

## ERASTUS OF CORINTH

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LAST year at the meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature I called attention to a recently discovered inscription which contained a rare New Testament word.<sup>1</sup> The object of this note is to bring to the notice of Biblical scholars an inscription which may refer to a New Testament character. Though the inscription was found on April 15, 1929, and has been noticed in some archaeological reviews, it has not so far I believe been presented to the theological reading public.<sup>2</sup>

The inscription was found by members of the American School expedition at Corinth near the recently uncovered theatre where a street to the northeast enters a square. A long paving block of limestone was cut for letters presumably of bronze. In some cases the lead intended to hold the letters in place can still be seen. The stone is nearly 7½ feet long, originally perhaps a little longer, but

<sup>1</sup> See *Zeitschrift für die N. T. Wissenschaft*, xxix. (1930) pp. 60ff. "Θεαρπίζω No Longer a N. T. Hapax Legomenon."

<sup>2</sup> The fullest discussion is "Erastus, Oikonomos van Korinthe en Vriend van St. Paulus" (with plate) by Dr. F. J. de Waele in *Mededeelingen van het Nederlandsch Historisch Instituut te Rome* ix. (1929) pp. 40—88. See also A. M. Woodward in *The Year's Work in Classical Studies, 1928—1929*, p. 110 and in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xlix. (1929) p. 221. T. L. Shear, *The London Illustrated News*, clxxv. (Aug. 17, 1929) p. 286 and "Excavations in the Theatre District and Tombs of Corinth in 1929" (with plate) in *American Journal of Archaeology*, xxxiii. (1919) pp. 525f. S. R[einach] notices de Waele in *Revue Archéologique*, xxxi. (1930) pp. 194f. The latest discussion to come to my attention is by A. G. Roos in *Mnemosyne*, lviii. (1930) pp. 160—165.

the letters<sup>3</sup> in two lines are all clearly preserved. The inscription reads as follows:

ERASTVS · PRO · AED  
S · P · STRAVIT

I spoke of this as a possible reference to a New Testament character. It was so hailed by its discoverers. I emphasize the purely conjectural nature of the identification since it is inevitable that conjectures are soon taken as certainties, what is first called possible is called probable, and I do not wish to be responsible for such unjustified assumption. Mere curiosity and interest in the Bible stories, quite apart from the apologetic desires that so often grasp at the vaguest archaeological contact as verification of scripture, make only too easy a translation of mere hypothesis into the assured commonplaces of the popular commentary. One recalls how Justin Martyr thought an inscription on the Tiber at Rome, since recovered, to the Sabine god SEMONI SANCO was evidence that the Samaritan Simon Magus was worshipped in Rome and how this false identification was repeated by Tertullian, Irenaeus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius, Theodoret and others.<sup>4</sup> It is best to set forth what at present seem to be the available facts about the Biblical and the epigraphical Erastus and to leave to others to decide how much or how little probability there is that they are the same. This involves a comparison in the four points — of name, date, place, and station.

The name Erastus<sup>5</sup> appears three times in the New Testament, —

<sup>3</sup> The letters are between six and seven inches high.

<sup>4</sup> The references are CIL VI. 567 (found in 1574 A. D.); Justin, *Apology* xxvi. 2 (quoted with approval in Eusebius, *H. E.* ii. 13, 3), lvi 2; Irenaeus, *Haer.* i. 23 § 1; Tertullian, *Apologeticus* 13; *Clem. Recogn.* ii. 9; Augustine, *De haer.* 1; Cyril, *Catech.* vi. 14; Epiphanius, *Adv. haeres.* 21; Theodoret, *Fab. haeret.* I. 1. The silence of Hippolytus (*Philosoph.* vi. 15) on this point is striking.

<sup>5</sup> The fullest discussion of the Erastus in the New Testament that I know is in Franz X. Pözl, *Die Mitarbeiter des Weltapostels Paulus*, Regensburg, 1911, chap. xxxii. pp. 263—269. The English books on the like subject by

in Romans, 2 Timothy and in Acts. The fullest and most secure testimony is that of Romans. It contains the sentence (16 23) ἀσπάζεταιται ὑμᾶς Ἐραστός ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως καὶ Κούαρτος ὁ ἀδελφός. The authorship of the passage is unquestioned. It is a genuine writing of Paul. The uncertainty affects rather the addressees (ὑμᾶς), since a widespread and quite plausible theory regards this chapter not as part of a letter to Rome but as a separate letter introducing Phoebe of Cenchreae and addressed to Ephesus.

A second passage is in 2 Timothy 4 20 Ἐραστός ἔμεινεν ἐν Κορίνθῳ, Τρόφιμον δὲ ἀπέλειπον ἐν Μιλήτῳ ἀσθενούντα. The authorship of the Pastorals is of course an open question. If they are genuine this passage must be assigned to Paul though at a date later than his other extant letters and than the events of his life narrated in Acts. Even if the Pastoral Epistles are not as they stand genuine they may have some genuine parts among which this section of 2 Timothy has an excellent claim to be included.

The third passage is Acts 19 21f. In the midst of the historian's account of Paul's stay in Ephesus, apparently after two years of it but before the episode stirred up by the silversmiths, we read that Paul intending himself to go into Macedonia and Achaia, "sending into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus (δύο τῶν διακονούντων αὐτῷ, Τιμόθεον καὶ Ἐραστον), remained himself for a time in Asia."

It is obvious that we have before us not merely the problem of identification between one Erastus in the New Testament and one on an inscription. The identity of the three Erasti in the New Testament references is not certain and must not be finally assumed. Here again Christian tradition has always had its own special tendency. In such instances it identifies all persons of the same name if possible. Certainly it is possible to regard the Erastus as referred to these three times as the same person. He is in each case a friend of Paul, in each case he is an associate of Timothy also. At least he is spoken of to Timothy in the letter that bears the

latter's name, his greeting in Romans follows one from Timothy, while in Acts he and Timothy are sent on a joint mission. This mission follows work at Ephesus and starts from Ephesus. The two references in the Pauline letters also may bring Erastus into connection with Ephesus. That his greeting in Romans was being sent to Ephesian Christians has already been suggested. 2 Timothy traditionally was addressed to Ephesus and if it is to be taken as a whole it is no doubt easiest to regard Ephesus as its destination. If on the other hand it be regarded as including genuine fragments there is perhaps fully as good reason for thinking that its immediate context points to Ephesus. It greets for example as does Romans 16 the Christian couple Prisca and Aquila.

But Corinth as well as Ephesus seems to be associated each time with the Biblical Erastus. 2 Timothy, whatever uncertainty we may otherwise feel about it, says explicitly: "Erastus remained in Corinth." Romans 16 when accepted in its present context is best regarded as part of a letter written from Corinth. Paul seems to be about to sail for Palestine with the collection contributed in Macedonia and Achaia. If Romans 16 is a separate letter it also is best understood as written in Achaia. The lady it introduces is Phoebe of Cenchreae, the harbor city of Corinth. And Erastus the *οἰκονόμος* of the city is usually accepted as an office holder in Corinth itself. Acts alone does not bring Erastus to Corinth, but it says that he was sent to Macedonia, and it is altogether likely that he either went by way of Corinth or else reaching Macedonia first came on later to Corinth. The latter was the intended route of Paul himself. And it would seem likely that at least Timothy was expected to go to Corinth. Such an expectation is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 4 17; 16 10 and these passages are usually brought into connection with Acts 19 22.<sup>6</sup>

We are now perhaps ready to bring into comparison with the Erastus or Erasti of the New Testament the Erastus of the inscription. The date of the New Testament references is pretty definitely

<sup>6</sup> See K. Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, 1911, pp. 134f.; G. S. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry*, 1930, pp. 79f., 192, *et al.* On the other side T. Zahn, *Introduction to N. T.* (Eng. trans. 1909) ii. p. 14f.

fixed. Paul's first visit to Corinth and the founding of the church there occurred, as the Delphi inscription about Gallio makes plain, in the early fifties of the first century. The book of Acts mentions also a later visit which must be still within the same decade. This later visit is the occasion to which Romans is usually referred and with it the mention of Erastus the *οἰκονόμος* of the city. Between these two visits occurred also the sending of Erastus and Timothy from Ephesus into Europe mentioned in Acts as well as a visit or visits of Paul to Corinth implied in the epistles but unmentioned in Acts. It is of course possible that the references to Erastus both in Romans and in 2 Timothy belong to this interval,—if we regard the references in these two letters as fragments of epistles now woven into new contexts. All three New Testament references can thus be put within the sixth decade. Even if the Pastoral Epistles be accepted as wholly genuine they can be dated at latest in the next decade, and still within the reign of Nero.

The date of the inscription is less easily fixed. The forms of the letters are the principal clue, but a clue that is quite subjective. Few persons are qualified to express a judgment on this point. The first publishers of the inscription inclined to date it in the second half of the first century. Others who have examined it think the letters point to a later date. A *terminus ad quem* seems to be fixed by the fact that the stone has been moved and was used in the repairing of the pavement which took place about the middle of the second century. The original inscription is therefore older than that, but whether one generation older or more cannot be determined.

There can be little doubt as to the like local connection of the Biblical and epigraphic persons. Erastus the *οἰκονόμος* of the city almost certainly means Corinth and the other New Testament references are compatible with Corinthian associations, as we have already said. While the inscription is not now exactly *in situ*, there is no doubt that it also refers to a Corinthian.

The rank and station of the Erastus mentioned should also be compared. The Erastus of Romans is called *ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως*. Though various other alternatives have been proposed this was

apparently a municipal office.<sup>7</sup> I am not aware that it is mentioned anywhere else in literature but inscriptions have been found from several cities with the same title. This epigraphic evidence has been all but completely ignored in New Testament commentaries and dictionaries but it was thoroughly collected and studied twenty years ago by Peter Landvogt.<sup>8</sup> I shall summarize his evidence.

The word *οἰκονόμος*, usually translated "steward" but probably as general as our modern word "manager," is found in inscriptions in many uses. Originally and always it could be used of an employee or slave of an individual private citizen. The Hellenistic kings employed their servants in this capacity, often for positions of supreme importance over large areas of territory. The term is found also under the Roman emperors though apparently it was not a position of so much power and was held by slaves or freedmen.

In contrast with the *οἰκονόμος* of the sovereign is the *οἰκονόμος* of a group. He is the appointee of a provincial religious commune—as of the *κοινόν* of Asia, — or of an association of Dionysiac artists, or of a tribe within a city, of a group of villages or of the city senate. It is also used of a city official. It is this last use which concerns us here.

The instances of this use are found especially in Asia Minor. Sometimes we get as in Paul's epistle the exact phrase *οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως*, sometimes the city name is added (in the genitive plural), sometimes the citizen's name is used without *πόλεως*. At other times the context alone makes plain that a city official is meant, rather than a private or imperial steward or an officer of some civic college or association.

<sup>7</sup> There is inscriptional evidence, though the dissertation by Landvogt to be mentioned presently intentionally omits it, of *οἰκονόμος* as the name of an ecclesiastical official. The evidence is, however, from later centuries. Pseudo-Dorotheus and the Greek menologies accepting this meaning and applying *πόλεως* of Romans 16 23 to the early capital of Christianity call Erastus *oeconomus ecclesiae Hierosolymitanae*.

<sup>8</sup> *Epigraphische Untersuchungen über den οἰκονόμος: ein Beitrag zum hellenistischen Beamtenwesen*. Diss. Strassburg, 1908.

The places involved with the dates so far as they can be given include the following:<sup>9</sup>

The island of Cos, two sepulchral inscriptions judged by the writing to be of late date (i. e. Roman era),<sup>10</sup> Chalcedon of Bithynia, a sepulchral inscription for Διονύσιος, οἰκονόμος Καλχηδονίων (date unknown),<sup>11</sup> Philadelphia in Lydia, an inscription refers to Antonius (probably then in the time of the empire), the οἰκονόμος of the city, as having taken charge of the erection of a statue or stele or something of the sort,<sup>12</sup> Smyrna, two lists from about 200 A. D. of municipal officers including simply the title οἰκονόμος,<sup>13</sup> Magnesia, nine inscriptions of the second century B. C. or somewhat later dealing with οἰκονόμοι as a college of officials always mentioned in the plural,<sup>14</sup> Priene, ten inscriptions from the fourth to first century B. C. referring to οἰκονόμοι or more often to ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως<sup>15</sup> "whoever he may then be,"<sup>16</sup> Stratonicea, an inscription of the later empire since the city directs its οἰκονόμος to ask whether the baneful barbarians will attack the city or country that year,<sup>17</sup> an inscription from Hierapolis of unknown date in which two οἰκονόμοι τῆς πόλεως are named as having charge of

<sup>9</sup> A partial list already in W. Liebenam, *Städteverwaltung im römischen Kaiserreiche*, 1900, p. 295, note 6.

<sup>10</sup> W. R. Paton and E. L. Hicks, *The Inscriptions of Cos* 1891, 308 (= CIG 2512) Διονυσίου πόλεως Κώων οἰκονόμου; 310 Φιλίππου οἰκονόμου τῆς Κώων πόλεως οἰκον[ο]μήσαντος ἔτη κγ ἀμέμπ[τ]ως. See Hicks' note on the term, *op. cit.* p. xxxvi: "The οἰκονόμος was (as elsewhere) a public slave, and his duties quite subordinate." The first of these (as published in Dittenberger, *Sylloge*<sup>3</sup> 1252) is the only epigraphic evidence cited in Preuschen-Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum N. T.*, s. v.

<sup>11</sup> CIG 3793.

<sup>12</sup> *Bulletin de corr. hell.* i. (1877) p. 84 ἐπιμεληθέντος τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ τῆς πόλεως οἰκονόμου Ἀντωνίου.

<sup>13</sup> CIG 3151, 3162.

<sup>14</sup> O. Kern, *Inschriften von Magnesia*, 1900, 12, 89, 94, 97, 98, 99, 100a, 101, 103.

<sup>15</sup> Also ὁ μέλλων οἰκονομεῖν, which may mean oeconomus elect.

<sup>16</sup> Hiller von Gaertringen, *Inschriften von Priene*, 1906, 6, 18, 83, 99, 107, 108, 109, 115, 117, 119.

<sup>17</sup> CIG 2717.

the erection of a statue,<sup>18</sup> another inscription from somewhere in Phrygia in which Amerimnos *οικονόμος τῆς πόλεως* commemorates a vow to the Mother of the Gods,<sup>19</sup> Olbia(?) of Thrace, an inscription of the close of the second century B. C. mentioning the *οικονόμοι* and their funds available for erecting a *τελαμών* or sculptured pillar.<sup>20</sup>

No apology is needed for giving so fully the above list. The pamphlet of Landvogt is rare and not easy of access and the New Testament helps give no clue to the wealth of epigraphic material on the *οικονόμος πόλεως*.

If Paul's use of the term referred to a free city of Asia Minor or belonged before the Roman period we should have to regard Erastus as a man of some position. For it was indeed an office of honor. The incumbent (in some cases there was a group or college of them) usually held office for a year. His duties consisted in having votes inscribed on steles or having steles or statues erected. Other duties ascribed to him are to disburse the funds required for these and similar public honorary awards. He is in general a financial officer but less than the *ταμίαις*<sup>21</sup> concerns himself exclusively with the cashier side of the public funds.

But the term *οικονόμος τῆς πόλεως* of Romans 16 23 is not from the Hellenistic environment but is from Corinth in the reign of Nero or Claudius. Two centuries earlier the "eye of Greece" had met unparalleled destruction at the hands of Mummius and one century before<sup>22</sup> a new city was founded by Julius Caesar, a Roman colony *Colonia Laus Julia Corinthus* composed of Roman soldiers and freedmen. We should therefore expect to learn the meaning of *οικονόμος* from its later usage, and if possible from Roman municipal organization.

<sup>18</sup> Judeich, *Altertümer von Hierapolis*, No. 35.

<sup>19</sup> CIG 6837. This inscription was cited from J. Spon by Wettstein on Rom. 16 23.

<sup>20</sup> Michel, *Recueil d'Inscriptions grecques*, 1900, No. 328, line 41 = Dittenberger, *Sylloge*<sup>3</sup> 707.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Landvogt, *op. cit.*, p. 19 ff.

<sup>22</sup> The exact year of founding the colony is not certain.



With regard to the term *οικονόμος* even in many Greek cities it is to be observed that it rapidly lost its suggestion of social standing. At least such general statements are made about the word,<sup>23</sup> and the evidence so far as available to Landvogt substantiates it. The term is used now of an imperial agent of rather humble financial duties almost always of "Caesar's household." As a city officer, instead of being a freedman and a citizen, he often, if not always, comes from the slave class. Thus an inscription from Nicomedia in Bithynia<sup>24</sup> refers to a Gaius son of Trypho who was an *οικονόμος* and evidently formerly a public slave since the inscription speaks of him as manumitted by his masters the citizens.<sup>25</sup> In the same way at Sparta, a city much closer to Corinth, mention is made in a list of city officers of *Φιλοδέσποτος οικονόμος*<sup>26</sup> while a second inscription mentions the same Philodespotos as a *δημόσιος* or public slave.<sup>27</sup>

If, however, an *οικονόμος* at Corinth is really a city official one would expect him to correspond to some Latin office. What would that be? The bilingual inscriptions that mention *οικονόμος* seem to use the term of a private employee or servant rather than a public officer. Therefore the Latin equivalents *vilicus*,<sup>28</sup> *dispensator*,<sup>29</sup> *actor*<sup>30</sup> probably do not suggest the correct Latin title for

<sup>23</sup> So for example the papyri of Egypt. Cf. Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, p. 443.

<sup>24</sup> CIG 3777.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* line 18 *τετιμημένος δὲ καὶ ἐλευθε[ρία] παρὰ τῶν κυρίων μου φιλοθρώπων πολειτῶν.*

<sup>26</sup> CIG 1276.

<sup>27</sup> CIG 1239. Cf. W. Vischer, *Kleine Schriften*, 1878, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> CIG 963 = CIA III. 1446 = CIL III. 555 (Athens) where an officer in charge of income from the five per cent tax on emancipation of slaves is called in Greek *εἰκοστῆς ἐλευθερίας ἰκονόμος*, in Latin xx. *lib(ertatis) vi(li)cus*. CIL III. 447 (Miletus) where another tax officer is named by the same Greek and Latin.

<sup>29</sup> CIG 3738 = CIL III. 333 of a slave of the imperial household at Cius who served as *οικονόμος ἐπὶ τοῦ σείτου* or *dispensator* [*ad*] *frumentum*.

<sup>30</sup> CIG 5875a<sup>2</sup> Add = IG XIV. 688 = Cagnat, *Inscr. Gr. ad Res. Rom.* 464. Cf. CIL IX. 425 where a private officer in Apollonia of Phrygia is called *οικονόμος* or *actor*.

an *οικονόμος πόλεως* and indeed they are all Latin terms used of agents of the emperors or of private persons rather than of municipal appointees.

The term used in the Vulgate, however, is *arcarius*.<sup>31</sup> This is a well known Latin official term. Often it is given in the form *arcarius rei publicae*. And it is not impossible that Paul's *οικονόμος τῆς πόλεως* translates that fuller Latin term. No objection can be raised to the translation of *res publica* by *πόλις*. That Latin term defied Greek rendering.<sup>32</sup> Nor is it strange if the Vulgate retranslates the Greek into *arcarius civitatis*. On the whole then Erastus mentioned by Paul may well be regarded as an *arcarius* or *arcarius rei publicae*.

Socially the status of such a person corresponded to what we have described as the status of the *οικονόμος* in the Roman era. The *arcarius* was invariably a slave or of servile origin, though he may often have been wealthy. The office like that of *οικονόμος* was not for a short specified term but continued without reappointment for years.

The longer phrase *arcarius rei publicae* often is used of municipal government.<sup>33</sup> The incumbent is listed among the public *familia*,

<sup>31</sup> There is no variant (except in spelling) noted by Wordsworth and White *ad loc.*, which is likely to be traced to Old Latin sources. 'Ambrosiaster' used *dispensator* and Codex Boernerianus (*g*) of the ninth century reads *arcarius vel dispensator*. In Pelagius *dispensator* has become attached to the name of Quartus later in the verse.

<sup>32</sup> Seven occurrences in the *Monumentum Ancyranum* receive four different Greek renderings besides being twice omitted. No doubt theoretically the Greek equivalent of *res publica* is *πολιτεία* (Pauly-Wissowa, 2. Reihe I. 636) but practically it was *πόλις*. Unfortunately David Magie's useful book *De Romanorum iuris publici sacrique vocabulis sollemnibus in Graecum sermonem conversis* fails us for both *arcarius* and *res publica*.

<sup>33</sup> W. Liebenam, *op. cit.*, p. 296 note 3, following Mommsen, e. g. CIL IX. p. 787, X. p. 1155) remarks that in the first centuries of the Empire *res publica* indicated not the *populus* but the *patrimonium populi*, — hence the addition of *rei publicae* to officers of the exchequer, quaestor, curator, scriba, actor, servus, arcarius, etc. According to the list in E. Ruggiero, *Dizionario Epigrafico*, I. p. 634 such *arcarii* are with one possible exception (a freedman, CIL XI. 3780) slaves of the *familia publica*.

and is sometimes described as *servus arcarius*. In the longest list of cases available from inscriptions<sup>34</sup> many of the towns where the office occurs were colonies. For Corinth itself there appears to be no inscriptional evidence, but that is not decisive against the view that Paul's friend at Corinth was *arcarius rei publicae*.

We have now to consider the standing of the Erastus mentioned in the inscription. Unfortunately it is not quite certain that the name there is complete. It is possible that the lines each extended farther to the left.<sup>35</sup> In that case a Roman nomen and cognomen might well have been indicated for Erastus and the question of his Roman citizenship would be settled. The absence of such evidence is far from decisive. But even so, Greek names as cognomina often indicate that the bearer is a freedman, and certain Greek names or the Latin equivalents of similar formation to the verbal Erastus are particularly common of slaves. I may mention as examples Optatus and Epainetus. In a Greek city Erastus would indeed be often a free citizen. But the old Corinthian Greek stock was completely exterminated or reduced to slavery by Mummius. If Erastus appears in later Corinth as a simple Greek name it belongs to a foreigner rather than to a citizen. The absence of patronymic genitive for the father does not in cases like this always exclude free

<sup>34</sup> See the full list in Geo. N. Olcott, *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae Epigraphicae*, Vol. I., Rome, 1904, pp. 438f. CIL V. 8818 *Sagaris, Alcimi Aug(usti) vern(ae) ark(ari) vic(arius)* assigned to Altinum probably belongs to Corinth (see CIL III. 7268) but refers to an officer of the imperial revenue in the province as is made plain in the Athenian inscription CIL III. 556 *Sagaris, Alcimi Aug(usti) ser(vi) vernae arcari Provinciae Achaiae vicar(ius)*. On imperial *arkarii* see O. Hirschfeld, *Die kaiserlichen Verwaltungsbeamten bis auf Diocletian*<sup>2</sup>, 1905, pp. 461f. note.

<sup>35</sup> I had thought from the photograph that the second line was so centered at both ends under the first line as to suggest that the inscription was complete. So also T.L. Shear, *loc. cit.* Since this article was completed Dr. de Waele has written me (Nijmegen xi. 29, 1930): "There can be no doubt that our inscription is only fragmentary: the left part is missing." He withdraws also his identification of the Erastus on the inscription with the Biblical one and accepts the interpretation of Professor Roos.

birth. And in Greece outside of Roman influence there had been Erasti as king of Sicyon or as archon at Athens.<sup>36</sup>

For our conjecture about the standing of the Erastus in the inscription we naturally look for some reference to office. It is possible as we have just stated that something has been lost in both lines and the loss in the second line has carried with it perhaps some reference to such honors as Erastus had held. There remain, however, only the two words PRO · AED. The first discoverers promptly rendered these as *procurator*, *aedilis*, as though they were the names of two successive offices held. De Waele plays with some other conjectures but regards this as most probable. But the rendering has from the first seemed to me improbable. Procurator was not an office in the *cursus honorum* of colonies or municipia. Procurator nearly always has a genitive following it, and this might suggest *procurator aedium* or something of the sort. But the strongest objection to any use of *procurator* in filling out the inscription is that its usual abbreviation is *proc* not *pro*.

Another interpretation would take *pro* with aedile as a preposition meaning 'for,' 'acting for.' Such a use became regular with proconsul and praetor. I am not aware that it ever occurs with aedile.

Much the most satisfactory solution has been recently proposed by Professor Roos of Leiden.<sup>37</sup> He regards the phrase as abbreviated for *pro aedilitate* and supposes that it was in return for the honor of the office of aedile that Erastus paid for the cost of the paving. Liebenam<sup>38</sup> had collected a great number of inscriptions in which public works are said to have been carried out, monuments erected, or cash contributions made because of some honor of office. Among the few Latin examples which Roos selects for illustration there is reference to the paving of streets by an aedile at Venusia<sup>39</sup> and by

<sup>36</sup> See Pauly-Wissowa, *s. v.* The Sicyonian king is doubtless mythical and belongs to only one of the chronographers' lists (Georg. Syncell.).

<sup>37</sup> See note 2.

<sup>38</sup> W. Liebenam, *op. cit.*, pp. 57—65.

<sup>39</sup> CIL IX. 442.

undesigned officials at Aeclanum.<sup>40</sup> The gift was sometimes promised in advance as the inscription from Tingad shows: *statuam quam ob honorem aedilitatis promiserat inlata etiam rei pub. honoraria summa posuit*.<sup>41</sup> Indeed all the details of the Erastus inscription are adequately illustrated, including PRO for the more usual *pro honore* or *ob honorem*, AED as an abbreviation for *aedilitas*,<sup>42</sup> and of course the very frequent S. P. meaning at his own expense (*sua pecunia*).

Roos makes no reference to Greek parallels, and remarks further that there is no evidence from inscriptions that Corinth had aediles. But the Greek inscriptions also record a similar usage for indicating public benefactions in return for offices awarded. In place of the longer *ob honorem* the Greek uses a single preposition ὑπέρ. And I have found one Greek inscription which not only mentions an aedile at Corinth but records the construction of buildings which he made ὑπὲρ ἀγορανομίας.<sup>43</sup> ἀγορανόμος, I needly hardly remind the reader, is the regular Greek word for aedile. The date is apparently early in the second century of our era. With this identity of time and place and the similar simplicity of the prepositional phrase, this Greek inscription is a perfect parallel to the proposed interpretation of the Erastus inscription.

If we are right in interpreting the two Erasti of Corinth as *aedilis* and *arcarius* respectively what are the possibilities of their identity? Although both offices are connected with the public finance they are scarcely identical. They might, however, be held successively

<sup>40</sup> CIL IX. 1143

<sup>41</sup> CIL VIII. 17834.

<sup>42</sup> In the exhaustive *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae Epigraphicae* by George N. Olcott, Rome, 1904, i. p. 149, nine instances of the abbreviation AED are given to only six for longer abbreviations. Of course if the inscription is incomplete the letters ILIT(ATE) may have begun the second line.

<sup>43</sup> IG IV. 203 = CIG 1104. The public benefactor is a Roman citizen P. Licinius Priscus Iuventianus. His structures were all, I think, connected with the equipment for the Isthmian games made at his own expense (ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων) as was the paving by Erastus. The last sentence reads ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ τὴν στοὰν τὴν πρὸς τῷ σταδίῳ σὺν τοῖς κεκαμαρωμένοις οἴκοις καὶ προσκοσμήμασιν ὑπὲρ ἀγορανομίας ἀνέθηκεν.

if they may be regarded as likely to belong to the same rank of society.

Against such a possibility it might be urged (1) that an aedile was usually *ingenuus*, the *arcarius* a slave. But precisely in the colonies founded by Julius Caesar as was Corinth we know that exception was made and that from the class of freedmen the highest officers of the city were at first chosen. That in subsequent generations any but freeborn held high office is neither likely nor confirmed by evidence. On the other hand an *arcarius* like any other slave might become freed while or after he held the position of *arcarius*. An Erastus who was a public slave in the time of Paul might thus at the time of the inscription have been manumitted and have become aedile in Corinth. The opportunity of acquiring property and of certain social standing was not denied the ordinary slave and was apparently greater in the case of slaves of the state or town.<sup>44</sup> (2) Another objection to identifying the aedile and the *οικονόμος* is that the *οικονόμος* is evidently a Christian and it is argued that no Christian could consent to the paganism involved in holding such an office as aedile. If the same person held both offices, the aedileship would certainly be the later one and hence must have been accepted when Erastus was already a Christian.

The force of this argument, however, may be turned partly by pointing out that the office of *οικονόμος* or *arcarius* doubtless involved contact with idolatry much as did that of aedile, though perhaps it was easier for a freedman or free man to refuse an honorary post than for a slave to escape the duties of *arcarius*.

The principal answer to the argument is that we have no certainty that Christians so early objected to the idolatrous associations of public office.<sup>45</sup> It is true we have no evidence in the first century of Christians accepting or remaining in official positions of this sort.

<sup>44</sup> See R. H. Barrow, *Slavery in the Roman Empire*, 1928, Chap. V, "In the Service of State and Town."

<sup>45</sup> On the whole subject see especially A. Bigelmair, *Die Beteiligung der Christen am öffentlichen Leben in vorconstantinischer Zeit*, Munich, 1902, and C. J. Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World: a History of the Christian Attitude to Pagan Society and the State Down to the Time of Constantinus*, London, 1925.

Later Tertullian roundly protests against Christian participation in both civil and military service. In *Apologeticus* 46, criticizing the political ambitions of philosophers in contrast to the modesty of Christians, he says: *tyrannidem adfectant, Christianus vero nec aedilitatem* ("the philosophers aspire to the place of tyrant, but the Christian not even to that of aedile"). But neither the personal views of Tertullian, nor the objection to political office widely shared by Christians of his time is evidence of a universal Christian conscience on the subject a century and a half before.

On the whole we may conclude that the offices are not likely to have been held by the same man, though this is not impossible, so that this consideration does not preclude any more than do the considerations of name and place the identification of the aedile and the *οικονόμος*. At the same time we would warn the reader again that identification is far from established. The name Erastus belongs neither to the commonest nor to the most uncommon of names of the Hellenistic world. It might seem reasonable to identify the three New Testament Erasti, since all are connected with Paul, much as we identify as one and the same person each mention of Timothy in Acts and epistles. But the Erastus who paved a street at his own expense may be a later and quite different Corinthian. More decisive evidence about him is scarcely to be looked for.

Turning our attention once more to the New Testament occurrences we may perhaps get some light from the discussion that the new inscription has aroused. If the *οικονόμος* was an office such as we have supposed, why is it mentioned by Paul? and does it have any bearing on the identification of the three men named Erastus in the New Testament?

That it is named as a position of honor has been generally assumed. It would seem that *arcarius* was so used in the inscriptions even though it was a servile station, for even slaves have their social pride in public office. To a Christian group that included members of the *familiae* of Caesar (Phil. 4 22), of Narcissus (Rom. 16 11), and of Aristobulus (16 10)<sup>46</sup> his rank might well be mentioned. But the

<sup>46</sup> According to ancient critical theories all these groups belonged to Rome; according to modern theories they all belonged at Ephesus (the destination

associations of *arcarius* or *οἰκονόμος* do not imply social preeminence such as wealth and station bring, and those commentators are probably wrong who cite Erastus as an exception to Paul's description of the first Corinthian Christians as including not many mighty, not many noble (I Cor. 1 26).<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand the title might be mentioned merely to distinguish him from others named Erastus, — from other Corinthians like the aedile if he is not the same, or from other Christians like the delegate of Paul in Acts if he is not the same. It might even be argued that the very use of the title suggests the existence of another Christian Erastus among the acquaintances of Paul and his readers.

Early Christian commentators evidently thought it unlikely that an *οἰκονόμος* could serve as a missionary, not from conscientious objections to public office, but because his office would not give him time. How much freedom of personal life or opportunity for travel abroad such positions as *arcarius* permitted I do not know. But from the assumption that a Christian comrade of Paul would find such an office too confining two views have resulted. Either this was felt to be sufficient ground for differentiating the Erastus of Romans from those in Acts and 2 Timothy, or it was concluded that he had given up the office and still bore the title only retrospectively. The latter was the view of Pelagius: '*arcarium ex-arcario dicit.*'<sup>48</sup> It would seem that inscriptions also use *arcarius* of men who hold the place no longer.

In this case of course there is no objection to supposing all three New Testament persons identical. Indeed it seems to me that Ro-

of Romans 16, the place of writing Philippians). In either case it was to the community containing these groups that Erastus sent greeting. It is even possible as we shall see that Erastus belonged to the same community too.

<sup>47</sup> The references to wealth in Clement's epistle to Corinth (xiii. 1, xxxviii. 2) do not really indicate much difference a generation later.

<sup>48</sup> Edited by A. Souter, *Texts and Studies*, ix. 2, 1926, p. 125. Pelagius compares the scripture use of *gentes* for Christians formerly gentiles and of 'Abigail, the wife of Nabal,' after she married David. Modern commentators note how Matthew is still called a publican when, as they suppose, he had given up that calling.



mans 16 23 quite as much as the other passages implies that Erastus had facility to travel abroad. At least it would be natural to suppose that he was personally known in the city to which he sent his greetings.

Finally the use of *πόλιως* in his title is rather striking. No city is implied in the context. It is not inconceivable that it means the city to which the letter goes, though it is usually understood of Corinth. Very likely if it is a translation of *arcarius rei publicae* it is a more integral part of his title, like an adjective.

The upshot of our discussion is that the identification of the Erastus of the inscription with a New Testament character is improbable if not impossible. What makes the improbability seem most like an impossibility is the difficulty of supposing that any man's *cursus honorum* included both *arcarius (rei publicae)* and *aedilis*. If however the discovery of the inscription should lead to a more careful and productive inquiry than has been attempted heretofore into the history and status of the Biblical Erastus, it will prove to have done a real service to New Testament research.