race-course of faith.

Versions have it); but the instructions to Timothy are, "Compete in the honourable contest of faith,"<sup>1</sup> a more compressed expression of the same comparison as in 2 Timothy iv. 7. The race in this honourable contest is described most fully in Philippians iii. 12-14, "It is not as if I had already got the prize or finished the race, but I am rushing on hard, to see if I may seize that for which I was actually seized by Christ; brethren, I do not count myself yet to have seized (the prize); but this one thing only, forgetting everything that lies behind, and straining forward to what is in front, I rush on with the goal in my view so as to reach the prize of the summons on high of God in Christ Jesus." The metaphor is concealed in several other cases in the English Version under the term "contention" (1 Thess. ii. 2) or "striving" (Col. iv. 12).

The prize in the foot race and other athletic contests was the crown; and the person who thinks of the Divine life as a race towards a goal must think of the culmination of the Divine life as the gaining of the victor's garland. But there are two important differences, (1) that in the games only one can obtain the prize, whereas every runner in the Divine race of life may gain it; (2) that the crown in the one case is an evanescent garland, which soon withers, whereas in the other it is permanent and unfading (1 Cor. ix. 24-27).

The analogy which Paul has in his thought is not confined to the eagerness of spirit and concentration of purpose and to the prize which is aimed at. The athletic competitor must live a life of training and strict discipline before the actual competition begins. So for the Divine race, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection," to avoid the danger of being led away and shipwrecked by passion and self-indulgence.

<sup>1</sup> ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως.

The athlete must also "strive lawfully" and observe all the rules laid down by the trainers and the guardians of the course, not merely for conduct in the course, but also during the preparation for it (2 Tim. ii. 5); and similarly in the Christian life it is Faith, like the arbiter, who lays down the laws of the struggle (2 Tim. iv. 8).

It was chiefly the race-course that furnished St. Paul with his metaphors; but the boxing contest also suggested itself to his mind in one case at least. "I so box as one that does not beat the air" (with his fists: 1 Cor. ix. 26).

The metaphors of this class are confined almost exclusively to St. Paul in the whole range of the Bible, and with him they are extremely frequent. The Paulinistic author of the letter to the Hebrews is almost the only other writer who uses such figures, and with him they are only few. The author of Revelation ii. 10 is hardly an exception. "The crown of life," the reward of the victor, is in a sense the garland of victory; but the crown was suggested to his mind rather by "the crown of Smyrna" than by the garland of the games<sup>1</sup>; and the idea of victory which so often occurs in the Seven Letters seems hardly to be consciously connected in the writer's thought with the games, but rather with war. The crown was not peculiar to the Greeks or to athletic contests; and, before assuming the connexion, in any case, it is necessary to prove that the idea of athletics lies in the passage as a whole. That is not the case in any of the non-Pauline passages where the crown is mentioned, except in Hebrews,

St. Paul stands alone in this respect; and his language came to him because of his early training. It is quite impossible to suppose that a method of illustration which is so frequent and characteristic was chosen deliberately to suit his readers in Gentile Churches. The Hellenist who

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 275.

wrote to the Hebrews used them in one or two cases in spite of the prejudice of his readers against those pagan habits. St. Paul was free from the prejudice ; he found that the keenness and enthusiastic, passionate attention, which were lavished on athletic contests in the world where he had been brought up, furnished the best illustration for the Divine life and the spirit in which it must be lived. He could not have appreciated this fact unless he had been brought up amid those surroundings and had experienced the strength of those feelings. If he had been educated as the narrow, strait-laced Jews to whom such things were an abomination it is impossible to suppose that he could have used such comparisons.

The frequency of these metaphors from gymnastic sports is a striking fact. They show real understanding of the intensity of feeling that the competition rouses in the athlete. It is only in youth, and especially in boyhood, that this can be learned. A Jew brought up in Palestine to abhor such sports, conducted by Gentiles in the Greek fashion of nudity, could never come to understand this intense feeling, if he merely saw the games in later life while living as a preacher in Greek cities. Paul had been educated in a Hellenic city, where he had seen for himself that athletic sports are not wrong or abominable<sup>1</sup> ; he had understood sympathetically the feeling of the competitors ; he knew that this feeling contained an element of nobleness and self-sacrifice, and he utilized it to express the intensity of the religious life. He had obviously not the slightest idea in his mind that such comparisons degraded religion.

<sup>1</sup> The Jews of Jerusalem had begun to learn this fact early in the second century B.C. ; and the building of a gymnasium (to which the priests hastened after service in the Temple), with the spread of Greek fashions and increase of heathenish manners in Jerusalem (especially the wearing of hats by the young men), are mentioned as having provoked the Maccabæan rebellion (2 Macc. iv. 12-14).

The narrow Jew could not free himself from that idea, but it evidently had no place in Paul's mind, which had been formed in other surroundings than those of Palestine. He sympathized with the Gentile ; he had learned from the Gentile ; he was a debtor to the Gentile.<sup>1</sup> Just as the experience of Ignatius in the Pagan Mysteries, and his understanding of the intense religious feeling which they roused in their votaries, coloured and formed his language in describing the deepest and most mystic elements in the Christian faith,<sup>2</sup> so Paul's language was coloured and formed by his experience in Tarsus. A man whose mind was thus moulded could not long have remained in sympathy with the Jews of Jerusalem. A common hatred for Him whom they thought an impostor united them all for a time to resist the religion of Christ. But his nature had been formed in a freer fashion than the Palestinian, and he soon burst their narrow bonds. His nature drove and goaded him on into a wider field , and he found it hard to "kick against the goads."

W. M. RAMSAY.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Rom. i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters to the Seven Churches*, ch. xiii.