

ADDENDUMS TO CORE LITERATURE

by
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I

Addendum A to Epaphroditus: The Man of Macedonia

PAUL AND ROME ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every Nation under Heaven....Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the Dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and Strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes.... – Acts 2:5, 9-10

Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, Preaching the Word to none but unto the Jews only.

And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, Preaching the Lord Jesus.

And the Hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number Believed, and turned unto the Lord. – Acts 11:19-21

Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch certain Prophets and Teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaë, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. – Acts 13:1 (See also Luke 23:26: “And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenean coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.” Moreover, Lucius may be the same man who with Paul saluted the people in Rome from Corinth: Romans 16:21.)

After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. – Acts 18:1-2

And when we came to Rome, the Centurion delivered the Prisoners to the Captain of the Guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a Soldier that Kept him.

And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the Chiefs of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the People, or Customs of our Fathers, yet was I delivered Prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans,

Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no Cause of Death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to Appeal unto Caesar; not that I had aught to Accuse my Nation of.

For this Cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you; because that for the Hope of Israel I am Bound with the Chain.

And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this Sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

And when they had Appointed him a Day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and Testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses, and out of the Prophets, from morning till evening.

And some Believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed after that Paul had spoken one word, Well Spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the Prophet unto our Fathers, saying, Go unto this People, and say, Hearing ye shall Hear, and shall not Understand; and Seeing, ye shall See, and not Perceive:

For the Heart of this People is Waxed Gross, and their Ears are Dull of Hearing, and their Eyes have they Closed: lest they should See with their Eyes, and Hear with their Ears, and Understand with their Hearts, and should be Converted, and I should Heal them.

Be it known therefore unto you, that the Salvation of God is Sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will Hear it.

And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the Kingdom, and Teaching those Things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all Confidence, no man Forbidding him. – Acts 28:16-31

PAUL AND ROME ACCORDING TO PAUL

And I myself also am persuaded in you, my brethren, that ye also are full of Goodness, filled with All Knowledge, able also to Admonish one another.

Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the Grace that is Given unto me of God, that I should be the Minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, Ministering the Gospel of God, that the Offering Up of the Gentiles might be Acceptable, being Sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

I have therefore whereof I may Glory through Jesus Christ in those Things which pertain to God. For I will not Dare to speak of any of those Things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles Obedient, by Word and Deed, through Mighty Signs and Wonders, by the Power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have Fully Preached the Gospel of Christ.

Yea, so have I strived to Preach the Gospel, not where Christ was Named, lest I should Build upon another man's Foundation: but as it is Written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall See: and they that have not Heard shall Understand.

For which Cause also I have been much Hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my Journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my Journey, and to be brought upon my way thitherward by you, if first I become somewhat filled with your company.

But now I go unto Jerusalem to Minister unto the Saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain Contribution for the Poor Saints which are at Jerusalem.

It hath pleased them Verily; and their Debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made Partakers of their Spiritual Things, their Duty is also to Minister unto them in Carnal Things.

When therefore I have Performed this, and have Sealed to them this Fruit, I will come by you unto Spain. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the Love of the Spirit, that ye Strive Together with me in your Prayers to God for me; that I may be Delivered from them that do not Believe in Judea: and that my Service which I have for Jerusalem may be Accepted of the Saints; that I may come unto with Joy by the Will of God, and may with you be Refreshed.

Now the God of Peace be with you All. Amen.

I commend unto you Phebe our Sister, which is a Servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh Saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a Succourer of many, and of myself also.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila my Helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the Church that is in their House.

Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the Firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us.

Salute Andronicus and Junia, my Kinsmen, and my fellow Prisoners, who are of note among the Apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. Salute Urbane, our Helper in Christ, and Stachyus my beloved.

Salute Apeles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' Household.

Salute Herodion my Kinsman. Greet them that be of the Household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord.

Salute Rufus Chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Salute Asyneritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobus, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

Salute one another with an Holy Kiss. The Churches of Christ salute you.

Now I beseech you brethren, Mark them which cause Divisions and Offences contrary to the Doctrine which ye have Learned; and avoid them. For they that are such Serve not Our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches Deceive the Hearts of the Simple.

For your Obedience is come abroad unto All Men. I am glad therefore on your behalf; but yet I would have you Wise unto that which is Good, and Simple concerning Evil.

And the God of Peace shall Bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Timothy my Workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my Kinsman, salute you.

I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius mine host, and of the whole Church, saluteth you. Erastus the Chamberlain of the City saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

The Grace of Our Lord be with you All. Amen.

Now to him who is of Power to Stablish you according to my Gospel, and the Preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the Revelation of the Mystery, which was kept Secret since the World Began, but Now is Made Manifest, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the Everlasting God, made Known to All Nations for the Obedience of Faith:

To God only Wise, be Glory through Jesus Christ For Ever. Amen.

After reading the selections above, one would wonder if Epaphroditus – in my opinion the Author of the Book of Acts – is talking about the same Church in Rome as Paul. Epaphroditus says nothing about the House Churches mentioned by Paul just prior to his ill-fated Collection for the Poor Saints in Jerusalem. Paul was even looking forward to traveling to Spain, a territory not yet reached by the Gospel.

Mysteriously, Epaphroditus paints a picture where the Jews in Rome were ignorant of Paul's Gospel to the Gentiles until they heard it from Paul in person. However, from Paul's Letter to the Romans, we know that this is fiction for look at the people Paul names at the close of his Letter, names that were famous for Preaching the Gospel from the Day of Pentecost to the time Paul came to Rome.

Note that the text says the Centurion delivered the "Prisoners" to the Captain of the Guard. In other words, Paul was not the only person being tried for the riot in Ephesus. Epaphroditus had mentioned as an aside that Aristarchus, from Thessalonika, was also on the ship headed to Rome from Caesarea. (Acts 27:2.) It is no coincidence that Aristarchus was in the Ephesian Theatre with Paul during the riot of the metalworkers. (Acts 19:29.)

It appears from the text that Paul and Aristarchus were then separated by the Captain of the Guard, Paul being allowed to have private quarters under house arrest. Note that he was not in the Praetorium, as he was in Caesarea, which is the main evidence that he wrote his Letter to the Philippians from Caesarea and not from Rome.

This allowed him to have free access to whomever sought him, as well as to call for special gatherings, yet not having total freedom. Paul, in Rome, tells Timothy, in Ephesus, that Demas has forsaken him and gone to Thessalonika. We are not told why. But if Demas, like Aristarchus, was also from Thessalonika, it may indicate the fate of Aristarchus if were tried separately from Paul.

We are told that Paul spent two years in this condition, though we do not know whether Epaphroditus was with Paul this whole time. We see that Epaphroditus was with Paul in the beginning because it's one of the "we" sections, but it's the last "we" section in the book before it ends.

Moreover, we gain little information about the Churches in Rome from the Book of Acts, other than they were likely started by the Strangers from Rome (Andronicus and Junia?) that were present in Jerusalem for Pentecost, both Jews and Proselytes. We further learn that because of the rioting caused by the Christians in the city, the Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome.

F.F. Bruce quotes the Roman historian Seutonius in his Life of Claudius xxv. 4: "As the Jews were indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus, he banished them from Rome." (Commentary On The Book of Acts, by F.F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, p, 368; 11th Printing, 1975.) Already we can see that belief in John's Book of Revelation was beginning to perform its mischief across the Empire.

In the Book of Revelation, Rome is seen as the the Great Dragon from the Sea and is Burned in a Judgment of Fire at the end. (Revelation 13:1-10; 18:16-19.) The fulfillment of the Prophecy actually occurred when Christians almost burned down the city of Rome while Paul was still facing his trial under the Emperor Nero. I believe that Nero is wrongly blamed for the fire under the theory that he wanted to get rid of the stench in the valley below his palace, and thus he was correct to put the blame on psychotic Christians.

We learn that Aquila and Priscilla were evangelizing there prior to being expelled and escaped to Corinth where they met Paul. They appear to have been Spirit-Filled Believers and were likely present at Pentecost. They worked together with Paul in Corinth as leatherworkers and tentmakers, and when Paul wanted to extend his Churches to Asia, the couple went ahead and paved the way for him. (Acts 18:2-3,18-19.)

I believe they ended up saving Paul's life when he was incarcerated in Ephesus because of the riot of the metalworkers. It must have gone bad for all of them because when Paul resumes his efforts in Macedonia after the debacle in Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla had moved from Ephesus to a new house in Rome. We learn from Paul's last letter, written to Timothy from Rome, that the couple had left Rome and returned to Ephesus and likely escaped the persecution of Nero. (II Timothy 4:18.)

Unfortunately Paul didn't. Legend has him being beheaded after the fire. He never made it to Spain.

I think that the people Paul greeted in his Letter to Rome are fascinating. He names three distinct House Churches, those of Aquila and Priscilla, Aristobulus, and Narcissus. And note how he singles out Mary, who came to Paul's aid with much labor. There is no mention of who she is for it appears that she needs no introduction.

In my opinion the author of the Gospel of John and the father of the Johannine Literature, was John Mark, a cousin of Jesus. We know he was headed to Ephesus because of Paul's Second Letter to Timothy, who was in Ephesus, from Paul, who was in Rome. (II Timothy 4:11.) Moreover, Legend has it that Mary Magdalene joined John Mark there.

Some even believe that Mary Magdalene was the author of the Gospel of John, and other than John Mark, this seems likely to me. The author describes him/herself as the Beloved Disciple. Gnostic texts state bluntly that Jesus loved Mary more than any others, and the Gospel of Philip states explicitly:

The Sophia whom they call barren is the mother of the angels. And the consort of Christ is Mary Magdalene. The Lord loved Mary more than all the disciples and kissed her on the mouth often.

The others too...they said to him, “Why do you love her more than all of us?”

The Savior answered and said to them, “Why do I not love you like her? A blind man and one who sees, when they are in the darkness the two do not differ from one another. But when the light comes, then he who sees will see the light, and he who is blind will remain in darkness.” – The Gospel of Philip, trns. by R. McL. Wilson (London: A.R.Aray & Co., 1962), chpt.112:55-56.

In my opinion, Jesus is saying that Mary has Seen the Light whereas the other disciples have not and dwell in Darkness. I believe she is given a bad reputation by Epaphroditus in his Gospel of Luke because of Peter’s hostility toward her as a rival. In the Gospels of Mark and Luke, Jesus casts out Seven Demons from her, as if she had been an evil witch prior to being exorcised. (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2.)

Remarkably, in the Gospel of Mary, Jesus gives Mary a Vision after his Resurrection in which he gives her the passwords for the Seven Demons that Guard the Seven Gates to Heaven. (The Gospel of Mary, trns. by Karen L. King (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2003), pp 15-17. However, in the Vision to Mary, Jesus gives her the passwords that help her overcome the Seven Demons, rather than exorcise them.

If one sees this Vision as one of Jesus’ Parables, then there is great truth here that was disregarded by the Jerusalem Church. The Gospel of Mary states clearly that Peter rejected her Vision because Jesus did not give it to him. (Id., p. 17.) It’s also worthy of note that Jesus teaches his disciples about what part of consciousness “Sees” the Vision:

She said, I Saw the Lord in a Vision and said to him, “Lord I Saw you today in a Vision.”

He said to me, “How wonderful you are for not wavering at Seeing me. For where the Mind is, there is the Treasure.”

I said to him, “So, now Lord, does a person who Sees a Vision Seeth with the Soul or with the Spirit?”

The Savior answered, “A person does not See with the Soul or with the Spirit. Rather the Mind, which Exists between these two, Sees the Vision... – (Id., pp.15-16.)

If Mary was present when Paul was in Ephesus, then she might have aided Aquila and Priscilla when they risked their necks for him after his arrest for the riot of the metalworkers. Paul praises her for her labor. What other Mary could she be?

Then, of course, there is Holy Blood and the Holy Grail, by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln (UK: Jonathan Cape;1982), where the authors document the Legend that Mary Magdalene (whose womb allegorically constituted the Holy Grail), arrived sometime after the Resurrection near Marseille, in the south of France, launching the beginning of the Royal French Marovengian Line. This would have been a likely place for Mary to escape from during the Persecution of Christians under the Emperor Nero.

The only mystery then is why Paul left her out of those who had the first Visions of Jesus after his Death and Resurrection in his recitation of the Gospel that he Preached to the Gentiles:

Moreover, brethren, I Declare unto you the Gospel which I Preached unto you, which also ye have Received, and wherein ye Stand:
 By which also ye are Saved, if you Keep in Memory what I have Preached unto you, unless ye have Believed in Vain.
 For I Delivered unto you First of All that which I also Received,
 How that Christ Died for Our Sins according to the Scriptures;
 And that he was Buried, and that he Rose Again the Third Day,
 According to the Scriptures;
 Aand that he was Seen of Cephas [Peter],
 And then of the Twelve:
 After that he was Seen of above five hundred brethren at once;
 Of whom the greater part remain until this Present,
 But some are Fallen Asleep.
 After that he was Seen of James, then of All the Apostles.
 And last of all he was Seen of me also.
 As of one born out of time.
 For I am least of the Apostles,
 That am not meet to be Called an Apostle,
 Because I persecuted the Church of God.
 But by the Grace of God I am what I am.
 – First Corinthians 15:1-10a.

Mary is known as the “Apostle to the Apostles” because she Saw Jesus First after his Resurrection, and then reported her Vision to the Twelve. (John 20:11-18; cf., Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:9-11[the 12 didn’t believe her]; Luke24:1-11 [again she was not believed].) Perhaps it

had to do with the fact that this was against the teaching of the Jerusalem Church. Other than that, we likely will never know for sure.

Rufus was another celebrity at Rome. His father, Simon/Simeon, called Niger, had carried the cross for Jesus before he was crucified. (Mark 15:21; Acts 13:1.) Simon, obviously a black man from Cyrene, was active in the Antioch Fellowship and was among the first to Preach successfully to the Gentiles. (Acts 11:20; 13:1.)

Perhaps the Jews Paul summoned in the account in Acts were from local synagogues and not from the Gentile churches, but that is no reason for Epaphroditus to ignore the House Churches of Rome in his account entirely. He states that Paul spent two active years there, but never mentions a word about his trial.

Had becoming a Christian become so deadly a Belief, that Epaphroditus failed to mention them in order to protect them from Roman persecution? I believe the answer is yes, for the same reason Epaphroditus sought to appease the Jerusalem Church: Fear for the existence of his Church in Philippi during a persecution by the Emperor Nero.

One wonders if he abandoned Paul like Demas, who fled to Thessalonika after All in Asia had forsaken him. (II Timothy 1:15; 4:10.) Epaphroditus was obviously a person of influence in Philippi, and when things turned sour for Paul's case, one can hardly blame him for avoiding being arrested, like he must have done when Paul and Silas were arrested for exorcising the Pythoness in Philippi. (Acts 16:16-24.)

Of course, Epaphroditus was an Evangelist, not a Historian. If he heard a good story that could be used to win souls, he had no hesitation in using it regardless of its truth. The Book of Acts has won millions to the Lord Jesus Christ so I am hesitant to accuse him of anything other than being a grand master storyteller.

Fortunately, we have Paul's letters for correction.

II Addendum to The House of the Forest of Lebanon

UPPER CHAMBERS IN THE HOUSE OF ASHERAH

And it was covered with Cedar above upon the beams, that lay on forty five pillars, fifteen in a row. – I Kings 7:3 (KJV)

And it was covered with Cedar above the Chambers that were upon the forty five pillars, fifteen in a row. – I Kings 7:3 (RSV)

After finishing the original article I came across the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of I Kings 7:3, and found that they translated the word translated in the KJV as “beams,” as “chambers.” As it turns out the same Hebrew word was used for the side chambers and Middle Chamber in the House of YHWH account. (I Kings 6:5, 8.)

The Hebrew word here is tsela, which has several meanings, two of which are in the KJV and RSV. (Strong's, #6763.) In my opinion, “chambers” makes more sense since this is a House of Asherah and chambers would be necessary in order to conduct business.

We are not told the height of the cedar pillars and because the House was 30 cubits high made of costly stone, and depending how many stories of chambers there existed, one can create several scenarios, any of which could be correct. For example, the pillars could be 15 cubits high (about 23 feet tall), with three stories of five cubits each, the same height as the Middle Chamber in the House of YHWH, and for the same purposes: Initiation, Dream Divination, and Hieros Gamos.

This would fit with the three rows of windows on each side of the House, providing interior lighting for the chambers. The square doors would be on the ground floor along with the entrance, and could provide sufficient light within the Hall. (I Kings 7:4-5.) We would thus be free to place stairs and corridors wherever we wished.

This could be tweaked for only one story of chambers on top of pillars 25 cubits tall, but I believe the three stories is the most likely and fits the description we find in the Song of Solomon, a Song of Hieros Gamos:

Behold, thou art Fair, my Beloved,
 Yea, Pleasant; also our Bed is Green.
 The Beams of our House are Cedar,
 And our Rafters of Fir....

He brought me to the Banqueting House,
 And his Banner over me was Love.
 Stay me with Flagons,
 Comfort me with Apples:
 For I am Sick of Love.

His left hand is under my head,
 And his right hand doth Embrace me.
 I Charge you, O ye Daughters of Jerusalem,
 By the Roes, and by the Hinds of the Field,
 That ye stir not up, nor awake my Love,
 Till he Please....

The Watchmen that go about the City found me:
 To whom I said, Saw ye him whom my Soul Loveth?
 It was but a little that I passed from them,
 But I found him whom my Soul Loveth;
 I held him and would not let him go,
 Until I had brought him unto my Mother's House,
 And into the Chamber of her that conceived me...

King Solomon made himself a Chariot
 Of the Wood of Lebanon.
 He made the Pillars thereof of Silver,
 The Bottom thereof of Gold,
 The Covering of it of Purple,
 The midst thereof being Paved with Love,
 For the Daughters of Jerusalem.

Go forth O ye Daughters of Zion,
 And behold King Solomon,
 With the Crown wherewith
 His Mother Crowned him
 In the Day of his Espousals,
 And in the Day of the
 Gladness of his Heart.

Behold, thou art fair, my love;
 Behold, thou art fair;
 Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks:
 Thy hair is like a flock of goats.
 That appear from Mount Gilead.

Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep
 That are even shorn,
 Which came up from the washing;
 Whereof every one bear twins,
 And none is barren among them.
 Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet;
 And thy speech is comely.
 Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate
 Within thy locks.
 Thy neck is like the Tower of David
 Builded for an Armoury,
 Whereon they hang a thousand Bucklers,
 All shields of Mighty Men.
 Thy two breasts are like two young Roes
 That are twins,
 That feed among the Lilies.
 Until the day break,
 And the shadows flee away,
 I will get me to the Mountain of Myrrh,
 And to the Hill of Frankincense.

Thou art all fair, my love,
 There is no spot in thee.
 Come with me from Lebanon, my Spouse,
 With me from Lebanon:
 Look from the top of Amana,
 From the top of Shenir and Hermon,
 From the lion's dens,
 From the Mountains of the Leopards.
 Thou hast ravished my heart,
 My sister, my Spouse,
 Thou hast ravished my heart
 With one of thine eyes,
 With one chain of thy neck.

 How fair is thy love,
 My sister, my Spouse!
 How much better is thy love than wine!
 And the smell of thine ointments
 Than all Spices!
 Thy lips, O my Spouse,
 Drop as the Honeycomb:
 Honey and Milk are under thy tongue;
 And the smell of thy garments
 Is like the smell of Lebanon.

A Garden enclosed is my sister, my Spouse:
 A Spring shut up, a Fountain sealed.
 Thy Plants are an Orchard of Pomegranates,
 With Pleasant Fruits,
 Camphire, with Spikenard,
 Spikenard and Saffron,
 Calamus and Cinnamon,
 With all trees of Frankincense;
 Myrrh and Aloes,
 With all the Chief Spices:
 A Fountain of Gardens,
 A Well of Living Waters,
 And Streams from Lebanon.

Awake, O North Wind,
 And Come, thou South:
 Blow upon my Garden,
 That the Spices thereof may Flow Out.
 Let my Beloved Come into his Garden,
 And Eat his Pleasant Fruits.

I am come into my Gardem,
 My sister, my Spouse:
 I have gathered my Myrrh with my Spice;
 I have Eaten my Honeycomb with my Honey;
 I have Drunk my Wine with my Milk:
 Eat, O friends; Drink, yea,
 Drink abundantly, O Beloved.

My Beloved is white and ruddy,
 The Chiefest among Ten Thousand.
 His head is as the Most Fine Gold,
 His locks are bushy,
 And black as a Raven.
 His eyes are as the eyes of Doves
 By the Rivers of Waters,
 Washed with Milk,
 And Fitly Set.
 His cheeks are as a Bed of Spices,
 As Sweet Flowers:
 His lips like Lilies,
 Dropping Sweet Smelling Myrrh.
 His hands are as Gold Rings,
 Set with the Beryl:
 His belly is as Bright Ivory
 Overlaid with Sapphires.
 His legs are as Pillars of Marble,
 Set upon Sockets of Fine Gold.:
 His countenance is as Lebanon,
 Excellent as the Cedars.

His mouth is Most Sweet,
Yea, he is Altogether Lovely.

This is my Beloved,
And this is my Friend,
O Daughters of Jerusalem.

Whither is my Beloved gone,
O thou Fairest among Women?
Whither is my Beloved turned aside?
That we may seek him with thee?

My Beloved is gone down into his Garden,
To the Beds of Spices,
To Feed in the Gardens,
And to gather Lilies.

I am my Beloved's
And my Beloved's is mine:
He Feedeth among the Lilies.

– Song of Solomon 1:16-17; 2:4-7; 3:3-5, 9-11; 4:1–5:1, 10–6:3

It only takes a little imagination to see the Daughters of Jerusalem/Zion as Priestesses of the Mother Fertility Goddess Asherah, YHWH's Wife; and the Banqueting House as the House of the Forest of Lebanon:

And all King Solomon's Drinking Vessels were of Gold, and all the Vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of Pure Gold; none were of Silver: it was nothing accounted of in the Days of Solomon. – I Kings 10:21

And when the Queen of Sheba had seen all King Solomon's Wisdom, and the House [of the Forest of Lebanon] that he had built, and the Meat of his Table, and the Sitting of his Servants, and the Attendance of his Ministers, and their Apparel, and his Cupbearers, and his Ascent [Spiral Staircase] by which he went up unto the House of YHWH, she was Breathless. – (I Kings 10:4-5.)

Upper Chambers would be a necessary location for the Priestesses and their function and I believe that this was so. Also on display were golden weapons of war, and it no coincidence that Asherah was also the Goddess of War:

And King Solomon made Two Hundred Targets of Beaten Gold: six hundred Shekels of Gold went to one target. And he made three hundred Shields of Beaten Gold: three pounds of Gold went to one Shield: and the King put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. – I Kings 10:16-17

This aspect is further bolstered by the fact that both the heads and armor of King Saul and the Giant Goliath were dedicated as war trophies to Ashtaroth by the Philistines (Ashtaroth was a Philistine equivalent of the Israelite Asherah), and to what we assume was the Shrine to Asherah in the El Elyon Shrine in Jerusalem by David, who kept the armor to himself:

And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in Mount Gilboa.

And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armor, and sent into the Land of the Philistines round about, to Publish it in the House of their Idols, and among the people,

And they put his armor in the House of Ashtaroth; and they fastened his body to the Wall of Beth-shan. – I Samuel 31:8-10

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him: but there was no sword in the hand of David.

Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith...

And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armor in his tent. – I Samuel 17:50-51, 54

At the time David slew Goliath Jerusalem, the Citadel/Fortress/Castle known as Zion, was in the hands and authority of the Jebusites. (II Samuel 5:7; Psalm 76:2.) The fact that David took the head to Jerusalem meant that he had some kind of special relationship with the Shrine of El Elyon located there since the days of Abram and Melchizedek, especially if his father, Jesse, a Prince of Judah, had a sheep sacrifice contract with the Shrine and his mother was the High Priestess of Asherah there, from whom his father engaged in Hieros Gamos. (Genesis 14:17-24.)

III

Addendum B to Epaphroditus: The Man of Macedonia

A SECRET READING OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

In my opinion there were many times in the Book of Acts where the author, Epaphroditus in my opinion, gave subtle hints that what was in the Book was not always the truth. The Book was originally crafted to be Volume Two of a Two Volume History of Jesus and the creation of his Church, and was originally directed at an audience of one person, Theophilus, likely a Roman

official in Philippi either interested in the history of Early Christianity or who feared it posed a threat to the Roman Empire. Philippi was a Roman Colony.

Likely composed during the reign of Nero, it sought to smooth out the contrary gospels preached by the Church of Jerusalem and the Apostle Paul. There are times when Epaphroditus tells obvious lies fabricated by the Jerusalem Church to explain the Ministry of Paul, as if Paul had been one of their members.

For example, he tells the story of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus three different times, and each time differently. In the first two versions Ananias, a Believer in Damascus, relays God's mission to Paul through the laying on of hands and the receiving of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 9:8-19; 22:1-16.) Why would Epaphroditus intentionally do this? Bad memory?

No, I believe he did it so one can read the Book Secretly. The first two versions are works of the Jerusalem Church, to show that Paul was always under the authority of one of the churches that the Jerusalem Church had recognized: Antioch for an example. However, the third version is one that lines up with what Paul says about his conversion: that he conferred not with Flesh and Blood immediately afterward, but received his Mission independently at that time from the Lord himself, then went into Arabia. (Acts 26:9-18; Galatians 1:11-17.)

Paul says nothing about the Damascus Road. In other words, Paul's Revelation was totally independent of the Church in Jerusalem, which is why I call the so-called "First Jerusalem Council," the "Circumcision Summit" instead: a meeting between equals. How many more Hints of Secrets can we find in the Book?

Hint #1 is so obvious one tends to overlook it. The ending of his First Volume, the Gospel of Luke, differs stunningly from the beginning of his Second Volume, the Book of Acts.

His Gospel ends on the same day as the Resurrection, Sunday evening, with Jesus Ascending at the end into Heaven like Superman. (Luke 24:1-53.) However, the Book of Acts

begins with a totally different story. (Acts 1:1-11.) There must have been a competition for secrets revealed in revelations among the early churches, for now Jesus remains on Earth after his Resurrection for 40 days before Ascending into Heaven, where he teaches his disciples in secret.

This ensures the original members of the Jerusalem Church would always be kept current with any new developments in the churches, for any new revelation can thus be claimed to have been already revealed to the 12 in the forty days Jesus remained with them in Jerusalem before he Ascended. I believe James, the Lord's half brother, concocted this scheme when he was the King of the Kingdom of God on Earth in Jerusalem, aka the Jerusalem Church. (James 1:1.)

Which leads us to Hint #2, the death of Judas and the appointment of Matthias to replace him, under a teaching that Jesus intended his so called 12 Apostles to be the Leaders of his Church on Earth. If one compares the death of Judas in the Gospel of Matthew with the Book of Acts, one finds that in no way can they be reconciled. (Matthew 27:3; Acts 1:15-19.) Both versions cannot be true. Of course, both versions can be false, but if one is true the other is self evidently false.

What could Epaphroditus be secretly telling his reader? A good guess would be that the Jerusalem Church Leaders murdered Judas as a traitor, period. Judas may have had a good argument that it was necessary for him to betray Jesus in order to fulfill the Prophecy that Jesus' best friend would betray him:

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. – Psalm 41:9

Unfortunately, the blood-thirsty 12 Apostles, likely the former bodyguards of Jesus, didn't perceive it that way. They, the Violent, had taken the Kingdom of God by Force, and would have seen its betrayal as a terrible tragic loss for them of a physical Kingdom on Earth where they would have been the Rulers. (Matthew 11:12.) And, lo and behold, they ended up being Rulers of a physical Church with all of its financial privileges anyway.

Already, Epaphroditus has revealed to us that he is an unreliable narrator and that the reader is wise to take everything he says with a grain of salt. We can now see how the Hints provide us that possess the Holy Spirit with a Secret Reading of his work.

Hint #3 would be the Giving of the Spirit on Pentecost, fifty days later after the Resurrection, whereas the Gospel of John tells us that Jesus Gave the Holy Spirit to several disciples on Resurrection Sunday evening. (Acts 2:1-4; John 20:19-23.) It is to be noted that Pentecost was celebrated more as the anniversary of the Giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, than a first fruits event. The Spirit that fell on the people on Pentecost was the Spirit of the Law, not the Spirit of the Lord, where there is Liberty.

Hint #4 would be the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, a well-to-do couple in Jerusalem who owned property. (Acts 5:1-11.) The story is told as a “Theatre of the Absurd,” with the couple dying on the spot from what we assume were heart attacks because they lied to the Holy Spirit. F.F. Bruce emphasizes the radicalness of this judgment by comparing it to a similar situation in the Dead Sea Scrolls Qumran Rule: “One year’s exclusion from the common meal and the docking of rations by one-fourth.” (New Testament History, F.F. Bruce (Anchor Books: Garden City, Doubleday, p.211; 1969, 1972.)

Epaphroditus reveals that both he and Theophilus are Gentiles in that he completely ignores the Mosaic Laws concerning dead bodies and the ritual that had to be performed seven days after contamination with one. (Numbers 19:11-18.) The humor in the story is in order to deflect from the fact that Peter had both Ananias and Sapphira murdered by a gang of young thugs for lying and keeping money from him. If we are keeping an Early Church body count, that makes three.

Hint #5 would be the creation of the 7 Deacons and their Ministry. It is clear that this was a separate group of Jews who spoke mainly Greek and used the Greek Bible, the Septuagint, in their worship and that they were not being treated equally. In fact, apparently Peter had made

a deal with Gamaliel on the Jewish Council to persecute the Greek Speaking Jews which were either banished or rounded up and murdered by Paul, Gamaliel's hit man. (Acts 5:34-39; 8:1.)

After being expelled, many of them started churches elsewhere and for the Jerusalem Church to bring them under its wing, lesser positions of authority, table waiters, was allegedly granted to them. Nicolas of Antioch, a Proselyte, was allegedly the Seventh Deacon, but his role as an Apostle of the Antioch Fellowship is vividly displayed in stark contrast to the Jerusalem Church in his Leadership of the Nicolaitans and their influence on the Churches in Asia established by the Apostle John. (Acts 6:1-5; Revelation 2-3.) Philip was also one of the alleged Deacons who established independent churches in Samaria and Caesarea, stolen by Peter for the Jerusalem Church. (Acts 6:5; 8:5-40.)

I am not going to mention all of the Hints in the pages that follow, but there are many, like never mentioning Paul's Fellow Soldier, Titus, whose foreskin had been on the chopping block at the Circumcision Summit; or Paul's Collection for the Poor Saints in Jerusalem as part of his handshake deal with James, Peter, and John at the Summit, that Paul would go to the Gentiles in the same way Peter had gone to the Jews, with Paul not forgetting the Poor in Jerusalem. (Galatians 2:1-10.)

The same goes for the failure to inform us of Paul's Mission to Crete, or his incarceration in Ephesus for the riot of metalworkers. Like I said, Epaphroditus was a grand master storyteller, but an unreliable narrator, and we should never expect his version of the Early Church to be set in stone.

But I'm sure he would have wanted it that way.