

# The Last Years of Paul

Essays from the Tarragona Conference, June 2013

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# Paul's Mission to Hispania: Some Critical Observations

*Christos Karakolis*

The present paper was originally composed as a critical response to Armand Puig i Tàrrrech's paper "Paul's Missionary Activity during His Roman Trial: The Case of Paul's Journey to Hispania." As such, it is not a comprehensive treatise on the question of whether Paul visited Spain; it is a critical examination of some of Puig i Tàrrrech's arguments that I see in a different light.

Therefore, I am not dealing with Puig i Tàrrrech's excellent analysis about the Roman city of Tarraco as the most probable destination of Paul's assumed travel to Spain. Instead, I will focus on the following points of his argumentation: (1) The problem of Paul's seven collaborators in Acts 20.4; (2) the role of Phoebe according to Rom 16.1ff.; (3) the witness of *1 Clem.* 5.6ff.; (4) Paul's Roman trial according to 2 Tim 4.16–18; and (5) the witness of other non-biblical sources. I will close my considerations with a presentation of my conclusions.

Due to the sparse sources we have at our disposal, the position that Paul never reached Spain seems to have more solid arguments in its favor than the opposite one. As Puig i Tàrrrech puts it: "The weight of proof falls upon those researchers who claim that Paul indeed visited Hispania." On the other hand, the argumentum e silentio is not always a good advisor in historical research or in theological evaluation for that matter. Therefore, we initially have to leave all possibilities open. The close examination of the relevant ancient witnesses will be decisive for our final position.

## A. The Problem of Paul's Seven Collaborators in Acts 20.4

The first question one always has to ask when dealing with Acts as an historical document is whether the historical data provided by this book can always be considered trustworthy.<sup>1</sup> Even if we give a positive answer to this question as a whole, we cannot be absolutely sure about the historical trustworthiness

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<sup>1</sup> Puig also asks this question in his paper, giving a cautiously positive answer.

of every single narrative piece of information. As a matter of fact, we do know for instance that the author of Acts disagrees with Paul on some details of the *vita Pauli*.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, nowadays we cannot even be certain whether all historical details provided by the Pauline letters are historically accurate. We have now become aware of the role of rhetoric (in the broad sense of the word) in the shaping of the narrative structures and the rendering of information in Paul's letters.<sup>3</sup>

However, let us assume that Luke's information about the seven collaborators who follow Paul to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary trip (Acts 20.4) is really an historical one, while keeping in mind that we are stepping upon speculative ground.

At this point the question arises: how can we be positively certain from an historical point of view that the seven collaborators of Paul in question were indeed missionaries who were meant and prepared to follow the Apostle not only to Jerusalem, but also to Rome and finally to Spain, as Puig i Tàrrach maintains in his paper?

According to a widespread theory these seven men were representatives of the cities or of the provinces that participated in the collection.<sup>4</sup> This theory, however, does not hold water. The city of Corinth and the province of Achaëa as a whole (cf. 2 Cor 9.2), as well as Philippi, do not belong to the list of the cities which these men come from.<sup>5</sup> Another difficulty is that in this context Luke does not refer to the collection at all – unless the reference of Acts 24.17

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<sup>2</sup> An example for this case is the information about the procedures and decisions of the so-called Apostolic Synod; cf. Acts 15.5–29 and Gal 2.1–10.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance L. Thurén, *Derhetorizing Paul: A Dynamic Perspective on Pauline Theology and the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. among others, G. Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte: Kommentar zu Kap. 9,1–28,31* (Freiburg: Herder, 1982), 281; J. Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles* (rev. W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann; Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), 199–200; W. Eckey, *Die Apostelgeschichte: Der Weg des Evangeliums von Jerusalem nach Rom: Apg 15,36–28,31* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2000), 419–420; F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (2nd ed.; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1976), 370; H. Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 199; C.K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (vol. 2; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 946; contra R.I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 508–09; E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 581, who rightly remarks that, even if the seven men had been collection agents, at this point of the Lucan narrative they “become mere companions.” Cf. J. Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 497–98, who presents a summary of the relevant discussion including the difficulty to connect the seven men with the collection.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Pervo, *Acts*, 508.



is indeed an indirect mentioning of the collection.<sup>6</sup> Can we then really connect these seven men with the collection, which might only vaguely be implied in Acts 24.17? We could only make this connection if we combined information from different sources, in our case Luke and Paul, without being able to ascertain whether the pieces of information we gathered from each one of them are actually compatible with one another and complementary to each other from an historical point of view.<sup>7</sup>

In my opinion, the most plausible explanation for the mentioning of the seven followers of Paul in the Lucan narrative is that their characters serve as representatives of all the Gentile churches that were founded by Paul.<sup>8</sup> Paul needs them with him in order to prove the effectiveness of his mission among the Gentiles to the Jewish-Christian brethren in Jerusalem, as well as to create a feeling of unity between Gentile and Jewish-Christians. Their number, namely seven, might signify the wholeness of this representation.<sup>9</sup>

Even if we would assume that these seven followers of Paul were indeed missionaries who were meant to follow him to Spain after visiting Jerusalem and Rome along with him, the question arises whether these seven men originating from the East of the Roman Empire would be really useful in Paul's Hispanic mission. Of course, Paul would certainly have to have had a couple of close associates with him for realizing his next grandiose missionary project. After all, this was part of his strategy throughout his Eastern mission. However, the presence of too many of them would make his movements less agile, while at the same time increasing the risk of attracting the potentially hostile attention of the Roman authorities.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 470; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 167; F. Mussner, *Apostelgeschichte* (Würzburg: Echter, 1984), 143; R. Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte: Apg 13–28* (Zürich: Benzinger; Neukirchener, 1986), 258; Barrett, *Commentary*, 1107–08; Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte*, 348–49; Eckey, *Apostelgeschichte*, 528; Pervo, *Acts*, 599; J. Zmijewski, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1994), 817; L.T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 355–57. Cf. for a more reserved and critical position on the matter Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 338; A. Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte: Kapitel 13–28* (Gütersloh: Mohn; Echter, 1985), 630. Among others, Haenchen, *Acts*, 654; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 570–71, and J.B. Polhill, *Acts* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 484, do not make any connection whatsoever with the collection.

<sup>7</sup> Even if the connection of these men with the collection had existed in the pre-Lucan tradition, it is not there in the book of Acts; cf. J. Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 296; Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 186; Zmijewski, *Apostelgeschichte*, 720.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 296; Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte*, 558–59; Pervo, *Acts*, 507; Polhill, *Acts*, 416.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. on the symbolic value of the number seven in this context, Pervo, *Acts*, 507.

Apart from the above mentioned difficulties, we have to ask in which way seven obviously Greek-speaking missionaries would be of help in a territory where practically no Greek was spoken. Unless these seven men also spoke a fluent Latin,<sup>10</sup> which we have to consider as highly unlikely,<sup>11</sup> they would be rather a burden than an aid to Paul's missionary activity in Hispania. Therefore, I would suggest that Paul should and would mainly rely upon human resources provided to him by the Roman church community,<sup>12</sup> rather than upon too many collaborators from the East.

The example of Paul's missionary experience in Lystra according to Acts 14.11 has to be seen in the light of the above observations. The relevant evidence is too fragmentary in order to conclude with Puig i Tàrrach that the "local language of Lycaonia seems to have been more widely used than Greek." But even if this had been the case, most probably the people in Lycaonia did speak Greek as the lingua franca of the eastern part of the Roman Empire.<sup>13</sup> In any case, there is no mention in Acts of a need for translation. On the contrary, the communication of Paul and Barnabas with the local inhabitants seems to be flawless. However, this would not be the case in Tarraco,<sup>14</sup> in which Latin was spoken and Greek was probably almost fully unknown.

The problem of addressing different sources as providing us with compatible and complementary pieces of historical information is apparent at this point. On the narrative level of Acts there are no clues about Paul's project to conduct a mission in Spain and therefore also no information that would connect the seven aforementioned men with it. The connection of Romans 15.24, 28 and Acts 20.4 is only feasible if we read these texts alongside each other. By doing so, however, we enter the sphere of historical speculation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> There is no doubt that a minority of Iberians, probably originating from the eastern part of the Roman Empire and belonging to the lower social classes, also spoke Greek; cf. S. Mariner Bigorra, "Hispanische Latinität und sprachliche Kontakte im römischen Hispanien," *ANRW* 29.2 (1983): 841–42. However, it is difficult to assume that Paul would target this minority and not the majority of Latin-speaking Iberians.

<sup>11</sup> Greek was the common language in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. To assume that those seven companions of Paul indeed spoke Latin, we would have to presuppose that there was a considerable number of fluent Latin speakers in the small Pauline communities and that seven of them were available to escort Paul leaving behind their business and families for an indefinite period of time. This is simply too much to assume.

<sup>12</sup> After all, this was probably the main reason Paul had for writing the epistle to the Romans; cf. U. Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (7th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 129.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Roloff, *Apostelgeschichte*, 216; Zmijewski, *Apostelgeschichte*, 535.

<sup>14</sup> In his paper, Puig has demonstrated convincingly that if Paul did reach Spain, then Tarraco must have been the obvious starting and reference point for his Hispanic mission.

<sup>15</sup> Apart from the above mentioned counterarguments it is not clear whether on the semantic level Acts 20.3 means a three months' stay of Paul in Corinth. Ἐλλάς is not

## B. The Role of Phoebe according to Romans 16.1ff.

There is no doubt that Phoebe played a crucial role in the community of Cenchræe and even more broadly in the churches of Achæa as a whole.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, we cannot be categorical about whether Phoebe's presence in Rome had something to do with the promotion of Paul's plans to preach the gospel in Spain.<sup>17</sup> She was certainly a wealthy person,<sup>18</sup> who may have had business of her own in the Roman capital city<sup>19</sup> apart from, probably, delivering Paul's letter to the Roman community.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, it is undeniably possible and even probable that she did indeed propagate Paul's mission in Spain while she was in Rome.<sup>21</sup> In case the greetings of Rom 16 are considered as being an organic part of the letter,<sup>22</sup> we have to assume that Phoebe was indeed knowledgeable about Paul's plan to conduct a mission in

necessarily identical with Ἀχαιῶνα. Their identification is possible, but the word Ἑλλάς normally signifies Greece as a whole; cf. BDAG, "Ἑλλάς," 318. In the latter case we would have to assume that Paul did not necessarily remain at the same place for very long during these three months, at least according to the information of Acts.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. R. Pesch, *Römerbrief* (Würzburg: Echter, 1983), 107; P. Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 217.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. S. Légasse, *L'Épître de Paul aux Romains* (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 940.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. W. Sanday and A.C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (5th ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 418; A.D. Clarke, "Jew and Greek, Slave and Free, Male and Female: Paul's Theology of Ethnic, Social and Gender Inclusiveness in Romans 16," in P. Oakes (ed.), *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), 116–18; B. Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 384; R. Penna, *Lettera ai Romani: Rm. 12–16* (Bologna: EDB, 2008), 286; L. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; InterVarsity, 1988), 530; J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (Dallas: Word, 1988), 888–89; A.J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 571–72; R. Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 946–947.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), 234; Morris, *Epistle*, 529–30; Dunn, *Romans*, 889; M. Theobald, *Römerbrief: Kapitel 12–16* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1993), 224–25.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. about the obvious conclusion that Phoebe was indeed the bearer of the epistle to the Romans, Dodd, *Epistle*, 234–35; Stuhlmacher, *Brief*, 217; C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 374; Witherington, *Letter*, 383; Hultgren, *Letter*, 569; U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer: Röm 12–16* (Zürich: Benzinger, 1982), 131; Theobald, *Römerbrief*, 224; contra E. Käsemann, *An die Römer* (3rd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1974), 396.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Penna, *Lettera*, 284; Hultgren, *Letter*, 570; Jewett, *Romans*, 943.

<sup>22</sup> See the discussion on this problem in Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 137–40. On the unity of Rom 16 with the rest of Rom, see the argumentation of P. Lampe, "The Roman Christians of Rom 16," in K.P. Donfried (ed.), *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 217–21.

Spain. Since she had the status of a high-class representative of an important Pauline community such as Corinth-Cenchreae, her presence in Rome was not only supposed to ensure the support of the Roman church in favor of Paul's missionary project in Spain, but also at the same time to help eliminate the prejudice against him on the part of at least some of the Roman Christians.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, there is no need to assume that the list of names and greetings in Rom 16 does not actually signify a personal acquaintance of Paul with all these people, but was just meant to help Phoebe build up connections with the Roman Christians. It would seem more probable that Paul did indeed know personally most, if not all, of the people he mentions in Rom 16<sup>24</sup> and sent them greetings according to his usual practice and not in order to facilitate Phoebe's negotiations. His recommendation of Phoebe, as well as her upper class status should have been sufficient for her contacts with the Roman community.<sup>25</sup>

### C. The Witness of *1 Clement* 5.6ff.

*1 Clement* is a crucial piece of evidence in favor of the theory that supports the historicity of Paul's mission in Spain. The reason is that it is the earliest source (possibly written even before the end of the first century)<sup>26</sup> which seems to be referring to the realization of this mission. However, the text under consideration, namely *1 Clem.* 5.6–7, is not free of problems and ambiguities.

In his paper Puig i Tàrrach sees here a perhaps not very straightforward, but nevertheless clear enough reference to two distinct imperial trials of Paul. His main argument is that *1 Clem.* testifies to an official exile of Paul after his Roman trial, which would imply that a second trial did take place after the end of this exile, a trial that finally led to the Apostle's execution.

The verb φυγαδεύω actually means to make someone into a fugitive (φυγάς).<sup>27</sup> This, however, does not have to be an official act initiated by the authorities.<sup>28</sup> In every case when someone is forced to get away from his or

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 129–31.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Witherington, *Letter*, 380.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Stuhlmacher, *Brief*, 217; Jewett, *Romans*, 945–48.

<sup>26</sup> See a summary of the relevant discussion in H. Löhr, "Zur Paulus-Notiz in 1 Clem. 5,5–7," in F.W. Horn (ed.), *Das Ende des Paulus: Historische, theologische und literaturgeschichtliche Aspekte* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 197–98.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Matt 13.52; 27.57; 28.19; Acts 14.21 for an equivalent usage of the verb μαθητεύειν, which means "to cause one to be a pupil" (μαθητής), BDAG, "μαθητεύω," 609.

<sup>28</sup> Contra B. Santalucia's essay in the present volume.

her dwelling place a φυγαδεύειν happens. Therefore, the word φυγαδευθείς in *I Clem.* 5.6 can either mean that Paul was sent into exile or that he was simply sent away.<sup>29</sup> What is more, we have several examples of Paul being sent away in Acts (13.50; 16.39; 17.10, 13, 14; cf. 2 Cor 11.33), although the verb φυγαδεύειν itself is never used in the New Testament.

Since *I Clem.* 5.6ff. begins with ἐπτάκις followed by a series of participles, all of them in the aorist (v. 6: φορέσας, φυγαδευθείς, λιθασθείς, γενόμενος; v. 7: διδάξας, ἐλθών, μαρτυρήσας, γενόμενος), it would seem that we are actually dealing here with a list of afflictions, which cannot possibly refer only to the Roman imprisonment of Paul, but more generally to his whole Christian life.

Therefore, since φυγαδευθείς belongs to this series of participles, it cannot refer to one concrete incident, namely Paul's supposed exile from Rome to Spain. According to the immediate context of the word, it clearly refers to the persecutions and especially to the expulsion of Paul from various cities, in which he conducted his mission.<sup>30</sup>

Ἐπτάκις δεσμὸν ἄφορέσας refers to seven imprisonments because of the semantic weight of the number seven, which denotes completeness.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, there is no indication whatsoever that this is a concrete and exclusive reference to Paul's Roman captivity and trial.

This conclusion is also supported by the semantic content and use of the word λιθασθείς in the same context. Stoning cannot be a reference to the Roman captivity of Paul, but only to the classical Jewish death penalty, from which Paul was, as it would seem, in some way able to be rescued. This underlines our conclusion that the reference here is to Paul's afflictions throughout his life in general, and not to a specific incident in his life, namely his Roman captivity and trial.

Furthermore, the phrase κῦρηξ γενόμενος ἔν τε τῇ ἀνατολῇ καὶ ἐν τῇ δύσει is also information that obviously refers to the whole of Paul's missionary activity and not only to his stay in Rome or even his presumed exile to Spain. What is more, immediately after this reference the author of *I Clem.* states that Paul received the fame of his faith and that he taught justice to the whole world, i.e., not only to Rome or to Spain.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. H. Omerzu, "The Probability of a Pauline Travel to Spain in Light of the Roman Law," in J.M. Gavalda Ribot, A. Muñoz Melgar, and A. Puig i Tàrrach (eds.), *Pau, Fructuós i el Cristianisme primitiu a Tarragona (Segles I-VIII): Actes des Congrès de Tarragona (19–21 de Juny de 2008)* (Tarragona: Fundació Privada Liber, 2010), 127.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Omerzu, "Probability," 127; H.E. Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 163.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the relevant discussion in Omerzu, "Probability," 127 n.83; contra Lona, *Clemensbrief*, 163.

On the other hand, the expression καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ τέρμα τῆς δόσεως ἑλθῶν must undeniably be a reference to Spain.<sup>32</sup> As R. Riesner puts it: “for an author writing in Rome that (= καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ τέρμα τῆς δόσεως ἑλθῶν) can only mean Spain!”<sup>33</sup> This is not a generalized expression, which would simply intend to demonstrate that Paul had indeed preached very far in the West. On the contrary, it seems to have a very concrete meaning because *I Clem.* does not include an analogous expression for the East (such an expression could be τὸ τέρμα τῆς ἀνατολῆς), since Paul had not reached the equivalent of Spain in the East. Furthermore, the author of *I Clem.* has already mentioned that Paul had preached, generally speaking, throughout the whole world, both in the East and in the West (5.6). Consequently, there is no obvious reason for him to refer to Paul’s preaching up to the limit of the West, unless he means by this expression his mission in Spain.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cf., among others, A. Borrell Viader, “Les tradicions sobre el viatge de Pau a Hispània en la primera carta de Climent i en el Cànon de Muratori,” in *Pau*, 163. Whenever the word τέρμα is connected with a geographical term in the genitive, it simply means the final frontier, the border; cf. BDAG, “τέρμα,” 999. This is the obvious semantic content of the word. In order for it to be connected with racing and especially horse racing, it would have to be connected with other semantic elements in the same context, which would point in this direction. Even if we take into account the words βραβεῖον and κλέος as referring to an athletic context and thus understand τέρμα as indeed pointing to the turning point of a horse race, as R. Riesner maintains in this volume, this turning point has certainly to be understood as Spain; cf. the relevant discussion in Löhr, “Paulus-Notiz,” 208–09.

<sup>33</sup> R. Riesner, “Romans 15 and Paul’s Project of Journey to Spain (Hispania),” in *Pau*, 108.

<sup>34</sup> A. Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); Lindemann, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum: Das Bild des Apostels und die Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Marcion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), 78–79, interprets this reference as a hint to Rome; cf. the counter-position of Löhr, “Paulus-Notiz,” 207–08. However, the most obvious meaning of the term is indeed Spain. There are no known witnesses in which Rome is characterized as being the limit of the West. Even Acts 1.8 cannot serve as such a witness; cf. H. Omerzu, “Das Schweigen des Lukas. Überlegungen zum offenen Ende der Apostelgeschichte,” in *Ende*, 132–33; E.E. Ellis, “‘Das Ende der Erde’ (Apg 1,8),” in C. Bussmann and W. Radl (eds.), *Der Treue Gottes trauen: Beiträge zum Werk des Lukas* (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), 279–83; R. Riesner, *Die Frühzeit des Apostels Paulus: Studien zur Christologie, Missionsstrategie und Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 272; J.M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul’s Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 142. Cf. also the essay by T. Nicklas in the present volume. On the contrary, Rome was considered at that time as being the center of the world. It is of course true that Paul’s preaching the gospel in Rome could in a sense be considered as the fulfilment of his mission, since it would be expected that the gospel would rapidly spread across the empire having reached its capital. Why then does the author speak of the limit of the West in the

The question is here whether in the light of this information we can trace a real historical memory or just the knowledge of Rom 15 on the part of the author of *1 Clem.*<sup>35</sup> Provided that Paul's letter to the Romans indeed reached the Roman community, it is only natural and to be expected from a later Christian writing originating from Rome and valuing Paul's person and work to draw material from this letter.<sup>36</sup> At this point intertextuality and historical memory are so much intermingled with each other that it is impossible to judge which of the two actually influences the information of *1 Clem.* about Paul's missionary activity in Spain. Therefore, it is difficult to accept *1 Clem.* as an objective witness in favor of the realization of Paul's missionary trip to Spain.<sup>37</sup>

#### D. Paul's Roman Trial according to 2 Tim 4.16–18

Differently from *1 Clem.*, in 2 Tim 4.16–18 there is indeed a reference to Paul's first trial in Rome or rather, in my opinion, to the first session of this trial.<sup>38</sup> Paul was not condemned and thus, obviously metaphorically,<sup>39</sup> was rescued from the lion's mouth.

The information drawn from 2 Tim is the following: Paul has been abandoned by all. During his trial nobody stood by him (4.16). However, the Lord was present and gave him strength, so that Paul was able to fulfil the preaching of the gospel resulting in all nations listening to it. He was finally saved from the death penalty (4.17), although not indefinitely, as he is currently

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first place? The general reference ἐν τε τῇ ἀνατολῇ καὶ ἐν τῇ δύσει should in this case have been enough. It is obvious that the author means to signify and to underline a concrete missionary activity of Paul that would heighten his accomplishments.

<sup>35</sup> It would seem that the author of *1 Clem.* had knowledge of Paul's Romans and 1 Corinthians; cf. Lona, *1. Clemensbrief*, 49–51.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Omerzu, "Schweigen," 155.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Löhr, "Paulus-Notiz," 208–09, 213. Even B. Wander, "Warum wollte Paulus nach Spanien? Ein forschungs- und motivgeschichtlicher Überblick," in *Ende*, 194, who is in favor of the realization of Paul's missionary trip to Spain, is in doubt about the trustworthiness of *1 Clem.* 5.7 in this regard.

<sup>38</sup> Cf., among others, N. Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (5th ed.; Regensburg: Pustet, 1989), 275–76; V. Hasler, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus (Pastoralbriefe)* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1978), 81; H. Merkel, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 86–87; L.T. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 442; W.D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville: Nelson, 2000), 594–95; L. Oberlinner, *Die Pastoralbriefe: Kommentar zum zweiten Timotheusbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1995), 177–78.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Merkel, *Pastoralbriefe*, 87; I.H. Marshall with the collaboration of P.H. Town-er, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 825; Mounce, *Epistles*, 597–98.

awaiting his death and his final salvation (4.18; cf. 2 Tim 4.6–8). Consequently, it would seem that 2 Tim 4 describes the stage after the first and before the second ἀπολογία.<sup>40</sup>

The expression πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in 2 Tim 4.17 most probably presents the image of a courtroom that is filled with representatives from all different parts and nations of the empire, which, historically speaking, may not be entirely out of place, considering the multiethnic and multicultural character of the city of Rome.<sup>41</sup> The context is here definitely not one of a mission in Hispania, but one of a defense in front of a Roman court. By preaching the gospel in front of the Roman authorities and a multiethnic audience Paul is presented as having finally managed in a certain sense to preach the gospel to all nations. This is probably the response of the pseudonymous author of 2 Tim to the actual failure of Paul to reach all nations from a geographical point of view, according to his divine call and his initial missionary program.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, Paul is presented here as fulfilling his call by being able to preach the gospel in Rome. This is then the actual end of his mission. It may well be implied here that from Rome, being considered as the center of the world, the gospel will be able to spread to all corners of the empire and beyond after the death of the Apostle.

The verb πληροφορηθῆ in v. 17 could theoretically imply the evangelization of Spain, had it belonged to a different context. However, it is clear that the context at this point is the ἀπολογία of Paul in the Roman court. Thus this verb cannot be possibly connected with Rom 15.19.

## E. The Witness of Other Non-Biblical Sources

The Muratorian Canon, as well as the *Acta Petri* and the *Acta Xanthippe et Polyxena* are much later documents and not trustworthy witnesses from an historical point of view.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, they cannot be used as primary pieces of

<sup>40</sup> Cf. A. Weiser, *Der zweite Brief an Timotheus* (Düsseldorf: Benzinger, 2003), 323.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Merkel, *Pastoralbriefe*, 86; Weiser, *Brief*, 324; Marshall, *Commentary*, 824; Mounce, *Epistles*, 596.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the essay by J.M.G. Barclay in the present volume.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. for the chronology of the Muratorian Fragment in the late 4th century G.M. Hahneman, *The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 215–18. Riesner, “End,” as well as J. Verheyden, “The Canon of Muratori: A Matter of Dispute,” in J.M. Auwers and H.J. de Jonge (eds.), *The Biblical Canons* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 556, among others, think that a dating around 200 CE is much more likely. However, even if we accept this early chronology, it is still a very late text with regard to Paul’s supposed visit to Spain and thus not a noteworthy witness from an historical point of view.



evidence in favor of a Pauline mission in Spain. The problem of historical trustworthiness is here even bigger than in the case of *1 Clem.* due to the longer temporal distance of these documents from Paul's time. Therefore, I find it rather doubtful that the aforementioned sources really do echo an independent Roman tradition about a Pauline mission in Spain.<sup>44</sup> While the existence of such a tradition is not to be altogether excluded, it is much more probable that the actual source for this information is a written text, in our case chapter 15 of the epistle to the Romans. Moreover, both aforementioned *Acta* are highly fictional works and should be handled with extreme caution when it comes to drawing historical data from them, as is the case with all New Testament Apocrypha.<sup>45</sup>

Yet, Eusebius of Caesarea indeed reads 2 Tim 4.17 as a reference to two different imprisonments and trials of Paul<sup>46</sup> by interpreting the clauses ἵνα δι' ἐμοῦ τὸ κήρυγμα πληροφορηθῆ καὶ ἀκούσωσιν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη as referring to an acquittal of Paul and to a last stage of missionary activity on his part.

In my opinion, this is an erroneous reading of 2 Tim 4.17. According to 2 Tim 4.16–18, everybody had abandoned Paul during his first defense. Only the Lord was present and gave him strength, resulting in the fulfilment of the gospel's preaching in the presence of all nations. There is no reference at all to an acquittal of Paul. In 4.17 there are three main clauses: (a) Ὁ δὲ κύριός μοι παρέστη, (b) καὶ ἐνεδυνάμωσέν με, (c) καὶ ἐρρυσθην ἐκ στόματος λέοντος. Two secondary final clauses are dependent upon the second main clause καὶ ἐνεδυνάμωσέν με, namely (a) ἵνα δι' ἐμοῦ τὸ κήρυγμα πληροφορηθῆ, and (b) (ἵνα) ἀκούσωσι πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. Since all three main clauses are connected with the conjunction καί, they build a temporal and logical sequence. The two secondary final clauses appear in the middle of this sequence, presenting the aim (or the result) of Paul's being strengthened by the Lord. The final stage of this sequence refers to the temporary avoidance of the death penalty on Paul's part. According to this syntactical analysis the meaning of the sentence is that the Lord was with Paul, he gave him strength in order to proclaim the gospel to the representatives of all nations present in the trial, and finally Paul avoided being condemned to death.

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<sup>44</sup> Contra V. Mihoc, "The Tradition on St. Paul's Journey to Spain in the Church Fathers," in *Pau*, 189–90.

<sup>45</sup> This is also a valid argument against the trustworthiness of the witness of *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, which fails to mention a trip of Paul to Spain. This work cannot be considered as having an analogous historical value with Luke's Acts. In every case, we are unable to conclude with certainty whether its author knew anything about a trip of Paul to Spain or not, using the argumentum e silentio; contra C. Büllesbach, "Das Verhältnis der Acta Pauli zur Apostelgeschichte des Lukas: Darstellung und Kritik der Forschungsgeschichte," in *Ende*, 237.

<sup>46</sup> *Hist. eccl.* 2.22.

Thus, the clause καὶ ἐρρύσθη ἐκ στόματος λέοντος<sup>47</sup> is presented not only as the last stage of the above mentioned sequence, but also at the same time as the result of the strength that the Lord gave Paul to preach the gospel to all nations. The conjunction καί has here a conclusive meaning. Paul's defense, which actually consisted in the preaching of the gospel, resulted in his rescue from the death penalty. The *passivum divinum* ἐρρύσθη demonstrates that this was the work of the Lord and not Paul's achievement.<sup>48</sup>

Theoretically there could be also another exegetical possibility with regard to the two final clauses of 2 Tim 4.17: they could parenthetically refer to future developments beyond the strict temporal sequence of the three main clauses. However, had this been the case, the two final clauses would have to depend upon the third main clause of the verse, namely Paul's rescue from the death penalty. They would then be the aim and the result not of the strength that Paul received from the Lord in court, but of Paul's rescue at the end of his trial. However, in our case the two final clauses are dependent upon the second primary clause, which clearly refers to the procedure of the trial and not to its final outcome.

On the basis of the above grammatical analysis, Eusebius' understanding of 2 Tim 4.16–18 as witnessing to the release of Paul after his first Roman trial, as well as the continuation of his missionary activity up to his second and final captivity in Rome, seems to be a misreading of the text.

## Conclusion

The team following Paul in Acts 20.4 is not necessarily comprised of missionaries who would follow Paul to Spain. Even if the account of Acts were considered historically precise, the seven men could be simply mentioned as Paul's escorts on his trip to Jerusalem. Furthermore, seven Greek-speaking missionaries would create rather than solve problems in Latin-speaking Spain. A smaller team of missionaries, including some Latin-speaking, probably from within the Roman community, would be more efficient.

It is possible that Phoebe propagated Paul's missionary plans in Rome. However, she might have travelled to Rome also on her own business. Therefore, we cannot be certain whether her only or even main purpose was to assist Paul in his missionary plans. In any case, it seems highly probable that Phoebe would know about Paul's future missionary project in Spain and that she would speak in his favor while being in Rome.

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ps 21.22; Dan 6; 1 Macc 2.60.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Weiser, *Brief*, 324–25.

*1 Clem.* 5.6 does not refer to the various stages of Paul's Roman trial. Only in 5.7 do we find a reference to Paul's witness during his trial and to his subsequent death. *1 Clem.* does not even necessarily presuppose that Paul was exiled. However, even if this would be the case, Paul's exile cannot be connected with Spain. On the other hand, *1 Clem.* indeed mentions Paul's preaching in Spain, which has to be taken seriously into consideration.

2 Tim 4 does not speak about an exile of Paul between the two phases of his trial, during which he was able to preach the gospel. Rather differently, it refers to Paul's preaching the gospel in front of the multiethnic audience of the tribunal. Paul was thus able to fulfil in a way his call and mission to preach the gospel to all the nations.

The Muratorian Canon, as well as the *Acta Petri* and the *Acta Xanthippae et Polyxena* are not historically trustworthy documents. Eusebius indeed reads 2 Tim 4.17 as referring to the continuation of Paul's mission after his assumed first trial in Rome. However, this reading is erroneous and most probably influenced by the missionary plans of Paul as presented in Rom 15.

Puig i Tàrrach states that "there are sufficient reasons to affirm as plausible and even probable the claim that Paul spent some time as an exile in a city of Hispania." For my part, I fail to see adequate evidence in the sources in favor of this position. The silence of Acts and of all the Deutero-Pauline writings about a visit of Paul to Spain is significant, although, as already mentioned, the argumentum e silentio should always be handled with caution. The strongest witness in favor of Paul's mission in Spain, namely the one of *1 Clem.* 5.7, could very well be influenced by Rom 15 and not by a local Roman tradition.

On the other hand, we also do not have at hand any evidence that would forbid us to speculate about a possible trip of Paul to Spain. Even if there are very strong indications that Paul was never set free and was condemned to death, we do not know this with certainty due to the lack of clear source material.

On the basis of the above, I would propose a rephrasing of Puig i Tàrrach's aforementioned sentence as follows: It still remains a possibility, although not a strong one, that Paul did visit Spain. However, on the basis of the relevant source material, it would seem much more probable that Paul never left Rome and that he was sentenced to death after enduring a possibly long captivity in the Roman capital.

