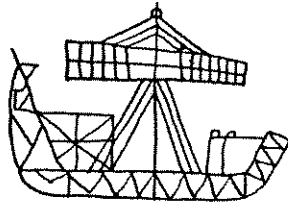


man-made, human opposition was unable to frustrate it. St Paul reached Rome, in spite of enemies, in spite of shipwreck; yet he arrived not as a free man, but as a prisoner.



SYMBOLIC SHIP FROM THE CATACOMBS

BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

- Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, by Samuel Dill, especially chapters two and three.
The Pagan Background of Early Christianity, by W. R. Halliday.
The Church and the Roman Empire, by W. M. Ramsay. Account of St Paul in Asia Minor, and *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*.
Les Religions Orientales, by F. Cumont.
Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church, ed. by B. J. Kidd, Vol. I, No. 35, "The Mysteries of Isis," from Apuleius.

CHAPTER IV

ROME: THE APOSTLES AND NERO

WE would give much for a document of equal authority with Acts, covering the foundation of the church of Rome and the later life of St Peter, but no such book has survived, if, indeed, it ever existed. Instead we have to piece together fragments of evidence, and our ignorance is such that it is possible for some Protestant scholars to deny that St Peter ever reached Rome at all, while Roman Catholics are unshakably convinced that he was the first bishop of that supremely important see. Supremely important it certainly was as long as Rome remained the capital of the Empire. It was said that all roads led to Rome, and that was true metaphorically as well as literally. From all parts of the world men came there on imperial business, for trade, in hope of advancement, with the army, as teachers of philosophy, as priests of new cults, or, like St Paul, as prisoners to be judged by Cæsar. Others were brought there as slaves, having been captured in war or bought in the market, and many of these eventually became freedmen and were added to the city's cosmopolitan population. Once Christianity had spread beyond Palestine, it was bound to reach Rome in a very short time, and the church established there could not fail to play an important part in spreading the faith. Language was no barrier, for Greek was as commonly heard as Latin in the streets of Rome, and the Hellenist Jews and the first Gentile converts were all Greek-speaking.

The very word "Rome" calls up to the mind's eye a

picture of magnificence, of wide streets and triumphal arches, temples, amphitheatres, and the great basilicæ surrounding the Forum. The picture is true, but it is a half truth. Rome was far more like its modern counterparts than were most ancient cities. Building land was at a premium and the population was housed in tall tenement blocks which rose precariously, several stories high, on inadequate foundations. Magnificent public buildings contrasted painfully with squalid slums. Great aqueducts brought a plentiful supply of water to the city, but the tenement-dweller, who had to buy his water from the *aquarii*, the slave water-carriers, could not afford to waste the precious stuff in washing the floor of his flat. Rome's huge drains are the admiration of archæologists, but no public drainage system served the poorer houses, as the passer-by sometimes learnt to his cost. Under such conditions dirt and disease were inevitable. Rents were extortionate and tenants relied on sub-letting to meet part of the cost. Thus the ground floor of a building might belong to a well-to-do man, while several poor families shared the garrets. At the opposite end of the social scale were the imperial palaces, where thousands of slaves were employed, and the lavish establishments of the Roman nobility.

If we were seeking for the earliest Christians in this great ant-heap of a city, we should naturally cross to the far bank of the Tiber and begin our inquiries in the Jewish colony which had long been established there. In the apostles' time it was already a century old. In 63 B.C., when Pompey captured Jerusalem, he brought back to Rome a large number of Jews as slaves. Their refusal to conform to Gentile ways made them awkward members of any household and most of them were soon manumitted. They formed the nucleus of the colony which soon grew, especially after Julius Cæsar granted the Jews extensive privileges, including the right to worship in their own way. Ed-

mundsen has described this Jewish settlement for us from his knowledge of contemporary sources:

“A large proportion of these Roman Jews were very poor, living in rags and squalor, making a precarious livelihood as hawkers, pedlars, and dealers in second-hand goods. Above these were then, as now, the moneylenders, larger traders, and shopkeepers, and at the head the wealthy financiers.”*

We do not know who were the first Christian missionaries to reach Rome. Possibly they were some of the Jewish pilgrims converted at Jerusalem during Pentecost, who afterwards returned home, bringing the Gospel with them; perhaps some of them were traders from Palestine. Their names are lost to us, unless Andronicus and Junias were among them, whom St Paul mentions in his letter to the Romans as his kinsmen and fellow prisoners, “who are of note among the apostles, who have been in Christ before me”. However that may be, by A.D. 50 Christians were sufficiently numerous in Rome to attract the attention of the Roman authorities. In that year riots broke out in the Jewish quarter, and all that the magistrates who investigated the matter could discover was that the trouble was due to a certain “Chrestus”. “Chrestus” represents a normal Roman mispronunciation of “Christus”, a mistake which was still common more than a century later and there can be little doubt that the rioting was due to the resentment which orthodox Jews felt at the spread of Christian teaching. Suetonius, who is our authority for this incident, simply records that “the Jews who were continually rioting at the instigation of Chrestus he (Claudius) expelled from Rome”. (“*Judæos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit.*”—Suet. Claudius 25.) No details are given, but remembering the trouble which the Jews in Asia Minor stirred up for St Paul, it is not hard to

* *The Church in Rome*, by G. Edmundsen, p. 6.

imagine what happened in Rome. We can picture the angry scenes in the synagogues, the campaign of rumour-mongering against the Christians, the public disturbance skilfully fomented, the accusations of treason brought against the Christians during the subsequent inquiry. It is not clear whether all Jews were expelled from Rome for a time in consequence of these disorders or only those accused of subversive tendencies, that is the Christians. But as the Roman authorities had not yet realized that the Christians were a separate sect, the order was probably general.

Among those expelled from Rome at this time were a Jewish tent-maker and his wife, who settled in Corinth and continued their trade there. They had not been there long, when St Paul arrived on his first visit to the place and at once made friends with them. St Luke gives us the facts very briefly:

“And he (Paul) found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome: and he came unto them; and because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and they wrought; for by their trade they were tentmakers.”*

No mention is made of the conversion of these two, who were to play an important part in St Paul's life and in the early Church, and it is reasonable to assume that they were Christians before they ever met St Paul. Indeed, it is probable that their house in Rome had been a meeting-place for Christians before they were forced to leave. It certainly was when they returned to Rome after the death of Claudius, for St Paul in his epistle to the Romans sends greetings to his two friends and also to “the church that is in their house”. † The site of that house has been identified,

* Acts 18. 2-3.

† Rom. 16. 4-5.

probably correctly, with that on which the church of St Prisca now stands. Near the church a house of the Republican period has been excavated; this would have been nearly a century old at the time when Aquila and Prisca lived there or close by.

St Paul's letter to the Romans was written from Corinth at the time when he was planning to visit Rome on his way to Spain, after taking the churches' contributions to Jerusalem and delivering them in person. Scholars are generally agreed that this letter was written about A.D. 57, and we know from Acts that St Paul was prevented from carrying out his plan. He was arrested in Jerusalem, owing to the animosity of the Jews, and eventually reached Rome as a prisoner three years later. From his letter we can gather some impression of the Christian community to which it is addressed, but only with difficulty, for St Paul is concerned with the unchanging truth of God's dealings with man, rather than with those accidents of place and time which differentiate one generation from another. The centuries which have passed between his day and ours are of little consequence when he writes and we read:

“God commendeth his own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

and

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

“For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.” †

Plainly these first Christians in Rome were as capable of thinking out the implications of their faith as any generation

* Rom. 5. 8.

† Rom. 6. 8-10 (A.V.).

since, and St Paul treated them accordingly. Those who expect to find in primitive Christianity a simple religion, free from the difficult dogmas of the Church, must look elsewhere than here for their evidence, though this is one of the earliest Christian documents we possess. To hold any but a rudimentary religious faith and yet be unconcerned about such problems as the existence of evil and the relation of man's free will to God's omnipotence, a man must either be content to worship with his heart and not his head, or else be the inheritor of a long-accepted tradition of Church teaching. These Roman Christians had no such tradition. Some of them were Jews who found that their faith in Christ was not compatible with strict adherence to Judaism. Others were Gentiles who in becoming Christians had altered their whole outlook on life. In this great epistle, St Paul stated some of the doctrines fundamental to the Christian faith, and applied them to the problems of the day; in so doing he helped to form a new tradition, the tradition of Christian dogmatic teaching which we have inherited. But here we are concerned, not with the thoughts of St Paul, which are familiar to all who read the New Testament, but with the almost unknown community to which he wrote. What does his letter tell us about the forgotten beginnings of the church of Rome?

Naturally enough, since St Paul was writing for his own contemporaries, to whom the facts were familiar, and not for us, there is no statement in his letter about the origin of the church of Rome or about St Peter's connection with it. St Peter is not mentioned by name from first to last. But that does not mean more than that St Peter was known to be absent from Rome at the time when St Paul wrote, otherwise his name would, of course, have been included in the salutations. In one place St Paul does seem to imply that the church at Rome was founded by another, for he writes:

"From Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ; yea, making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but, as it is written,

They shall see, to whom no tidings of him came,
And they who have not heard shall understand.

Wherefore also I was hindered these many times from coming to you."

He goes on to say that he is planning a visit to Spain and that he hopes to see them on the way. Now it is highly probable that the founder to whom St Paul alludes was an apostle, a man whose authority St Paul recognized as being equal to his own, else he would hardly have been so scrupulous. There is a strong and early tradition that this man was St Peter. Our evidence for the tradition is material as well as written, for St Peter and St Paul are represented together on early medallions and similar finds, suggesting that they were regarded, as early as the second century, as of equal importance in the history of the Roman church. The traditional belief that St Peter was the founder is also in accordance with what we know of the organization of the early Church. When the apostles heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent St Peter and St John to confirm the newly baptized. A little later St Barnabas was sent by the church of Jerusalem to the newly founded church of Antioch. What more inherently probable than that when the apostles heard that Christianity had spread to Rome they should send St Peter there at the first opportunity? His first visit may well have been, as Edmundsen supposes, in A.D. 42 after his escape from prison in Jerusalem. If so, he was back in Jerusalem in A.D. 46 at the time of the famine, and was afterwards in Antioch for a time, and almost certainly visited Corinth. But if St Peter led a roving life, going from church to

church and taking his wife with him,* that does not disprove his connection with the church of Rome. He was not continually resident there, but he may well have exercised a controlling influence.

On the other hand, there is nothing in St Paul's letter to suggest that the Roman Christians formed a single body led by a bishop or even by a council of elders. On the contrary, in his concluding salutations St Paul mentions five distinct groups of believers: the church in the house of Prisca and Aquila, those of the households of Aristobulus and Narcissus, the brethren with Asyncritus and his friends, and the saints with Philologus and Nereus. Evidently at this time there were five congregations of Christians in Rome, and it is worth noting that whereas St Paul writes to the "church of God" at Corinth, to the church of the Thessalonians and the churches of Galatia, and mentions the bishops and deacons at Philippi, he addresses his letter to the Romans to "all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints", and makes no mention of either elders or deacons. Probably each of the five groups which St Paul mentions had its own leaders, and, though they would all respect the apostolic authority of St Peter, there is nothing to show that he had in fact appointed elders or organized the church.

Evidently the Christians in Rome in the earliest period met for the most part in private houses. Those who gathered in the house of Prisca and Aquila would many of them be Jewish, but probably the majority in the other groups were Gentiles. This must certainly have been the case with those of the households of Aristobulus and Narcissus. Narcissus was dead by the time this letter was written. He had been a wealthy freedman, a favourite of the Emperor Claudius, and when suspicion fell on him and he was executed, his slaves became part of the vast imperial house-

* 1 Cor. 9. 5.

hold, but evidently retained their old distinguishing name. Some scholars think that the same was true of the household of Aristobulus. In any case, the Christians in both these groups would be slaves, Greek-speaking Gentiles for the most part, some of them employed in menial work, but others well-educated men filling clerical posts, the equivalent of our modern civil servants. In recent years what has been identified as an early Christian sanctuary has been found within the precincts of the first-century imperial palace on the Palatine. We have therefore concrete evidence for the supposition that Christians of Cæsar's household met together for worship and formed one of the several congregations of the church of Rome.

In spite of its unusually long list of salutations, St Paul's epistle to the Romans tells us disappointingly little about the church to which it is addressed. The last chapter of Acts, in which St Paul's arrival in Rome as a prisoner is described, is even less enlightening. St Luke describes how he and St Paul were welcomed by the Christians at Puteoli, where they stayed for a week before continuing their journey to Rome. Evidently the news of their coming went ahead of them, for the brethren came out to meet them. Some were waiting at Appii Forum, a town forty miles from Rome, and others were ready to greet them at the Three Taverns, some ten miles nearer the city. St Luke records St Paul's joy at this welcome: "he thanked God and took courage". And then with the words, "When we entered Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him", St Luke ends his personal narrative. The last fourteen verses of the book are written in the third person, and they add little except a puzzling account of St Paul's interview with the leading Jews in Rome. The strangest thing about it is that the Jews appear to be quite ignorant of the existence of a Christian community in Rome, and that is barely credible,

however ingeniously one may try to explain it. Probably the incident was one which St Luke had from hearsay, not from personal experience, and it has been somewhat garbled in the telling. All that we can reasonably conclude is that St Paul made an independent approach to the Jews in Rome and, when they rejected his message, spent his time during his enforced stay in the city in preaching the Gospel to all who cared to come to him in his own hired lodging. We have no certain knowledge of what happened at the end of the two years that he stayed in Rome, but according to tradition he was released, and carried out his project of visiting Spain.

There must have been a decade during which the church in Rome enjoyed comparative peace and grew steadily. It was in A.D. 50 that Prisca and Aquila had to flee to Corinth, and in A.D. 64 the most terrible of the early persecutions fell upon the church. About the intervening years we know very little; but it would seem that Christianity gained converts among all classes of society. In A.D. 50 a Roman lady of rank, Pomponia Græcina, was accused of being addicted to a foreign superstition. She was tried by her husband, Aulus Plautius, in accordance with Roman law, and was judged innocent. The discovery that her family tomb later became an early Christian burial-place confirms the suspicion that she was a Christian. To this period, too, must belong the contest between St Peter and Simon Magus which caught the imagination of succeeding generations, and so gave rise to a host of legends. As told by Eusebius, the fourth-century historian, the story is credible enough, and Eusebius was relying on an early authority, the second-century apologist, Justin Martyr. Simon was a native of Samaria, and in his own city he had gained a reputation, not merely as an astrologer, or wise man, but as a worker of wonders and one inspired by God. When St Philip came to Samaria preaching Christ, Simon was

attracted by the miracles of healing and other signs, and, professing himself to be a believer, he was baptized. His real motive for seeking baptism became plain when St Peter arrived in Samaria to confirm those who believed. After prayer and the laying-on of hands, the power of the Holy Spirit came upon the newly confirmed and Simon approached St Peter and offered him money saying:

“Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.”

Evidently Simon Magus saw in this new religion a means to attain his own ambition, which was to make a reputation and a fortune as a religious leader and a semi-divine person. St Peter rejected Simon's proposal with horror and warned him to repent, to which Simon Magus replied:

“Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me.”*

His later behaviour shows plainly that this piously meek answer was due to nothing better than a superstitious fear of being cursed. Most successful charlatans arrived in Rome sooner or later, and Simon Magus was no exception. According to Justin, Simon appeared there, claiming to be God and accompanied by a former prostitute from Tyre, named Helen, who was supposed to be an incarnation of divine thought proceeding from him. This precious pair reaped a harvest from the superstitious and the gullible, many of whom were to be found in the capital, and no doubt Simon was disconcerted when his old opponent, St Peter, arrived on the scene and convinced many of the fraudulent nature of Simon's claims. Eusebius writes as though St Peter utterly defeated his opponent, as indeed he may have done. But the battle between Christianity and the form of superstition which Simon Magus represented had only begun and was to be bitterly contested for several generations.

* Acts 8. 9-24.

According to Eusebius, there was an important sequel to this contest between St Peter and Simon Magus. The Christians in Rome became increasingly anxious to possess a record of St Peter's teaching to which they could refer in cases of controversy, and they urged his companion, St Mark, to undertake the work. The result was the Gospel according to St Mark, which was approved by St Peter and was thenceforth read aloud in the churches. Eusebius quotes St Clement of Alexandria as his authority for this statement, but another early father, St Irenæus, says that St Mark's Gospel was written after the deaths of St Peter and St Paul. Most scholars think the later date the more probable, and agree that it was written after the persecution in A.D. 64 and before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. But, of course, it is by no means impossible that a first draft of the Gospel was made in St Peter's lifetime, even if the Gospel as we have it is five or ten years later.

For the first thirty years or so of her life, the Church was not subject to persecution by the State. Roman officials did not recognize that Christianity was a new religion, but thought it a form of Judaism. Naturally the Jews who rejected Christ were extremely unwilling to allow the Christians to shelter behind the privileges which had been granted to Judaism. The populace in Rome, as in the cities of Asia and Greece, was ignorant, excitable and quick to adopt a prejudice. St Luke has shown in Acts that in the eastern provinces the Jews and other interested persons found it easy to stir up popular opposition to St Paul. Rumours became widespread in Rome also that the Christians were a dangerous secret society, that they practised obscene rites and feasted on children. Whether these rumours originated in Jewish jealousy we do not know, but some of the early apologists thought so. This was the state of affairs in A.D. 64, when the great fire which occurred in July brought upon the Christians the first official persecution.

The fire broke out in some shops at the end of the Great Circus and spread rapidly. It lasted nine days, and totally destroyed the houses in three out of the fourteen districts of Rome, and left only a few half-ruined buildings standing in seven of the others. It is estimated that nearly half a million people were left homeless. This immense damage was only possible because the huge tenement blocks, which housed most of the population, were flimsily built of brick and timber. The flames easily leapt the narrow streets from one high building to another, and attempts at fighting the fire proved futile. The Emperor Nero behaved admirably in his efforts to relieve the distress occasioned by this great disaster. He opened to the public various buildings and grounds, including his own gardens, and built shelters for the homeless. He also bought up corn and sold it to the destitute at a low rate, thereby instituting what amounted to price control of essential commodities and preventing famine. Yet, in spite of this, he gained no popularity. Rumours spread throughout the city that the fire was not accidental, but had been caused by incendiaries acting on the orders of the Emperor himself. Nero's love of display was well known, and his action in appropriating a huge site in the devastated area for a new imperial palace must have confirmed the suspicion that he had staged the fire, so that he might have an opportunity to carry into effect his plans for the rebuilding of Rome. The rumours were persistent, and the strength of popular feeling alarmed the Emperor. What followed is best told in the words of Tacitus:

"But neither man's efforts to give relief, nor the largesse of the prince, nor the propitiations of the gods were able to dissipate belief in the sinister report that the fire had been ordered. Wherefore to efface the rumour, Nero contrived that accusations should be brought against a set of people hated for their abominations, whom the populace called Christians, and subjected them

to the most exquisite torments. The author of this name, one Christus, had in the reign of Tiberius been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilatus; and the pernicious superstition, though repressed for the moment, began to break out afresh, not only in Judæa, the origin of that evil, but also in Rome, where all things horrible and shameful from every quarter collect together and are practised. Those therefore who confessed were first brought to trial, afterwards by the information derived from them, an immense multitude were joined with them, not so much for the crime of incendiarism, as for hatred of the human race. To their deaths mockeries were added, so that covered by the skins of wild beasts they were torn to pieces by dogs and perished or were affixed to crosses set on fire and, when day had fallen, were burnt so as to serve as an illumination for the night. Nero had offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a public show in the circus. He mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer, standing in a car. Hence compassion began to arise, although towards criminals deserving the extremest forms of punishment, on the ground that they were destroyed not for the public good but to gratify a single man's savage cruelty."*

Even to us of the twentieth century, made callous or indifferent by countless stories of atrocities, the scene in the Vatican Gardens is one of fantastic horror. Indeed it may be that we understand it better than our forefathers could, who lived in a happier age. To them such a monstrous exhibition of human cruelty seemed remote, a barbarity of a far-off time. To us it is real and credible in all its loathsome details. We, too, have seen tyranny in action, and we know how essential a scapegoat is to a régime of that kind. Persecution of some minority within the nation provides a necessary outlet for the suppressed feelings of resentment against the Government, resentment which might otherwise break out in revolution. If the tyrant is deified, then someone must play the part of the devil and take the blame for whatever goes wrong.

* Tacitus, *Annales* XV, xliv.

Hence Hitler's Jewish pogroms, and hence Nero's persecution of the Church. There is no reason to think that much effort was made to convict Christians of arson. The vast majority suffered on the general charge of being "enemies of the human race". From then on until the reign of Constantine, Christians were always liable to persecution for the mere confession of their faith. The great number of those who were arrested and died as martyrs proves conclusively that Christianity had already taken a deep hold in Rome. Nor could persecution stamp it out. When the horrible games were over the Christians who survived collected what remained of the martyrs' bodies and gave them burial in the cemetery on the other side of the road, where some one of their number owned a tomb. Now the magnificent church of St Peter extends across the site of that cemetery and over part of the arena itself; so thousands worship where the first martyrs died. "Semen est sanguis Christianorum."*

It is unlikely that St Paul was in Rome at the time of this sudden persecution. St Peter may have been, but if so he seems to have survived the first attack. If the epistle known as 1 Peter be accepted as authentic, then it must have been written near the end of his life, when the persecution showed signs of spreading to the provinces.† The letter is addressed to Christians in Asia Minor, and in the closing verses, which appear to have been in St Peter's own handwriting, there is a salutation from the church "that is in Babylon", a figurative expression for the church of Rome. Reading this letter carries us back into those days of trial and courage, of constant danger and immortal hope:

* "The blood of Christians is seed." Tertullian.

† The authorship of 1 Peter has been the subject of much dispute, but on the whole the reasons for believing that the epistle was written by St Peter outweigh those against its authenticity. See *The New Testament: A Reader's Guide*, by C. A. Alington, p. 18.

"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may shew forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

"And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good? But and if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye: and fear not their fear, neither be troubled."

"Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind."*

Even from stray sentences like these the glory of that first time of testing still shines out. There is no fanaticism here. Christians are counselled to be obedient to all proper authorities, not provocative, but ready to give a reasoned defence of their faith if questioned. It is a sensible and sober letter, but written within sight of a better country. St Peter speaks as though from the border of eternity, not because he foresees his own death, though he may well have done, but because he believes the end of the world to be at hand. Later generations have, for the most part, lost this sense of urgency and of imminent judgement, and with it they have lost some of the eagerness of St Peter's hope and the exultant quality of his courage.

There is no reasonable doubt that both St Peter and St Paul were martyred at Rome. The tradition is early and widespread, literary evidence confirms it and archaeological evidence is overwhelmingly in its favour. But little more than the bare fact is definitely known. It is almost certain that St Peter was crucified, for at the end of St John's Gospel, which must have been written after St Peter's martyrdom, there is an allusion to the nature of his death:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

* 1 Peter 2. 9; 3. 13, 14; 4. 1.

"Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God."*

According to Tertullian, St Paul was beheaded and became his rank as a Roman citizen, and this is inherently probable. But as to the exact date of their deaths and as to whether both suffered on the same day or no, evidence is insufficient for an absolute decision. Considering the wholesale destruction of Christian documents at a later period, the lack of a well-authenticated account of the apostles' fate is not surprising. All we have left are some chance allusions in early writings and a mass of later legends of little historical value. One legend, however, will always be remembered in connection with the death of St Peter, whether it can be proved to be based on fact or not. This is the famous "Quo Vadis?" legend, which tells how, during the persecution when the Roman police were searching for St Peter, the brethren came to him and begged him to go into temporary hiding for their sakes:

"And he obeyed the brethren's voice and went forth alone, saying: Let none of you come forth with me, but I will go forth alone, having changed the fashion of mine apparel. And as he went forth of the city, he saw the Lord entering into Rome. And when he saw him, he said: Lord whither goest thou thus? And the Lord said unto him: I go into Rome to be crucified. And Peter said unto him: Lord, art thou being crucified again? He said unto him: Yea, Peter, I am being crucified again. And Peter came to himself: and having beheld the Lord ascending into heaven, he returned to Rome, rejoicing and glorifying the Lord, for that he said: I am being crucified: the which was about to befall Peter."†

If the personal messages in what are known as the Pastoral Epistles are accepted as having been written by

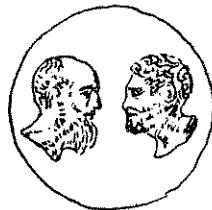
* John 21. 18-19.

† *Acts of Peter*, section XXXV, in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, translated by M. R. James.

St Paul at this period, then we can form some idea of his life during the last few months when he was awaiting the trial which resulted in his execution. The Second Epistle to Timothy shows us St Paul alone, except for his faithful friend and doctor, St Luke. He complains of desertion even by members of the Church, and begs Timothy to come to him before the winter and bring St Mark with him, and also a cloak and some books. But although St Paul anticipates a long imprisonment, he has no doubt that his trial will result in his condemnation. The confidence with which he waits for death is characteristic:

"I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day: and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved his appearing."*

With the deaths of St Peter and St Paul, the first, the apostolic, period of the Church's history was practically



BRONZE MEDAL FROM THE VATICAN LIBRARY SHOWING THE HEADS OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL. 2ND CENTURY.

ended. St John alone of the great apostles is believed to have lived on to extreme old age in Ephesus. Elsewhere the successors of the apostles faced the task of preserving the apostolic teaching and strengthening the organization

* 2 Tim. 4. 6-8.

of the Church to meet the constant danger of persecution. It is to this second generation, the disciples of the apostles, and to St John, that we owe the greater part of the New Testament.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

The Church in Rome in the First Century, by G. Edmunsden.
Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church, ed. by B. J. Kidd,
vol. 1.