Notes on the 'Acta' of Martyrs.

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I. Onesiphorus the Martyr.

There is a tradition, found only in some later authorities, that Onesiphorus and Porphyrius suffered martyrdom at Parium, a city of Mysia, situated near the western end of the Sea of Marmora, where it narrows to the Hellespont; and in the tradition this Onesiphorus is identified with the friend and disciple of Paul mentioned in 2 Ti 1^{16} 4^{19}. The martyrdom is said to have occurred while Adrianus was proconsul. All the authorities are quoted in *Acta Sanctorum* under date 6th September, pp. 662–666.

In investigating this tradition we can at once place its origin earlier than the reorganization of the Roman provinces by Diocletian about 295 A.D. The tradition obviously goes back to the period when Parium formed part of the province Asia, governed by a proconsul. Diocletian broke up that great province, and Parium thenceforth formed part of Hellespontus, which was not governed by a proconsul. Many traditions are shown to be of later origin, because they use official names of the post-Diocletianic system. This tradition, which uses the older titles, must go back to the earlier period; and that gives it a high character.

The editors of the *Acta Sanctorum* remark that no proconsul Adrianus is known at any time which would suit the tradition. They have, however, overlooked the proconsul Hadrianus, known from coins of Thyatira to have governed Asia some time between 102 and 114 A.D.[1] This proconsul is, indeed, not entirely certain, as of the coins which mention him, two are incomplete in the legend, and one, though said to be complete, depends on the not quite trustworthy reading of the old numismatist, Sestini; but so competent an authority as M. Waddington does not hesitate to accept their converging testimony. The additional witness of this old tradition lends some confirmation to it. This obscure proconsul is not likely to be invented by tradition; it would be too marvellous a coincidence that, with the temptation to use the title emperor in place of proconsul for Hadrian, a mere invention should have agreed with the record of coins.

We can, therefore, now go further, and assert that probably the tradition embodies a historically trustworthy record: there occurred at Parium the martyrdom of Onesiphorus and his servant Porphyrius during the reign of the Emperor Trajan, between 102 and 114 A.D. This is one more item to add to the short list of martyrs under Trajan, given by Lightfoot (*Ignatius and Polycarp*, i. p. 50 ff., ii. p. 438 ff.).

Waddington considers that this proconsul Hadrianus cannot be the emperor of that name. The future emperor was consul in 108, and the usual interval at that time between the consulship and the proconsulship of Asia was twelve or more years. This argument, however, is not conclusive, for an exception might be made in favour of a person so closely connected with the emperor as Hadrian; and it is quite consistent with all that is known of his life that he should have governed Asia either in 112–113 or 113–114. His appointment, in 114, as *legatus* (doubtless of Syria) during the Parthian expedition, might be the sequel of his governorship of Asia. It is known from a Latin inscription of Athens, of the year 112, that up till that time he had not governed Asia. We must resign ourselves to remain ignorant, in the present state of knowledge, who the proconsul was or was not.

The importance of this question lies, not in the fate of Onesiphorus, but in the existence of a Mysian Christian tradition, originating not later than the beginning of the second century. If our reasoning is correct, we find that in Mysia there was preserved the memory of an event which must have been lost, unless a continuous tradition bridged across the centuries from 100 A.D. onwards, preserving some obscure facts of history in a trustworthy form. This event is not recorded in the oldest martyrologies, but appears in late documents, various menologia, etc. (see *Acta Sanctorum, l.c.*).

[1] On the coins Trajan bears the title Dacicus, which he received late in 102, but not Optimus, which he got during 114.

Whether Onesiphorus the martyr is the same as the Onesiphorus mentioned by Paul about 66 A.D. remains uncertain; but the identity is improbable. The dates do not definitely exclude the identity, especially if Hadrian's proconsulship fell early in the period which is open for it, 102–114. But, against this, we must remember that the persecution began in the neighbouring province, Bithynia, not earlier than 112; and it would appear that the attention of Trajan and of his governors was directed to the Christians about that date, so that 113 or 114 is the most probable time for the government of Hadrian. As Onesiphorus was the head of a household in Ephesus when Paul wrote 2 Ti, about 65 or 66, he could hardly at that time be younger than thirty to forty; and it is highly improbable that this Onesiphorus should be acting as a missionary in Mysia in 113.

Moreover, the tradition embodied in the *Acts of Paul and Thekla*, which goes back at least as early as 150–170 A.D., makes Onesiphorus a native of Iconium, converted by Paul on his first visit, and already a householder at that time, about 48 A.D. This tradition, in so far as it has any value (and it is old enough to have some authority) would make the identity of the two persons named Onesiphorus impossible.

II. Serenianus, Persecutor.

Firmilian, bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, writing to Cyprian in 256–257 A.D., mentions a former governor of Cappadocia, Serenianus, *acerbus et dirus persecutor*, who was administering Cappadocia and Pontus (the great part of Pontus being united with Cappadocia, while only a small part was classed with Bithynia), about twenty-two years ago, *temporibus post Alexandrum Imperatorem*. In ordinary matters of history no doubt would be entertained about a statement resting on such excellent authority; but yet some scholars are possessed by such scepticism with regard to all the details of the persecutions, that it is useful to find confirmation of this governor's reality and date. From several milestones found in Cappadocia by Professor Sterrett and Messrs. Hogarth and Munro, we learn that Licinnius Serenianus was governing the province under Maximin, the successor of Alexander, during the first year of his reign, 235 A.D. How long Serenianus governed we cannot tell; three years was a common term for *legati* of Augustus. Firmilian mentions that the persecution was purely local, being roused by the occurrence of great earthquakes in the province (cf. Tertullian, *Apol.*, c. 40); and many Christians migrated into neighbouring provinces in order to escape from the danger.

III. Optimus, Proconsul.

In the *Acta* of Maximus, and the *Acta* of Peter, Andreas, Paulus, and Dionysia, these martyrs are said to have suffered in the reign of Decius, 250–251 A.D., while Optimus was proconsul of Asia. Waddington accepts the authority of these *Acta*, and makes Optimus the successor of Proculus Quintilianus, who governed Asia 249–250; but Dr. Dessau, in *Prosopographia Imp. Rom.*, *s.v.*, declares that these documents are valueless (*exigui pretii vel adeo nullius*), and that the name of the proconsul is corrupt. He conjectures that the proconsul was called Aristus in the Greek original, and that when the *Acta* were rendered into Latin, the name was translated as Optimus. Apparently Dessau's scepticism relates only to the name Optimus, which was unknown to him as a Roman name, while two persons named Flavius Aristus are known; he takes the documents to be careless renderings of more trustworthy Greek *Acta*. The name Optimus has, however, been justified by the recent discovery of a Greek inscription on the site of the Phrygian city, Meiros or Meros (in the province Asia), honouring Fl(avius) Optimus, τὸν διασημ(ότατον) ἡγεμόνα (published by Mr. J. G. C. Anderson in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 1897, p. 424).

As Meros was in the province Asia, there is some temptation to identify Optimus of the *Acta* with Flavius Optimus of the inscription. But this is not possible. Flavius Optimus, it is true, was governor of the province in which Meros was situated; but he bears the title διασημότατος, *i.e.* *perfectissimus*, which marks him as belonging to a lower grade of governors, and to a later era. In 250 A.D. the governor of Asia had the rank λαμπρότατος, *clarissimus*; and the inscription must be referred to the fourth or fifth century, when Asia had been broken up, and Meros was part of Phrygia Salutaris, administered by a *praeses perfectissimus*.

The inscription, therefore, merely proves that the name Flavius Optimus is as probable as Flavius Aristus; Dr. Dessau must either carry his doubts much further, or accept the authority of the *Acta*.

But there is no reason to distrust the *Acta*; they have been received by Ruinart among the *Acta Sincera*, and Ruinart's judgment was rarely mistaken. A minuter examination would show further reason to trust these special *Acta*, but it seems unnecessary to defend them until some better reason has been shown for distrusting them.

Maximus is said to have suffered *apud Asiam*, and, again, *apud Asiam provinciam*. The analogy of the *Acta* of Peter and Andreas shows that probably *Asiam* is a false reading of the name of some city; and several authorities conjecture *Asisiam*, and transfer Maximus to Liburnia (in which Asisia was situated). Certainly *apud* is not particularly suitable with the name of a province (though allowable in these *Acta*); moreover, one authority speaks of Maximus *in Asia civitate*. Now the *Acta* of Peter and Andreas show that Optimus was governor of Asia, for they mention the two (Asian) cities, Lampsacus and Troas, as the scene of martyrdom. Hence, if any change is needed, we must look for the name of an Asian city. Further, there is another Maximus, who is said to have suffered *apud Ambiensem provinciam* on a different day of the year; and all authorities recognize the probability that these two Maximi are different forms of one martyr, distorted through errors in the transmission of an original text. The correct reading seems to have been corrupted both to *Asiam* and to *Ambiensem*.

The true reading is probably *apud Apiam*. The city Apia, now called Abia, was situated in the province Asia; and *apud Apiam* might readily be corrupted, on the one hand to *Asiam*, on the other hand to *apud Abiam*. *Apud Asiam provinciam*, which occurs in the concluding formula of the *Acta*, probably was the first to be corrupted; it was understood that the province was meant, and the word *provinciam* was introduced; and, after this, further corruption was inevitable, either *Asiam* or *Abiensem*. The insertion of *m* in *Ambiensem* may be compared to *Andrianus* for *Adrianus* (found in the records of Onesiphorus), and *Antalia* for *Attalia*. It is no real argument against this suggestion that one authority says Maximus suffered at Ephesus; this is a mere inference from *Asiam provinciam*: Ephesus was the capital of the province Asia.

Recent Foreign Theology.

The 'Kurzer Hand-Commentar.'

THIS excellent series of commentaries on the O.T. continues to make steady progress. One of the most recent additions [1] to it contains the Books of Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. At present we desire to notice the commentary on Ruth by Bertholet and that on Esther by Wildeboer. To the others we may return on a future occasion.

Bertholet, upon the ground of the contents and the linguistic features of Ruth, postulates for this book a relatively late date. As to the question whether the author of the book meant to narrate pure history, or whether a 'tendency' (even supposing a traditional basis underlies the contents) is not to be detected in his work, Bertholet has no hesitation about accepting the second alternative. He rejects, however, the idea that the purpose of the book is to direct the eyes of the remnants of the Northern kingdom (after the Fall of Samaria) to the Davidic dynasty, with a view to the reunion of all Israel under that sway. As little can he accept the notion that the aim of the book is to be found in a desire to emphasize the duty and the blessing of levirate marriage, although he believes that in the case of Boaz and Ruth we have to do with levirate marriage according to the oldest conceptions of this institution (cf. Gn 28). Others have viewed the story of Ruth as a *midrash* intended to explain how David came to entrust his parents to the keeping of the king of Moab (1 S 22^3), and also to supply a missing genealogy of David (see *ZATW*, xii. 43). But Bertholet objects to this, that what is emphasized in the book is the breaking off by Ruth from all connexion with Moab, that there is no trace of any connexion with the Moabite royal house, and that 4^{18-22} (containing the genealogy) did not probably

[1] *Die fünf Megillot.* Erklärt von Budde, Bertholet, und Wildeboer. Freiburg i. B.: Mohr, 1898; London and Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate. Price 4s.