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'To us who had a share in the experience of the world catastrophe, the death of millions, the death of civilization, the death of the god of mercy, nothing was left but faith in the one thing—in Death.' The result is a certain vague theosophy. 'God is neither alive nor dead; God is the rhythm of death and renewal in its beginning, its end and its very least inflection.' This faith the writer calls the clair-obscure. 'Whoever finds the clair-obscure becomes both a *genuine* mystic and a *genuine* realist. And when in the depth of his being he feels the heart of the universe beating

with the rhythm of the clair-obscure, he reaches beyond wholeness and attains holiness.'

It will be remembered that a series of articles by Canon Battersby-Harford appeared in this magazine last autumn, attracting considerable attention among Old Testament scholars. The articles have now been reprinted, and may be had from Mr. Henderson, George IV. Bridge, Edinburgh, or direct from the author at Ripon. The title is *Altars and Sanctuaries in the Old Testament*, and the price 1s.

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## The Census of Quirinius.

BY THE REVEREND J. W. JACK, M.A., GLENFARG.

THE verses in which Luke (2<sup>1-3</sup>) alludes to a general census of the Roman Empire, carried out in Judæa at the time of Christ's birth and under the legateship of Quirinius in Syria, have given rise to an abundant literature and provoked numerous critical comments.<sup>1</sup> Historians find no difficulty about the statement that a census took place at this time by order of Augustus, for it is known that enrolments were made every fourteen years in Egypt under Roman rule, and there can be nothing improbable in one taking place in Judæa at the time indicated. Indeed, the statistics of the Empire, including those of dependent States, were a favourite study of Augustus. The real difficulty lies in the statement that the census referred to was executed while Quirinius was legate. On this point the accuracy of Luke, so conspicuous in many other details, has been impugned. Syria, a consular province, could not be entrusted to Quirinius till after his consulate (12 B.C.). Now, during the immediately following years, we find M. Titius as legate about the year 10 B.C., then C. Sentius Saturninus from 9 to 6 B.C., and P. Quintilius Varus from 6 to 4 B.C. This last-named was still in office at the time of Herod's death,<sup>2</sup> so that the first Syrian legateship of Quirinius could not have commenced before the year 3 B.C. As the birth of Jesus must be placed one, two, or perhaps three years before Herod's death, it is evident that Quirinius could not have

been legate at the time. If Jesus was born while he was legate, Herod was already dead; if Herod was not yet dead, how can we speak of Quirinius? Many attempts, most of which have been enumerated and analysed by Schürer, have been made to overcome this dilemma. It has been said, e.g., that the census operations may have been prolonged during two consecutive years—that they may have commenced in the year 4 B.C., before the death of Herod, and been continued and finished under Quirinius, and hence the latter's name has been associated with them as that of the governor who closed the lists and proclaimed the results. This seems a plausible argument, but historians are not impressed with it in view of the fact that the legateship of Quirinius is known to have occurred about A.D. 6 or 7, and the only census which he could have carried out was the famous one known to have taken place about that time. This was ten years or more after the Nativity, when Judæa, on the deposition of Archelaus in A.D. 6, became a Roman province annexed to Syria; and it led to the rebellion of Judas the Gaulonite or Galilæan.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars however, advance the theory that Quirinius may

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ac 5<sup>37</sup>; Jos. XVII. xiii. 5, XVIII. i. 1; Schürer, *op. cit.*, i. 327; *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*, iii. 287. The census of Quirinius is corroborated by a Beirût inscription, the trustworthiness of which was doubted until the original was discovered at Venice (see Dessau, *Inscript. Lat. Sel.*, 2683). It is the funeral inscription of a sub-officer who took part in the operations.

<sup>1</sup> For bibliography, see Schürer, *Gesch. des. Jüd. Volkes*, 3rd ed., 508 f.

<sup>2</sup> Schürer, i. 322.

have held a previous legateship of Syria, about 3 or 2 B.C., and base their view on a mutilated inscription found at Tivoli in 1764, which describes some official (the name being destroyed) who twice governed Syria under Augustus.<sup>1</sup> But it is apparent that even such a previous tenure of office cannot possibly have coincided with the Nativity but must have been after Herod's death. It is not worth while to discuss such points here. The number of writers who have put forward arguments in favour of Luke's statement about Quirinius is too large to deal with in this article.<sup>2</sup>

If only the name Saturninus had been written in the text instead of Quirinius, all the difficulties of the case would have vanished, for it is admitted by scholars that the Nativity probably occurred during the former's legateship, and a casual statement of Tertullian corroborates this. In reply to the Doketic views of the Marcionites, Tertullian reminds them *inter alia* that Christ's family could easily have been discovered from the census taken in Judæa by Saturninus: '*Census constat actos sub Augusto nunc in Judæa per Sentium Saturninum apud quos genus eius inquirere potuissent*' (*Adv. Marcionem*, iv. 19). Here, of course, if Tertullian had said Quirinius, we would still have been faced with the same dilemma, but his naming of Saturninus seems to show that he was drawing his information from some independent authority, possibly the same as supplied a further reference which he makes to Saturninus (*Tert.*, *De pallio*, i.). Under the circumstances, before we regard Luke as in error, it is worth while studying the Greek uncial text of Lk 2<sup>2</sup>, to see if by any chance the name Saturninus may have been originally written by Luke and been corrupted into Quirinius. A critical examination of the two names in the ancient script clearly shows not only the possibility but the likelihood of such a corruption. The spelling of the latter name, which happens in the text to be in the genitive, differs in the various manuscripts. The form *Κυρηνίου* occurs in Westcott and Hort's text, *Κυρίων* in Lachmann's, and *Κυρείων* in the margin of several (Westcott and Hort, Tregelles, Nestle, etc.). Now, assuming that Luke wrote *Σατυρνίνων*, it is a remarkable fact that six out

of the ten letters in this word are to be found in *Κυρείων*, and in precisely the same order; and it is also remarkable that *ατ* in the ancient uncial script might easily be taken for K, and if the initial Σ were lost or omitted through the common fault of haplography (owing to the preceding word *Συπλάς* ending in this letter), we have the syllable *Κυρ-*. The *-ρίων* would quite easily become *-είων*, for the uncial N frequently differed little or none at all from the uncial *ετα* (H), and we know that *ηι* is an itacism which was often changed to *ει*.

A careful examination of the different styles and fashions of ancient uncial writing goes to confirm this view. First, in regard to the change of *ατ* into K: In the earliest uncial manuscripts of the Gospels the *α* is either written **A**, a form in which the two lines to the left make a sharp angle (as in *Cod. Sinaiticus*, belonging to the fourth century), or **A** where a small loop or curve is found (as in the Brit. Mus. Pap. 115, Hyperides, *pro Euxenippo*, written in the latter part of the first century). In either case the angle or loop is generally quite thin in comparison with the right limb of the letter, and in some manuscripts it is very small and almost insignificant in appearance (e.g. in *Codd. Laud.* 35, *Basil.*, *Borelli*, *Arundel* 547, and many others). One can understand how such an angle or loop might become indistinct or even fade out altogether in the course of a few years. Indeed, the disappearance of slight lines in some manuscripts was of such frequency that, in some cases (as in the *Cod. Vaticanus*), a later hand had to retrace the letters. It is by no means improbable, therefore, that in the *ατ* only the right limb of the *α* might be left distinct enough in course of time for a copyist to see it. The right limb was not always written at the same slope, but often more perpendicular (as in *Codd. Harleian.*, *Basil.*, etc.);<sup>3</sup> and in this case, if the T were written close up to it (as was common in many manuscripts in regard to all the letters) and happened to be sloped a little to the left (as the superior bar of the T was in the second century, at least in the west),<sup>4</sup> we have an excellent K (**K**), and hence the syllable *Κυρ-*. As for the disappearance of the initial Σ under haplography, one has only to remember that in the uncial script there were no capital letters to distinguish the beginning of names or sentences until the fifth century, when we find them in the *Cod. Alexandrina* A. All

<sup>1</sup> *Corpus Inscript. Lat.*, xiv. 3613; Dessau, *op. cit.*, 918.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. especially W. M. Ramsay, *Was Christ born at Bethlehem?* 3rd ed., 1905, pp. 95-196; A. Mayer, *Die Schatzung bei Christi Geburt in ihrer Beziehung zu Quirinius*, 1908; W. Weber, *Zeitschrift f. neuest. Wissenschaft*, 1909, pp. 307-319; Schürer, *op. cit.* i. 534 ff.; also bibliography in *H.D.B.*, iv. 183b.

<sup>3</sup> In one case at least (*Cod. Dublin.* Z), it is quite perpendicular, though this style is probably unique.

<sup>4</sup> Cagnat, *Cours d'épigraphie latine*, 4th ed., p. 22.

letters were of the same size, with no space between the words, and no breathings or accents or marks of any kind. On this account, when one word ended in a certain letter, as in the case before us (*Συρίας*), and the next began with the same, it was not uncommon for a copyist unintentionally to omit one of the two letters. The same haplography is found occasionally in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, and is of a type well understood by textual critics. If the copyist happened to be one who lived several decades or, perhaps, a century or two after Luke wrote his account—our earliest manuscripts (except the Oxyrhynchus fragment and some other small ones) are not earlier than the fourth century—he would probably have only a limited acquaintance with Palestine at the time of Christ's birth, and may easily have been misled into identifying the census with the great Roman one about A.D. 6 or 7, made the more famous by the rebellion which it occasioned; and consequently, if the Greek manuscript in his possession was of the nature we have indicated, he may the more easily have assumed that the name was *Κυρηνίου*, and thus eliminated or overlooked the superfluous Σ. Again and again, words have been changed by a copyist simply owing to the working of his own mind on the subject before him.

The copyist, having transcribed the first syllable *Κυρ-*, would easily slip into the further mistake of regarding *-νίου* as *-είνου*, for the uncial N being often written **N** or even **H** was often confused with *eta* (H), *i.e.* the cross line of the former did not always pass from the top of the left vertical to the bottom of the right one as in English, but often began nearly half-way down the left one and ended nearly half-way from the bottom of the right one (as in *Cod. Alexandrina A. Sinaiticus*, etc.). In some manuscripts it is here and there not far from the horizontal (as in *Codd. Borelli* and *Claramont*). In a few cursives, indeed, N and H almost interchange their shapes (*e.g.*, in 440 Evan. at Cambridge and in Tischendorf's lo<sup>11</sup> or 61 of the Acts). The copyist having taken the letter to be *eta* (H), the change of HI into EI was natural. This is a change which frequently occurs in the ancient manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> It is a well-known itacism, or confusion of certain vowels or diphthongs having nearly the same sound. A very large proportion of the various readings brought together by collators are of this description (cf. *τιμήση* and *τιμήσει*, Mt 15<sup>6</sup>; and such variations as *ἡδόκησα* and *εὐδόκησα*, *ἡκαίρουν* and *εὐκαίρουν*). The

copyist would thus be left with *Κυρείου*, as in the margin of most texts; or by a different itacism he would have *Κυρίου*, as in Lachmann's text. The transformation may be seen as follows. The letters, except the sloping T, are taken from the *Cod. Sinaiticus*:

THCCYPIACC KYPHINOY  
 THCCYPIACC KYPHINOY  
 τῆς Συρίας Κυρείου

Marginal readings are not to be rejected. They may be the surviving representatives of other codices perhaps even earlier than any now extant. The mere fact that there is a marginal reading implies some amount of corruption, and the stranger the reading the more likely is it to be genuine.

We have only to remember the great number and variety of copyists through whose hands the early manuscripts passed. Most of them at first must have been private persons, unskilled in the art of writing, whose object was not to introduce a version fit for sale, but to use it themselves or transmit it to friends. Professional scribes, unless they happened to be Christians, would not be employed to transcribe the text, and skilled calligraphy was not, therefore, to be expected. The persecution under Diocletian, too, and then the reaction under Constantine, must have had considerable influence on the state of the text. In addition to all this, there were official revisers who made many changes. The whole *Cod. Sinaiticus*, for instance, is disfigured by many corrections made by an early reviser, many more by an ancient hand of the sixth century, a greater number still by some scholar of the seventh century who often cancels the changes introduced by his predecessors, and numerous others again in later years by as many as eight different writers.

Looking at the matter, then, from all aspects, it seems not at all improbable that Luke's original text contained the name of Saturninus, the penultimate predecessor of Quirinius. The argument receives strength from Tertullian's statement, already referred to. This Roman lawyer and historian must have had access to many trustworthy sources, and by happy chance he has preserved the evidence which not only confirms the census at the time of the Nativity, but seems to reveal the corruption in Luke's text. If this view be correct, the Nativity and the census referred to must be dated 7 B.C. or the beginning of 6 B.C., which would permit of the requisite interval of two or three years between that and the death of Herod.

<sup>1</sup> F. H. Scrivener, *Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 2nd ed., p. 10.