

Professor Edwin Judge: A Book Launch

E.A. Judge, *Engaging Rome and Jerusalem*,
(ed. S. Piggin; North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014).

In 1966 E.A. Judge, Reader in History at the University of Sydney had a small third year Roman History class of which I was a member, along with a younger Tom Hillard.

Tom has gone on to great things as a Roman historian and I have pursued the study of Christian origins within the canon of Jewish, Roman and early Christian texts. Another in the class, Judith Nicholls, now a senior mature age student, is researching her PhD on Jerome.

Edwin Judge's office is lined with the higher degree theses of his dozens of supervised students. These volumes are silent tribute to a master teacher's scholarship but equally to his generosity.

We students derived *data* from Judge, but more importantly, *method*, or more precisely *documentary* method. Surely my guess is close to the mark in thinking the words 'Ancient History *Documentary* Research Centre' are Judge-inspired. I am not guessing, but speak from knowledge, that 'New *Documents* Illustrating Early Christianity' is pure Judge.

Judge was always an elegant lecturer, who combined eloquence with gravitas, with a degree of tantalizing obscurity thrown in, who was always more than a pleasure to hear. He was different from, but as good as, Cable or Mansfield, which is high praise.

But it was the *method*...so simple: a sheet of text from the classical era; that was all. In the course of the well-shaped hour its *Provenance* would emerge, with critical comment; also its literary *Context*. Then what did these words *mean*? What was their *significance* relative to other texts? Then on to an emerging explanation of what was going on, *historically*.

The cluster of 'history' words are noteworthy: *historeō* ('to learn by inquiry'); *historia* ('a learning by inquiry'); *historikos* ('of' or 'for inquiry'); so Liddell and Scott. What I remember learning from Judge was 'inquiry' via exegesis of texts.

History *is* documents, whether carved in stone or written on paper.

As it happens, I had learned about documents beforehand from Knox and Robinson, my teachers at Moore College, who had studied Greek at the University of Sydney under, respectively, Enoch Powell and George Pelham Shipp. My teachers schooled me in the method. But Judge took it to a new level and mightily reinforced this text-based method as a platform to journey into exciting historical territory.

But I did learn *data* from Judge, one aspect of which is thankfully preserved in Stuart Piggins' collection. To this day I cannot bring myself to refer to the early Julio-

Claudians as ‘Emperor Augustus’ or ‘Emperor Tiberius’. It was a delight, therefore, to re-read ‘Who First Saw Augustus as an Emperor?’ which Judge had explored more fully explored in the papers in Jim Harrison’s collection, 2008.

As it happens you will search the New Testament in vain for the word, ‘emperor’. It does not appear. Its texts come from the later Julio-Claudian and Flavian era (circa 50-95) but you will not find ‘emperor’. You will find ‘*Caesar*’ – Caesar Augustus, Tiberius Caesar, ‘tribute to Caesar [Tiberius]’, ‘Caesar’s friend [Tiberius]’, ‘no king but Caesar [Tiberius]’, ‘the decrees of Caesar [Claudius]’, offence ‘against Caesar [Nero]’, ‘the tribunal (*bēma*) of Caesar [Nero]’, ‘appeal to Caesar [Nero]’, ‘you must stand before Caesar [Nero]’, ‘the household of Caesar [Nero]’.

I do not know, but would like to, if the uniform precision of the New Testament about ‘Caesar’, influenced Judge’s judgement. After all, these New Testament texts are the earliest major sources for the ‘Caesars’ of the first century, predating by decades Tacitus and Suetonius.

There are many fine contributions about early Christianity, let me mention three:

Where is the Historical Jesus?
Jesus outside the Gospels
The Essential Jesus

The first – ‘Where is the Historical Jesus?’ – was published in *The Australian* newspaper in 1968 but a young Stuart Piggin had heard it with excitement as a lecture in 1965.

Its insights are stunning. Classical man would not have been surprised by assertions of resurrection because people were looking for ‘monstrosities’ as ‘portentous’ because they viewed the future with anxiety. But in the gospel the ‘resurrection’ was no mere portent but the climax to an extended *historical* narrative about Jesus of Nazareth (my words).

Was that narrative *myth*? Christian meetings in no way resembled mystery cults but were educational (my word) in character focusing not on ‘religious atmosphere’ or ritual but on historical statements and historical documents that soon became or already had become ‘crystallised in the creeds’. Judge’s brief analysis quietly demolished Rudolph Bultmann’s elaborate argument that the gospel was myth-based. No one believes this today, even though Bultmann dominated New Testament thought in the first half of the twentieth century. Judge was ahead of his times, as in so many areas.

Was the argument ‘*legend*’? Judge’s keen awareness of chronology – a most vital discipline for the historian – unerringly ‘fixes’ the texts we call ‘canonical’ to the two generations immediately following Jesus. These texts, which are rich in uncontrived historical detail (my words), were not sufficient for people a century later, however, who wrote new gospels romantically filling in the gaps. But they did so with fantastic legendary elements, as in the Gospel of Peter, where the risen Jesus is a gargantuan

figure who is so huge that he reaches to the heavens!

Judge comments: 'By contrast with the accretion of legend in later versions the historical integrity of the canonical texts stands out clearly'.

This was a prescient statement. Many scholars today do a double shuffle. They ridiculously push the dates of the canonical texts into the second century. This is in spite of retrospective references to them by the church fathers in the early second century (Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp). This, too, in spite of the emerging mass of papyrus manuscripts beginning with P52 (a fragment of John from c. 125) that culminate near the end of the second century in a codex with the four Gospels and Acts (P45), Paul's thirteen epistles and Hebrews (P46) and the Apocalypse (P47).

These codexes (or is it codices?) were each for church reading and teaching (education and edification). But the flavour of the month now is to date that which is early late and to classify that which is late and legendary as if *primary* regarding the historical Jesus, about whom as a consequence we can now say nothing.

What then of Paul's version of the gospel? Judge points out that the young Pharisee had been brought up in the 'hard school' of 'punctilious...verbal accuracy...[in] ancient Judaism'. When the arch-enemy of the gospel became a leading advocate he scrupulously distinguished his own words from the words of the Lord. This man of powerful education and intellect remained resolutely the 'slave (*doulos*) of Jesus'.

The gospel authors wrote in the two decades after Paul's death in 65 (Mark wrote from Rome between 65-70). Almost certainly they were aware of Paul's writings but were not influenced by them. They wrote down as *history* what they had preached, a *biographically* based account of Jesus, his life, death and resurrection. They did so independently of Paul.

Jesus outside the Gospels (1985) is a masterly survey of and commentary on references to Jesus in early non-Christian sources. Its precision and brevity invites expansion into a monograph, something for Edwin to do in his spare time! He goes against the flow in denying that Suetonius' *Chrestus*, who inspired Claudius' expulsion of Jews from Rome, was *Christus*, the founder of the *Christiani*. He was merely a man named *Chrestus*, about whom we know nothing else. Does Edwin Judge still believe this?

My last sample is: *The Essential Jesus* (2002) where Judge reviews a book that critically reviews the reductionist Jesus Seminar. In a rare example of humour Judge comments, 'None of the contributors is likely to be elected as a fellow of the Jesus Seminar'. But maybe it wasn't humour, just a laconic statement of fact.

There are also a number of pieces on education, reflecting Judge's interest not only in university education, but education at primary and secondary levels as well, indicating his remarkable breadth of interest.

Edwin Judge is my teacher and dear friend. His influence on me has been wholly good, indeed inestimable, and for that I thank God most sincerely. I am certain that I speak for many about a man we all love.

I am honoured to co-launch Stuart's collection, which is all the more valuable because it sets in stone what Edwin Judge thought at the time he wrote, now going back many years. It is, therefore, a modern historian's ready made source book for the thoughts of a great historian of antiquity.

We thank Stuart for his hard work in tracking down these texts and for his very helpful introductory notes.

Paul Barnett
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