

THE CENSUS OF QUIRINIUS.

II.

AT this stage there is a point which requires careful notice. The regular ancient custom, when any important event was taken as an era, seems to have been to call the current year in which that event occurred the year 1. It was not the custom to institute a new kind of year beginning from the event in question. The years continued to run as before; and the numbering began with the year in which occurred the event commemorated. For example, the battle of Actium, which was in many places taken as an era, occurred on 2nd September, 31 B.C.; and at Amisos in Pontus, the year 1 ended on 23rd September, 31 B.C.¹ Now if Augustus's assumption of tribunician power on 27th June, B.C. 23, was the beginning of the *census*-periods, as our theory is,² it follows that in a country where the year began on 1st January, the year 1 would be 23 B.C., and the first year of the next *census*-period would be 9 B.C.; and in a country where the year began on 23rd September (as was the case in many parts of the Greek world) or on 29th August (as was the case in Egypt), the year 1 would be

¹ This fact is now accepted: M. Imhoof Blumer in *Zeitschrift für Numismatik*, 1896, p. 257, quotes for it his *Griech. Münzen*, p. 33, my *Histor. Geogr.*, pp. 194, 441, and Kaestner *de Aera*. See also Kubitschek in Pauly-Wissowa, *s.v. Aera*. In Syrian Antioch coins of the year 29 mention both the XII. consulship and the XIII. consulship (January 2 B.C.) of Augustus; and therefore the year 29 corresponds to B.C. 3-2. The year 1, therefore, was B.C. 31-30, showing that either the Antiochian year began earlier than 2nd September, or the era was reckoned not from the day of battle, but from some subsequent event affecting Antioch specially.

² In support of the statement, p. 278, that any important device of organization, especially in Egypt, would be likely to emanate from Augustus, Dr. Plummer refers to Tacitus, *Ann.*, ii. 57, and *Hist.*, i. 11, in which the jealousy with which Augustus and Tiberius kept everything in their own hands respecting Egypt is noted. The strictness with which Tiberius restricted himself to following out the ideas of Augustus is familiar to all.

24-23 B.C., and the first of the next *census*-period would be 10-9 B.C. It was only in a country where the year began in the spring¹ that the year 1 would be 23-22 B.C., which in the preceding article was taken as the first of the *census*-period. That fact seemed to point to the conclusion that the *census*-periods originated, not in a general regulation for the whole empire, but in a local regulation for a country such as southern Syria, where the year began in spring. This was an embarrassing fact; and therefore I was careful to use on p. 285 and elsewhere a very guarded form of words in view of the conclusion towards which I was working, and which was to be stated in this article.

A timely communication of Rev. A. Wright, Queen's College, Cambridge, pointing out that I had been guilty of an arithmetical error,² relieved me from this embarrassment; and, though it is not a pure pleasure to find out one's errors, yet any pain I felt in having made such a strange mistake³ was immediately swallowed up in the pleasure of recognising that the corrected numbers suit my theory better. The first year was B.C. 23 in Italy and the more thoroughly Romanized provinces of the West, and 24-23 in Egypt and many eastern provinces; the next *census*-period had as its initial year 9 in the West, and 10-9 in the East; the rest were as already stated. Here we have a system that suits the prevailing customs of the empire; the fundamental fact would be that the initial years were 23, 9 B.C., 6 A.D., etc., according to the Roman year; and I should have expressed the former article in this simpler form, instead of in the more complicated double form, had

¹ In the eastern provinces the Romans usually accepted the existing facts of society, and made little or no attempt to Romanize the institutions of the country.

² I apologise to Dr. Wilcken for the note on p. 278. He was right, and I was wrong. My warm thanks are due to Mr. Wright.

³ It arose from confusion between the Roman reckoning (including both first and last terms of a series), and the modern (including only one term).

I not been misled by the arithmetical error, which made me think that the facts did not suit the Roman year.

Further, as Dr. Wilcken has pointed out, the census was intended to include all children born in the initial year of the period, and hence the actual enumeration could not be made till the next year had begun. Hence the enumeration for the period whose first year was 10-9 B.C. could not begin until the year 9-8 (see p. 278).¹

There remain still several difficulties connected with the passage of Luke. But since the greatest of them has been eliminated, we may look forward with good hope to the growth of knowledge clearing up the rest. Two may here be noticed.

I. The first *census* should be taken B.C. 9-8; but that year certainly does not suit Luke's description, for Sentius Saturninus came to govern Syria in 9 B.C., and was in Syria certainly during 8 B.C. Now, if a *census* had begun in 9 B.C., how can Luke pointedly call the *census* under Quirinius the first? We answer that it was reckoned as the application of the first *census*-period to Palestine. For some reason the *census* of 9 B.C. was not carried out in Palestine in that year. This may have been due to the practical difficulties of carrying out the enumeration in an Oriental country; these difficulties must have been great, especially when the idea was quite novel. Moreover, it is highly probable that Herod himself was not very eager to carry out the *census*, which brought his realm more definitely under the Romans than he would like. He visited Rome in the latter part of 8 B.C.,² and in 7 B.C. he fell into disgrace with Augustus, and his independence was curtailed by some sharp regulations on the part of the

¹ The two sentences at the top of p. 280 introduce an extraneous subject, and should not have been intruded into the discussion.

² These dates are probable; but except when a coin or inscription attests a date (as in the case of Varus), it is rarely certain to a year in that period and country.

Emperor. We must gather from Luke that Augustus insisted on the *census* being carried out in Herod's dominions, and that this at last was done while Quirinius was governor. Now, according to Tacitus, *Hist.*, v. 9, Quintilius Varus was governing Syria during the disturbances that followed the death of Herod in 4 B.C., and it cannot reasonably be supposed that Tacitus erred on this point. Varus, therefore, remained in Syria at least as late as the summer of 3 B.C., and he had come to Syria not later than the summer of 6 B.C.¹ Further, the government of Quirinius is universally placed later than that of Quintilius Varus. Is it possible that the *census* was postponed so late as the year 3-2 B.C.?

According to Luke, the census in Judæa was in progress before Herod died in 4 B.C.;² and our previous results have shown that, if any *census* took place before the "great census" of 6 A.D., it is likely not to have been postponed much after 7 B.C. What evidence, then, exists to show what was the period when Quirinius governed Syria for the first time? His second governorship of Syria, as is agreed on the clear evidence of Josephus, began in A.D. 6. With regard to the facts of his life between his consulship, 12 B.C. and that year, it is not possible to fix any date with precision: we have nothing better than probabilities to go on. It is certain that in this interval the following events occurred: his first governorship of Syria with the war in which he conquered the Homonadenses, thereafter his governorship of Asia, and, probably still later, his tutorship of Cæsar in Armenia and his marriage to Aemilia Lepida. With regard to the dates of these events, the following

¹ Coins of Antioch mention him as governor in the years 25, 26, and 27, *i.e.*, 7-5 B.C. Varus was, therefore, governor of Syria during parts at least of the three years from Sept. 7-Sept. 4 B.C.; *i.e.*, he came to Syria not later than summer 6 (according to the usual season of arrival and departure).

² The current date is accepted here as immaterial for our immediate purpose; but it is not intended to decide the question whether Herod died in the year 5-4 or 4-3 B.C.

statements are probably true, though hardly one of them is absolutely certain, and some are far from certain.

As to the governorship of Asia, it is quite certain that Cn. Lentulus Augur held that office in B.C. 2-1, and probable that he also held it in B.C. 1-A.D. 1.¹ It is highly probable that M. Plautius Silvanus governed Asia in A.D. 1-2,² and Marcius Censorinus 2-3, dying in office in the latter year. Further, Asinius Gallus governed Asia in B.C. 6-5. There remain open for Quirinius's proconsulate the years 5-2 B.C. and 3-6 A.D.

But, further, we know that in A.D. 20 Quirinius prosecuted his former wife, Aemilia Lepida, on a charge of attempting to poison him and of other misconduct; and it is mentioned as a fact which roused general sympathy that he brought this accusation "after twenty years" (*post vicensimum annum*). The precise force of this expression is obscure; but it may fairly be taken as a rough estimate from the marriage to the trial.³ Now the marriage did not take place until the death of Lucius Cæsar (to whom Lepida had been betrothed) on 20th August, A.D. 2; probably the marriage with Quirinius took place in the same year; the trial, then, occurred in the nineteenth year afterwards (according to Roman reckoning), which would justify Suetonius's rough estimate of the time. We conclude on Suetonius's authority, therefore, that Quirinius was in Rome in the end of A.D. 2; and as he was sent to act as tutor to Gaius Cæsar in Armenia, when Lollius, the

¹ Lentulus was in office on May 10, B.C. 1, which, as Mommsen points out, shows that he governed in the year B.C. 2-1 (*Res Gest. D. Aug.*, p. 170, *Prosopographia Romana*, s.v.). Further, Waddington is probably right in inferring from CIG 2943 that Lentulus was still in office on Aug. 12 in that year, and therefore governed B.C. 1-A.D. 1.

² See Zippel, *Röm. Herrschaft in Illyrien*, p. 13, Mommsen, *loc. cit.*

³ Mr. Furneaux (and apparently Nipperdey) take the interval as reckoned from the divorce to the trial. This suits the Latin order in Suetonius better; but is tacitly rejected by Mommsen and others as contrary to common sense and the general circumstances of the case.

previous tutor, died in that year, we may suppose that these two great honours, which associated him so closely with the imperial family, were bestowed on him together at the close of A.D. 2. He doubtless remained in Armenia with Gaius, until the latter, being seized with illness from the effects of a wound, returned towards Italy, and died on the Lycian coast on 21st February, A.D. 4.

Now, when we consider that the consuls of the years 11, 10, and 8 B.C., had all held the proconsulship of Asia before the year 3 B.C., and that less distinguished men, consuls in 14 and 8 B.C., governed Asia in 2 B.C. and 1 A.D., it is highly improbable that Quirinius's government of Asia was postponed so late as 4-5 A.D. : the interval of sixteen years between consulship and Asian proconsulship is unexampled at that time.¹

We conclude, then, that Quirinius probably governed Asia in some year in the interval 5-2 B.C., *i.e.* not later than 3-2 B.C. and his first Syrian governorship in that case could not be later than 4-3 B.C. But, as we have seen, Varus governed Syria B.C. 6-3; and, according to Josephus, he succeeded Saturninus, who came to Syria in 9 B.C. No interval remains for Quirinius, except on one of two suppositions. (1) Did Josephus omit Quirinius by mistake, owing to the fact that he, governing Syria 7-6 B.C., was entirely occupied by the Homonadensian war, and never appeared in Southern Syria? This is a view which seems contrary to sound method, and to have nothing in its favour. (2) Was there a temporary arrangement in Syria similar to that which was instituted in Africa by the Emperor Caligula; *viz.*, that the command of the army with a view to the Homo-

¹ *L' intervalle sous Auguste parait avoir été généralement de cinq à six ans* (Waddington, *Fastes*, p. 12). The interval was thirteen years in the case of Cn. Lentulus Augur; but this is unique in that age.

nadensian war was entrusted to Quirinius, while the peaceful administration was committed to Quintilius Varus? This, certainly, is a rather violent supposition,¹ but it is clear that the Homonadensian war, in the remote north-west corner of the vast province, would monopolize the energies of the general for a long time. The importance attached to the war by the Romans appears from the fact that two supplications were voted on account of the success, and triumphal ornaments were awarded to Quirinius.² It seems, therefore, not impossible that in B.C. 6 or 5, Quirinius was sent to administer the Syrian armies, and conduct the great war, while Varus, who had been already in office for a year, was continued as peaceful administrator: the serious business connected with the Judæan kingdom, where Herod (as we have seen), was rather discontented and estranged, seemed to demand the continued close surveillance of Varus, who therefore was retained with authority over the province in everything except military matters. Finally we must understand that on the conclusion of the war the extraordinary power delegated to Quirinius ceased, and he returned to Rome (or went to govern Asia), while Varus remained in Syria until B.C. 3.

Why, then, did Luke name Quirinius in place of Varus, when the latter was more immediately connected (on our supposition) with Judæan affairs? In the first place, we notice that on our supposition, the mention of Quirinius gives a more definite date than the mention of Varus; and Luke's object in mentioning the governor is simply to give a date according to the usual style of ancient dating. Further, the subject is too obscure to make it possible to

¹ Similar suggestions have been made by two German scholars, but not in a form consistent with Roman usage or supported by really parallel cases.

² As he was only *legatus*, a triumph could not be granted to him.

answer every question. Whatever view is adopted, difficulties and unanswerable questions remain.

For those who adhere to the generally accepted dating of Quirinius' first Syrian governorship between 3 and 1 B.C., the supposition which would be most natural and easy is that *Κυρινίου* is an error for *Κυντιλίου*¹; because it is obvious that Luke's narrative demands a date under Herod, and Quintilius Varus governed at least from 6 B.C. till after the death of that king. This error might be explained in several ways. (1) Luke might have made a slip as regards the name. (2) The likeness of the two names, and the fact that the "great census" had made Quirinius a far more familiar and important name in Palestine, might have caused an unintentional corruption of the text; but the fact that MSS. are unanimous is strong against this supposition. (3) There might have been deliberate and intentional alteration at an early date by editors, who, knowing about "the great census" under Quirinius in A.D. 6-8, and thinking that *Κυντιλίου* was a mere slip, corrected it to *Κυρινίου*. I have not acquired the right by sufficient study to hold views about the text of the Gospels; but, if the analogy of *Acts* can be applied to the third Gospel, continued study makes me more and more convinced that the text of *Acts* has been much exposed to deliberate and intentional alteration in details, sometimes by suppression, sometimes by addition, and sometimes by change of a word or words (implying editing of the text). But all these suppositions are less probable than our view.

In these remarks it is assumed that the famous and much discussed inscription of Tibur relates to Quirinius. That is probable, but, like most of the facts here stated, is not certain. We must at present be content with possibilities, and wait for the discovery of the inscription which will afford certainty. It is lamentable to think that

¹ The usual epigraphic form in Greek.

so little effort is being made to discover the lacking evidence, and that the inscriptions which might give us certainty on this and many similar points may at any moment be perishing for want of any eye and hand to copy them. It is certain that owing to the spread of what is called civilization, more inscriptions have perished in Asia Minor in the last fifty years than in several centuries previously; and we make no effort to save the knowledge that is daily perishing.

II. An objection which has been urged against the narrative of Luke ii. 1 ff. is that, even if a *census* were ordered by Augustus, it would not take place in the kingdom of Judæa; and if it did take place, there would be no need that Joseph or Mary should go up to Bethlehem. These objections are closely connected, and seem to me to be founded on an incorrect conception of the relation of such dependent kingdoms as that of Herod to the Roman Empire. The language which some modern writers use about Herod's kingdom would almost seem to imply that it was independent instead of being dependent. The intention of Augustus (and obviously of other Roman administrators) in instituting these dependent kingdoms is clearly indicated by Strabo¹ in describing the reason why Cilicia Tracheia was placed under the government of King Archelaus. A territory which was still not ripe for Roman provincial administration was made into a dependent kingdom as a preparatory step; the continuous rule of a king was believed to be more effective and to exercise a stronger compulsion upon an unruly and uncivilized race. But the dependent king was an instrument intended to prepare a race, too utterly alien to Roman ways, for the stage when it might be incorporated in a Roman province. In the Roman conception the dependent kingdoms formed part of the Roman world (what Luke calls τὴν οἰκουμένην);

¹ xivi, p. 671.

they paid tribute, as is mentioned expressly in many cases; and they therefore contributed to the strength of the empire. Herod seemed to Augustus to be acting in too independent a fashion about 8-7 B.C., and the reins were tightened rather sharply in consequence.¹ The numbering of the people was insisted on, in spite of Herod's natural reluctance to treat his kingdom as a part of the Empire.

May we not fairly regard the method of numbering as due to this reluctance on Herod's part? If he must hold a *census*, at least he might give it a national character by numbering according to tribes in the native and non-Roman style.² This would disguise from his subjects the true character of the *census*. In the circumstances, the mode of *census* described by Luke seems a perfectly natural and probable procedure.

Luke was, beyond doubt, acquainted with the Roman method of taking *census*; and, if he here described a non-Roman method as having been followed, he did so consciously and on authority. The very fact that the tribal method forms an essential part of the story seems to me to be a sign of truth: an inventor would have followed the familiar method of Roman *census*.

Further, this tribal method of numbering explains why no such serious disturbance was produced by it as resulted from the Roman numbering and valuation which took place in Quirinius's second Syrian administration. It was not felt as an entirely foreign and hateful thing, though doubtless it was as unpopular with the people as it was distasteful to Herod, and disapproved by them as much as David's numbering had been.

¹ γράφει πρὸς τὸν Ἡρώδην . . . ὅτι πάλαι χρώμενος αὐτῷ φίλῳ νῦν ὑπηκόῳ χρήσεται, Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, xvi. 9, 3. Mr. Lewin, in his *Fasti Sacri*, has treated this episode excellently.

² There was an essential and inherent opposition between the national and the Roman spirit in all matters and in every subject land. Romanization meant denationalization.

The Egyptian records show that two distinct kinds of ἀπογραφή were practised regularly under the Empire. One was the numbering by households, in which the head of each household made a return of his whole household every fourteenth year for purposes of numbering and probably of conscription. The other was for the purpose of taxation. Wilcken, in the paper which lies at the foundation of this study, has drawn this distinction clearly. In Judæa "the first census" was of the former kind only, "the great census" was also of the second kind.

It may be added that the statement of Justin Martyr, that the birth of Christ can be ascertained "from the ἀπογραφαὶ which were made" (ἐκ τῶν ἀπογραφῶν τῶν γενομένων), seems to imply an idea on his part that periodical census were taken, and that the records were preserved and could be consulted by authorized persons; and we have seen that both these facts are true in all probability. Beyond this general idea, which springs from his own knowledge of the Roman system, Justin seems to have no information except what he got from Luke. He knows that the registers exist, and he takes the facts on Luke's authority, and refers for corroboration to the registers; but his words would be meaningless unless it were a matter familiar to all that the registers did exist and constituted a final and indisputable court of appeal.

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