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New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published 1986-87

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Ever since its inauguration in 1981 by G. H. R. Horsley, the *New Documents* series has provided a useful selection and analysis of recent epigraphical and papyrological publications. The series has undergone several changes in scope. The purpose of the original publication, embodied in the first five volumes, was twofold: to render more accessible documents that illustrate the cultural and social context in which Christianity was born and to collect philological notes that would contribute to the eventual compilation of a vocabularic analysis of the New Testament, replacing the 1930 Moulton and Milligan volume, *The Vocabulary of the New Testament*. The next three volumes edited by S. R. Llewelyn were less miscellaneous than their predecessors, concentrating on documents that illustrate aspects of the social history of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods and organized under three or four main rubrics (e.g., “army,” “transportation,” “slavery”). The volume under review is again more miscellaneous in nature, although the headings “Judaica” and “Ecclesiastica” have been retained. In place of topical organization, the texts are simply divided into “epigraphic” and “papyrus” documents. All but one of the epigraphical documents are from Asia.

What is particularly noteworthy about this volume is the increased attention to the categories of Mediterranean anthropology and social relations—honor and shame, benefaction and reciprocity, *patronalia* and *clientalia*—especially in the five contributions by James R. Harrison. Harrison uses *IMylasa* I 119 (Mylasa; second

century B.C.E.), a fairly typical decree voting an honorand a crown and a share in the sacrifices, to highlight the contrasting behavior of early Christians, who either ignored honorific practices or redirected honorific language toward God and Christ. Three inscriptions illustrate honorific vocabulary associated with the recognition of public benefaction: *IKilikiaDF* 69 (Cilicia; second century B.C.E.) applies the term *sotereia* to acts of deliverance performed by a public benefactor (compare the Priene inscription honoring Augustus with similar terms [V. Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones, *Document Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949) §§98, 98a]); *ISmyrna* II/1 616 (Smyrna; Hellenistic period) uses the terms *aner agathos* (compare Rom 5:7b) and *euergetes tou demou* (compare Acts 10:38) to recognize superior moral achievement; and *SEG XXXVII* 957 (Claros; late third century B.C.E.) honors a benefactor for his decisive benefactions in “times of necessity” (*en kairois anagkaiois*; cf. 1 Cor 7:26–29). *SEG XXXVII* 1210 (Carallia; Imperial period) offer other instances of *aner agathos* and “pressing times” (*en deinotatois kai epeigousin kairois*) but also describes the accomplishments of the benefactor in the language of excess (*hyperballein*), designed to foster competition among others within that class. Harrison notes that Paul restricts the language of excess to God and avoids deploying such language in order to create competition among benefactors. The latter point could be made even more effectively by citing Attic inscriptions such as *IG II*² 1297; 1327, which use the explicit formula, “in order that there might be a rivalry [*ephamillon*] among those who wish to be benefactors to the *koinon*” (see J. S. Kloppenborg, “Egalitarianism in the Myth and Rhetoric of Pauline Churches,” in *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack* [ed. E. Castelli and H. Taussig; Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996], 258).

Several other inscriptions concern benefaction. T. W. Hillard treats the relationship between Roman benefactors and the Greek cities of the East: *SEG XXXVII* 958 (Claros; 61–58 B.C.E.) accords semidivine honors to a governor, Cicero’s younger brother Q. Tullius Cicero. Cicero had written that these provincials regarded Quintus as a deified mortal dropped from heaven (*Q. Frat.* 1.1.7). Hillard uses *SEG XXXVII* 959 (Claros; 38–35 B.C.E.), which describes Manius Valerius Messala Potitus as a *patron tes poleos*, to advance the debate as to whether Rome imagined its imperial extension into the East as an act of state *patrocinium* (E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae (246–70 B.C.)* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1958]) or whether the inscription merely evidences the recognition of the personal patronage of individuals (E. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984]). E. A. Judge presents an inscription from a bath complex in Sardis (*SEG XXXVI* 1092; Sardis; 41–54 C.E.) honoring Apollophanes with *eucharistia*, a word that the New Testament reserves for God.

The remaining epigraphical documents are more miscellaneous in nature. Llewelyn's analysis of *IHadrianoi* 24 (Akcapinar; first century B.C.E.), buttressed by several other epigraphical and literary texts, concludes that the phrase *pistoi logoi* (cf. Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 1:14; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:13) normally refers not to the deity's words but to human words spoken on the deity's behalf. *ZPE* 69 (1987): 90–92 (Attica? first century B.C.E.–second century C.E.), a funerary inscription discussed by Judge, describes the ascent of the *psyche* of the deceased, a common motif on Greek tombstones but one that distinguishes Greek anthropology from that typically encountered in the early Jesus movement. A relatively unremarkable bilingual milestone from near Smyrna (*ISmyrna* II/1 826; 92–93 C.E.) gives R. A. Kearsley the occasion to discuss the network of Roman roads in Asia and occasions of the direct intervention of the emperor in provincial affairs, especially to prevent exploitation of inhabitants. Two honorific inscriptions, one from Ephesus (*SEG* XXXVII 886; 213–217 C.E.) and one from Sardis (*SEG* XXXVII 1096; 211–217 C.E.), point to intercity rivalry for the possession of a temple of the provincial imperial cult (see in general, S. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Emperors* [Religions in the Greco-Roman World 116; Leiden: Brill, 1993]).

The volume editor presents a number of papyri, mostly exemplifying economic and legal issues. *PKöln* VI 268 (Arsinoite nome; third century B.C.E.) illustrates both the way that persons without substantial means might lease, though a guarantor, the right to conduct a state-controlled business and how in the case of default guarantors might lose their sureties through seizure and auction by the *oikonomos*. The use of the coercive powers of the *oikonomos* to compel a party in a dispute to comply with the wishes of a plaintiff is the subject of *PKöln* VI 196–97 (Arsinoite nomes; third century B.C.E.). *PKöln* VI 170–72 (Arsinoite nome; 213 B.C.E.) and *PHelsingiensis* I 1 (Arsinoite nome; 194–180 B.C.E.) concern the mechanisms of tax-farming contracts, and the former reveals the complexities of a dual calendar system (one for the financial year, the other for the regnal year). *PHelsingiensis* I 2 (Arsinoite nome; 195–92 B.C.E.) reports a personal attack on a tax official in a bath, and *PHelsingiensis* I 31 (Arsinoite nome; 160 B.C.E.) complains of damage done by a roving herd of sheep. Four papyri from Munich illustrate (respectively) the use of the participle *zōn, zōsa* (living) to qualify objects or attributes as divine (*PMonac* III 45 [221–205 B.C.E.]), the dangers of childbirth (III 57 [second century B.C.E.]), imprisonment in the service of debt-recovery (III 52 [Heracleopolis; second century B.C.E.]), and a community of Jews from Heracleopolis with both *presbyteroi* and *archontes* (III 49; second century B.C.E.). Llewelyn's discussion of *PKöln* VI 247 (Oxyrhynchus? second/third century C.E.) introduces a very useful discussion of the form of wedding invitations for those interested in the etiquette of dinner invitations in Egypt. Judge republishes a document of the “ecumenical synod of Dionysiac artists” (*POxy*

XXVII 2476; 288 C.E.), the only civil body to act internationally prior to the ecumenical synods of the Christian church.

In the section devoted to Judaica, Judge discusses the well-known inscription from Aphrodisias that lists *theosebeis* among the donors to a Jewish association (see J. M. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias: Greek Inscriptions with Commentary* [Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1987]). Judge inclines to the view that the *theosebeis* are Gentiles attracted to Judaism without thereby becoming proselytes, though Judge does not explain what “attraction” might amount to for the town councilors on face B 34–38, who would undoubtedly be involved in the cult of Aphrodite. Curiously, Judge does not discuss the issue of the gender of Iael, the *prostates* (see B. J. Brooten, “Iael προστάτης in the Jewish Donative Inscription from Aphrodisias,” in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 149–62; idem, “The Gender of Ιαηλ in the Jewish Inscription from Aphrodisias,” in *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins Presented to John Strugnell* [ed. H. W. Attridge et al.; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1990], 163–73). This section concludes with Judith Lieu’s examination of a fifth-century *ketubbah* from the Cologne collection, which bridges the gap between the second-century C.E. *ketubboth* from Muraba‘at and Nahal Hever (H. Cotton and A. Yardeni, *Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek Documentary Texts from Nahal Hever and Other Sites* [DJD 27; Oxford: Clarendon, 1998]) and *ketubboth* known from the Cairo Genizah. Llewelyn adds a synthetic essay on the history of the *ketubbah* from the Hebrew Bible to the rabbinic period.

The volume concludes with four miscellaneous Christian documents: J. W. Pryor’s presentation of the Cologne fragment of the “Unknown Gospel” (*PEgerton 2; PKöln VI 255*); a Christian funerary inscription from Claudiopolis (*IKlaudiuPolis 5*; second/third century C.E.) that describes that deceased as “awaiting the trumpet,” the earliest reference to “the Lord’s day” (*POxy LIV 3759; 325 C.E.*; cf. *POxy 3407*; fourth century C.E.; Llewelyn and Nobbs); and two hymns, one to Christ (*PHeid 292*; sixth/seventh century C.E.) and the other to Mary (*PHeid 294*; fifth/sixth century C.E.; M. Halding). As usual, the volume is furnished with a subject index and an *index locorum*.

This volume, like its predecessors, is a treasure trove of useful documents bearing on numerous issues in the interpretation of early Christian texts. It is an indispensable tool for anyone who wishes seriously to explore in concrete detail the economic, social, technological, legal, and administrative contexts in which the Jesus movement was born. The unfortunate aspect of the series in general is that the lag time between the dates of original publication and their appearance in *New Documents* is increasing. The 1981 *NewDocs* volume (vol. 1) collected original publications from 1976; the 1987 volume

(vol. 4) appeared eight years after the original publications; and original publications in the volume under review are already fifteen to sixteen years old. Most are not very well known by scholars in the fields of Christian origins and Second Temple Judaism, so their republication still serves a useful purpose. The Aphrodisias *theosebeis* inscription, however, is so well-known and so widely discussed, as Judge's appended bibliography in fact indicates, that one wonders whether there is really a point in including it, when other corpora of inscriptions published in 1986–87 were not included: Thomas Corsten, ed. *Die Inschriften von Apameia (Bithynien) und Pylai* (IGSK 32; Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1987); Pierre-Louis Gatier, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie. Tome XXI: Inscriptions de la Jordanie. 2: Région centrale* (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, 114; Paris: Librairie Orientale Paul Geuthner, 1986); Leah Roth-Gerson, *HKTWBWT HYWWNYWT MBTY-HKNST B'RŞ-YSR'L: The Greek Inscriptions from Synagogues in Eretz Israel* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzak Ben-Zvi, 1987); or Ender Varinlioglu, ed. *Die Inschriften von Keramos* (IGSK 30; Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1986), for example.