

just said, these are not two different senses but two different aspects of one and the same sense. David clearly perceived a close relation between God and the Messiah, a relation much closer than that existing between God and himself or any of his successors, because it was by reason of this relation that the Messiah was to receive a universal dominion.

Therefore to the question put at the beginning of this note we may answer: David intended to represent Christ the Messiah as God's beloved and as ruling over the whole world on account of God's special love for him. He neither understood nor positively excluded Christ's divine sonship which was absolutely beyond the Old Testament Messianic outlook. This divine sonship, however, David has foreshadowed by expressing, under divine inspiration, Christ's relation to God in a way that is not applicable to any other of his successors upon the throne of Israel.

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## PROFANE EVIDENCE FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT

The notes and list of abbreviations are printed at the end of the article.

IN a somewhat industrialized market-town this winter the librarian of the public library reported that the two books for which he had the longest waiting-lists were *Forever Amber* and Bp. Barnes's *Rise of Christianity*. The questioning of the veracity of the Evangelists which this latter book has caused must be held to be the principal reason for this article, which is intended to reply to the questions: What tests can be used to prove that the NT is a collection of valid historical documents? Are there any independent sources or documents which back up events and happenings in the NT? These questions fall chiefly upon the gospels and Acts, for the epistles, concerned as they are more with teaching and exhortation, have less call to be narrating facts. An attempt will therefore be made to give samples, for in the space no more can be done, of what profane evidence there is that supports the veracity of gospels and Acts.

In any narrative of travel one can easily test whether the writer has visited the places he describes by examining his use of the local names and titles. If he describe a visit to Edinburgh and mention that he spoke with a Writer to the Signet, or tell of an interview with the Proctors at Oxford, he is more likely to be telling the truth than not. If this happens throughout his narrative, the probability of his truthfulness has increased indefinitely. Now this is exactly what is observed in St. Luke's narrative of travel in the Acts. At Thessalonica he mentions the *politarchs* as the chief magistrates. The title is attested by five in-

scriptions for Thessalonica, nine other inscriptions show that it was used in other towns of Macedonia, while for the rest of the world there are perhaps three more instances. It is not, therefore, a common term in use in all cities of the Roman world, but something of a speciality in Macedonia. In Philippi (xvi, 21) St. Luke makes the magistrates claim with pride that they are Romans, i.e. not merely citizens, but of Italian origin. Now the Roman pride of the *colonia* is witnessed to by many inscriptions, of which one (C.I.L. iii, 7343) may be cited. T. Uttedius Venerianus, a man who by his name must have come from the Marsic country, was *archimimus Latinus* to the town, which is a sign that he had brought the tradition of the Sabellian farces with him. At Ephesus the Asiarchs are met with (xix, 31); these were the officers of the imperial cult, chosen from among the leading men of the province Asia. There were several of them at Ephesus, where also the Roman proconsul (xix, 38), who was not a *procurator* nor a *legatus Augusti*, held a *conventus* during his term of office. In local matters Ephesus was self-governing, with an *ekklesia* and the secretary thereto (xix, 32 and 39). Finally, in Malta there was a chief man of the island (xxviii, 7) whose title is given thus on two inscriptions (C.I.L. x, 7495 and I.G. XIV, 601 A): *primus Melitensium* and πρῶτος Μελιταίων.

Jewish literary evidence, though it was written down at a date not earlier than the fourth century, has a value of its own, seeing that it is so completely hostile. Moreover the Talmud usually gives the name of the Rabbi from whom each bit of tradition comes, and as these Rabbis can be assigned dates, either absolutely in reference to some event like the revolt of 132, or relatively by their place in the succession-lists, the stories they tell in the Talmud have a much greater antiquity than the date of that book would suggest. The most important statement about our Lord in the Talmud runs (T.B. Sanhed. 43a): On the eve of the Passover they hanged Yeshu the Nazarene. For forty days previously a herald went forth proclaiming: Yeshu the Nazarene is going forth to be stoned, because he practised magic and led Israel astray into apostasy. . . . Ulla (a disciple of R. Yochanan, late third century) said: "Do you suppose that he (Yeshu) had any right on his side? Was he not a beguiler, of whom Scripture says: Thou shalt not spare, neither shalt thou conceal him? With Yeshu it was different, for he was connected with royalty (or, was near the government)." For the proclamations of the Jewish authorities before our Lord's arrest, one must consult Jn. ix, 22 and xi, 57. That stoning should be threatened here and hanging (on a tree) be the result obtained is to be put down to the discrepancy between what the Jews wanted according to their own penal law and what the Romans allowed. The Jews stoned for blasphemy, but the Romans executed by crucifixion. The charge of beguiling the people is quite in accord with the comments of the crowd in Jn. xii, 12, while the apostasy from Israel which the acceptance of Christianity

involved can be sufficiently illustrated from the NT claim that Christianity was the true and spiritual Israel.

One may suppose that the testimony of Tacitus<sup>1</sup> to the existence of Christ is well known and not in need of comment. It may suffice to remark that this testimony is sufficient to establish by itself the truth of the article of the creed which says : He suffered under Pontius Pilate. The witness of Josephus is on a different footing, for it is constantly being submitted to fresh scrutinies. Josephus refers to Christ in one passage of his Jewish Antiquities which is admitted to be genuine by all the critics. He is writing an account of the death of James in A.D. 62. (Ant. xx, 200), and describes him as : " James, brother (or cousin) of Jesus that is called Christ." The other passage (Ant. xviii, 63) in Josephus where our Lord Himself is described is longer, and has been the object of much criticism. No one contests that it is in all the MSS of Josephus that are known, but as Origen twice remarks in his writings that Josephus " did not accept our Jesus as Christ," many argue that the text of Josephus has been tampered with by the Christians. If his words are closely examined however, it appears that Josephus is all the time using faintly contemptuous language that indicates (not admiration but) that he could not care less about the whole story. By A.D. 94 when he was writing, he was quite estranged from his Jewish faith, was living in comfortable exile at Rome, and had adopted the blasé outlook of the contemporary pagan. His words run thus : There came about that time Jesus, a man that was a sophist—since one should call him a man. He was the doer of astonishing deeds, a teacher of men that receive the truth with avidity. He enticed to follow him many Jews and much of the Greek element. He was " the Christ." When Pilate, on information laid by the principal men amongst us, condemned him to the cross, those who at first had been content with him did not desist—for he appeared to them alive again when it was the third day from his death, the holy prophets having foretold this and countless other marvels about him. Even yet the tribe of those who are called " Christians " after him is not extinct.

Here certain key-words give the note of contempt, and they make it very unlikely that a Christian forger wrote the passage ; the description σοφός ἀνὴρ ; the words for the miracles παραδόξων ἔργων ; the enticing that is suggested by ἐπηγάγετο ; the use of ἀγαπᾶν to mean *put up with*, as a second best (the only sense in which Josephus ever uses the word) ; the μυσία Θαυμάσια and the word Φύλον or *tribe* used for the Christians, a use to which Harnack found no parallel in early Christian literature, all these added together give the global impression of contempt. That εἰ γάρ is used to mean *seeing that* was suggested by Emery Barnes and Gray long ago, and can be supported from ordinary Greek usage, for which cf. Denniston, *Greek Particles*, p. 142. The crucial words : He was " the Christ," may mean no more than : This Jesus is

the one whom you have heard called Christ. By A.D. 94 the Christians would be quite numerous in Rome and the words are needed to go with the explanation of the name Christian. Alternatively, one might say that Josephus is holding up to ridicule the idea of a suffering Messias. "This man was the Messias, and he was crucified, too. I ask you, could that be possible?" In 1913 Prof. Burkitt began the reaction in favour of the authenticity of the passage, and he was supported by Harnack and many other non-Jewish critics. Dr. St. John Thackeray, who edited and translated the works of Josephus with great care, came in his later years to accept it, after having published a lengthy condemnation of it, but he was still inclined to suspect Christian alteration of the central phrase.

The dry formulae of Roman law provide another means of checking details of the gospel narrative. It is laid down, for instance, by Ulpian the jurist (Digest, *xlvi*, 24, 1) that: "The bodies of those who have been executed are not to be refused to their relatives; and even the god-like Augustus notes in the tenth book of his Autobiography that such was his own practice." Tiberius, who followed religiously the path traced out for him by Augustus, will not have altered this usage, and one is thus enabled to see why Mark can write (*xv*, 43) that Joseph of Arimathaea came *boldly* to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. He was asking for the rights of "the relatives," and he presumably had some token or signature from our Lady to show that he acted on her behalf. That Pilate should not question his right would seem strange, if there were not this provision of the law, and it would be a point on which the forger, had he been at work here might have shown some hesitation, for the account as it is found in Mark can only have been written by one who possessed the truth, or by one who was well versed in the Roman law. Now it is not to be supposed that ancient writers of fiction took the meticulous care with their details which is expected of the modern writer of detective fiction. The ancient world failed to produce anything like the detective story, and it is one of the reasons for the lack of popularity of Mark's gospel in antiquity that it has so much detail.

Bp. Barnes in his book (pp. 76-7 and 112) writes: "There is no evidence, save a broken inscription carrying little weight, that Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene at the time (A.D. 28-29) of which Luke (*iii*, 1) speaks. Lysanias had been dead sixty years when Jesus began His ministry." Now quite apart from the resemblance of this argument to the apologia for the illegitimate child: "It is such a small one that it might be overlooked," it must be said that it is not true. There are three inscriptions attesting the existence of a Lysanias of Abila later than the Lysanias, king of Ituraea and Abila, mentioned by Josephus, who is known to have been put to death by Mark Antony before 34 B.C. The first inscription, found by Pococke and published in C.I.G.

5421, was broken. The second inscription, published by Waddington (iii, 1880) is a broken dedication: "To Zenodorus, son of Lys(anias) tetrarch and to Lysanias." There are coins of Chalkis to show that this Zenodorus was the son of the Lysanias who had been put to death by 34 B.C., and the Lysanias who receives the dedication with him is either his son or his brother. In view of the fact that Greek families so often alternate their names with succeeding generations, it is more probable that he would be son to Zenodorus than brother. In either case he is the right age for rule over Abila at the time Luke mentions. The third inscription, found twenty miles NW. of Damascus by an Arab and published by Père Savignac, O.P. (Rev. bibl. 1912, p. 533) so far from being broken, is carved on the rocky face of the hillside and cannot be removed or broken. It tells how one Nymphaios had built a temple to Kronos and had made a way up the steep hillside to it. He describes himself as "freedman of the tetrarch Lysanias," and declares that his act of piety was "for the safety of the Lords Augusti and all their house." Now there were not very often *two* Augusti in the Roman empire and there was no tetrarchy of Abila after A.D. 37, when, as Josephus himself records (xviii, 237), it was suppressed and given to Herod Agrippa I. The only two Augusti before this date are Tiberius and his mother Livia, the widow of Augustus, who took the title Augusta after her husband's death and kept it until her own (A.D. 14-29). The masculine word "Lords" is known to have been applied to Tiberius and Livia, as it is used on other inscriptions. The place where the freedman has built his temple is recognized by archæologists to be near the site of the town of Abila. Had he been a freedman of the old Lysanias I, as Schmiedel in a desperate attempt at scepticism supposes, he would have to be at least seventy years old at the time of the making of the inscription, and perhaps eighty-five or ninety, the mention of the name of Lysanias (then, by hypothesis, so long dead) would be inexplicable, seeing that Lysanias I is known to have been succeeded by his son Zenodorus, and the possession of Roman citizenship by Lysanias I would have to be supposed, for no one can give citizenship by manumission if he has it not. Now the grant of the *tria nomina*<sup>2</sup> to client princes cannot be proved for Antony, while it was undoubtedly the practice of Augustus to work into his imperial system the Oriental princelets by making them honorary Roman citizens. A parallel to the Lysanias family can be found in Sparta, where Lachares had been executed by Antony, after which one finds his son Eurycles king of Sparta styled C. Iulius Eurycles from 31 B.C. and succeeded by C. Iulius Laco, his son, who in turn gives place to another C. Iulius Eurycles. The final count against the sceptics is the evidence of Josephus who speaks of the suppression of the tetrarchy of Lysanias in A.D. 37 without further explanation (Ant. xviii, 237), whereas Lysanias I had then been dead for seventy years, and his realm, as Josephus himself records, had been

reduced by the carving out from it of the tetrarchy of Trachonitis (Bell. Iud. I 399) and the kingdom of Chalkis. Thus, so far from proving that Luke is dependent, as Bp. Barnes thinks, on Josephus, the case of Lysanias proves Luke's independent accuracy in a striking way. At the same time it gives a warning against supposing the gospel wrong because there may be no evidence to support its statement. Until 1860 or so, there was no evidence to support Luke's statement about Lysanias, though now there is plenty.

St. Luke makes Gamaliel, it may be remembered, speak (Acts v, 36) of two rebels who came to nothing, Theudas and Judas the Galilean. To the second name a date is attached; he rose up in the days of the census. Now from Josephus (Ant. xviii, 4) it may be learnt that when Quirinius came from Rome (in A.D. 6) to make a valuation of the property of the Jews and to sell the estates of Archelaus, the disgraced son of Herod the Great: "One Judas a Gaulanite from a town named Gamala, with his associate Zadok the Pharisee, urged the raising of a revolt." Later in the narrative of Josephus he is called a Galilean, and it is said that he urged the non-payment of tribute to Cæsar. His fate is not recorded by Josephus. So far, so good. Josephus supports Luke in his historical details. But the only rebel Theudas mentioned in Josephus is one who (Ant. xx, 97) at some time between A.D. 44 and 46 led a great mob with all their belongings from Jerusalem to the Jordan, promising that the river would divide at his word and they would all witness the miracle. Cuspius Fadus the Procurator sent a troop of cavalry to intercept this procession of devotees and had Theudas executed. But, as Fadus was governor of Judæa only after the death of Herod Agrippa I in A.D. 44, *this* Theudas cannot be mentioned by Gamaliel, who is speaking some six years earlier. What Gamaliel says should be examined closely. Theudas declared himself to be someone great; he attracted 400 followers; he was killed (or as the *codex Bezae* puts it, his followers were scattered) and all came to nothing. The affair is smaller than the one Josephus describes and has no explicit link with the Jordan; can it be the same? Can it be that Luke wrote as late as A.D. 94, and was in debt to an account in Josephus which he had misread? Theudas was a common name, being the abbreviated form of Theodorus or Theodotus, and meant "the gift of God," a name that many mothers may have applied to their children. In Hebrew it would be Matthias, and some critics have suggested that a certain Matthias, who just before Herod's death pulled down the great eagle which Herod had set over the gate of the temple, and who was burned alive at Herod's command, could be the man referred to by Gamaliel (Ant. xvii, 149). But Gamaliel, who cannot have loved Herod the Great, would probably have approved the act of this Theudas or Matthias. Another Theudas is mentioned by Cicero in 46 B.C. as the *libertus* and confidential agent of one Trebianus, the *princeps equitum*. A Jew

in such a position might have been tempted to fish in the troubled waters of his fatherland on his own account, where risings (Ant. xvii, 285) were as common as blackberries in September. It is best to say that Luke's Theudas is otherwise unknown to history, and that, as was the case 100 years ago with Lysanias, the evidence is not sufficient to identify the man.

Ancient buildings can sometimes provide a means of verifying statements in the historical parts of the NT, especially when such buildings are found to contain some inscriptional evidence of their purpose. Thus in 1914 there was found in Jerusalem, on Mt. Ophel, a ruined building which, from a large slab of stone discovered on the site, was shown (Rev. bibl. 1921, p. 251) to be identifiable as the synagogue of the *Libertini* or freedmen spoken in of Acts vi, 9. The slab carried the following inscription in large Greek characters: "Theodotos, son of Vettenos, priest and synagogue-ruler, son and grandson of synagogue-rulers, built this synagogue for the reading of the Law and for the teaching of the commandments, along with the hospice, the rooms and the baths, to serve as a lodging for those who come from abroad. It had been founded by his fathers and by the Ancients and by Simonides."

The lettering of the inscription is of the first century, according to the experts. Obviously the synagogue is Greek-speaking, and is frequented by Jews of the Western Dispersion, not by Jews of Palestine. Further, the name Vettenos, which is not Jewish, implies that the father of Theodotos had been connected with the Roman house of the Vettii in such a way that he bore a name derived from theirs. Now this is exactly in accord with what took place in the lives of many Jews who were carried away as slaves by Pompey in 63 B.C., and who were afterwards manumitted by their owners and allowed to live on in Rome as *libertini*. If Vettenos's son was born in Rome about 40 B.C., he might have returned to Jerusalem about A.D. 10 when he has already reached the dignity of synagogue-ruler, to restore and embellish the synagogue which had seen the ministrations of his father and grandfather before him. In A.D. 19, the Jews were banished from Rome by Tiberius, the able-bodied among them being conscripted for work in Sardinia. Had Theodotos still been in Rome at that date, he must have then been expelled. He therefore may be supposed to have done his work before the time when Stephen began to dispute with those that were of the synagogue of the Libertines. Certainly no date after A.D. 65 is possible for the building, the troubled years 36-65 are hardly suitable either to such a work of benevolence or to the pedigree of Theodotos, and the identification is therefore most probable.

Finally a brief mention must be made of the cornerstone of Pauline chronology, the inscription which fixes the fact that Gallio was in Achaea as proconsul at some date between Jan. 52 and Jan. 53 A.D. (Inscr. Delph. 2178, etc.). Of course, as Roman governors may have

had a second year in office, and as St. Paul was in Corinth for eighteen months, the actual date of his appearance before Gallio there cannot be fixed to a year, but must be within the limits A.D. 50-53.

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

C.I.L.	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.
I.G.	Inscriptiones Graecae.
T.B.	Babylonian Talmud, Soncino edition.
Ant.	Antiquitates Iudaicae of Josephus, ed. Niese.
Bell. Iud.	Bellum Iudaicum of Josephus, ed. Niese.

For further reading one might suggest :

St. John Thackeray, *Josephus, the man and historian*, 1929.

Ramsay, Sir W., *The bearing of recent discoveries on the trustworthiness of the NT* 1915.

Corbishley, T., *Quirinius and the census* (article in *Klio*, 1936).

Paley, *Evidences of Christianity*, Vol. II, ch. vi. Old but not antiquated.

Herford, *Christ in Talmud and Midrash*, 1903.

Pinard de la Boullaye, *Jésus et l'histoire*, 1929.

Arenzden, *The Gospels, fact, myth or legend?* 1920.

Arenzden, *Men and manners in the days of Christ*, 1928.

de Grandmaison, *Jésus-Christ*, Vol. I, 1928.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus's testimony is in *Annals* 15, 44: *Auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat.* The context is the fire of Rome in A.D. 64. Christianity is a *nomen*—not merely the designation of a class, but a group of people with definite characteristics, like the *nomen Latinum*, or the *nomen Volscum* of Livy 3, 8, 10. Christ is its *auctor*, its only begetter and surety.

<sup>2</sup> The *tria nomina* are the *nomen* of the *gens*, such as the gens Iulia before which is set the *praenomen*, one of the 15 which Romans had to choose from (for men), such as Publius or Marcus, and after which is added the *cognomen*, often in the old Roman families a nickname drawn from some physical oddity, but in later recruits to Roman citizenship often a foreign name indicating the citizen's origin. Only citizens had the right to use the three names.