

IV.

THE COMPOSITION AND LITERARY CHARACTER OF THE GOSPELS OF LUKE AND MATTHEW.

Date and Authorship of 'Luke' and 'Acts.'

THE Third Gospel is not a book complete in itself. It is only the first portion of a larger historical work, which was apparently designed to be executed in three volumes. The third volume is not extant; in fact, there is very little reason to suppose that it was ever actually written, but the absence of an adequate peroration at the end of the Acts of the Apostles (which forms the second volume of the series), shews us that a further instalment must have been contemplated. The date of 'Luke' and 'Acts' can be determined within narrow limits, if the arguments used below are sound. On the one hand, both the Gospel and the Acts contain details drawn directly from the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus, a work published in 93 or 94 AD; on

THE GOSPEL HISTORY

the other hand, the literary evidence indicates that the author of the Gospel and of the Acts is none other than that companion of S. Paul, whose travelling diaries are largely quoted in the latter portion of the work. The Gospel and the Acts may therefore be assigned to the decade 95-105: we shall not be far wrong if we say in round numbers about 100 AD.

The evidence which convicts the Third Evangelist of having used the *Antiquities*, not always with complete accuracy, is very well brought together by Prof. P. W. Schmiedel in *Encyclopædia Biblica*, articles 'Theudas' and 'Lysanias.' In Josephus, *Ant.* xx 5, we read:

"While Fadus was procurator of Judæa, a certain charlatan, Theudas by name, persuaded a very great number of people to take their effects with them and follow him to the river Jordan; for he told them that he was a prophet, and said he would at the word of command divide the river and give them an easy passage through it; and by these words he deluded many. Fadus, however, did not permit them to gain aught by their folly, but sent a squadron of cavalry against them, which, falling upon them unexpectedly, slew many of them and took many alive. Taking Theudas also alive, they cut off his head and carried it to Jerusalem."

This would be between 44 and 46 AD.

Josephus then goes on to say that the procurator Alexander of Judæa (about 46-48 AD) put to death some of the sons of Judas the Galilean, a personage who had incited the Jews not to pay

LUKE AND JOSEPHUS

their taxes in the time of Quirinius, about AD 6 (*Ant.* xx 5₂).

Now in Acts v 34 ff a speech is put into the mouth of Gamaliel in which these two men, Theudas and Judas the Galilean, are mentioned one after the other as agitators who had come to grief after making a great stir for a short time.

“For before these days rose up Theudas, giving himself out to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about 400, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed and came to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the enrolment, and drew away some of the people after him: he also perished; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad.”

Here, if anywhere in the Acts, the details of the speech must be due to the author, for all the Christians had been put outside. There are strong reasons for believing that the passage in *Ant.* xx 5_{1,2} supplied the material for Gamaliel's speech. The verbal resemblance between the two passages is considerable; so much so, that Eusebius quotes *Ant.* xx 5₁ in his Ecclesiastical History as a confirmation of the narrative in Acts.

The account in Josephus is consistent, and his information about these agitators, for aught we know to the contrary, is accurate. The passage in Acts, on the other hand, occurs in a speech where it is probable that the narrator is freely setting down such details as seemed appropriate;

THE GOSPEL HISTORY

it is chronologically faulty, for Gamaliel was speaking before 34 AD, before the rebellion of Theudas took place, and yet this rebellion is mentioned as if it preceded the times of the Census of Quirinius and the birth of Jesus. When therefore we find a passage where Theudas and Judas are spoken of, one after the other and in reverse chronological order, occurring in a standard history, it is natural to conjecture that this passage was in the mind of the author of the book of Acts. That the author of the book of Acts should have been careless in his choice of suitable historical instances to put into the mouth of Gamaliel is not very surprising, and surely quite excusable: the important point is not his inaccuracy, but his acquaintance with the *Antiquities* of Josephus. If he had read the *Antiquities*, and I cannot help drawing this inference, we must date the composition of the book of Acts later than 94 AD.

It should be remarked that if we admit the literary connexion between the Acts and the *Antiquities* we cannot arrive at an earlier date for Acts by postulating a common source for Luke and Josephus. The problem is not to explain how the author of Acts should have heard of Judas of Galilee and of Theudas, but why he should mention them together in the wrong order.