

Historical Evidence for Jesus Christ

There is ongoing debate among conservative and liberal Biblical scholars and secular scholars about who the authors of many of the books of the New Testament were and when these books were written, as well as how well the autographs have been preserved in manuscript form. However, there is little disagreement that many of the epistles attributed to the apostle Paul are authentic and that these books were written before his death ca. 67 A.D. One of these letters, the book of Romans, was written 50 – 67 A.D., with several conservative scholars placing the time of writing to ca. 57 A.D. Part of the book of Romans has been preserved in the Chester Beatty II papyri (P46), dated about 100 – 150 A.D. The first part of the book of Romans, Rom. 1:1-7, is preserved in (papyrus) P. Oxyrhynchus 209 (P10), dated about the 4th century. These verses from the beginning of Romans emphasize the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, and the Old Testament prophecy of His coming. Although the apostle Paul never stated in any of his letters that he had met Jesus Christ during His ministry on earth, Paul did clearly state that he had met with several of the apostles of Jesus and had spent time with them, e.g. Gal. 1:18-19, Gal. 2:11-14, etc. Therefore, Paul had the opportunity to discuss the teachings and the life of Jesus Christ with men who had first-hand knowledge of His earthly ministry.

Twentieth century secular historian, Will Durant, adequately summed up the impact of this evidence for the historical Jesus Christ in his book, *The Story of Civilization, Vol. III: Caesar and Christ*:

The Christian evidence for Christ begins with the letters ascribed to Saint Paul. Some of these are of uncertain authorship; several, antedating A.D. 64, are almost universally accounted as substantially genuine. No one has questioned the existence of Paul, or his repeated meetings with Peter, James, and John; and Paul enviously admits that these men had known Christ in his flesh. The accepted epistles frequently refer to the Last Supper and the Crucifixion.

... The contradictions are of minutiae, not substance; in essentials the synoptic gospels agree remarkably well, and form a consistent portrait of Christ. In the enthusiasm of its discoveries the Higher Criticism has applied to the New Testament tests of authenticity so severe that by them a hundred ancient worthies, for example Hammurabi, David, Socrates would fade into legend. Despite the prejudices and theological preconceptions of the evangelists, they record many incidents that mere inventors would have concealed the competition of the apostles for high places in the Kingdom, their flight after Jesus' arrest, Peter's denial, the failure of Christ to work miracles in Galilee, the references of some auditors to his possible insanity, his early uncertainty as to his mission, his confessions of ignorance as to the future, his moments of bitterness, his despairing cry on the cross; no one reading these scenes can doubt the reality of the figure behind them. That a few simple men should in one generation have invented so powerful and appealing a personality, so loft an ethic and so inspiring a vision of human brotherhood, would be a miracle far more incredible than any recorded in the Gospel. After two centuries of Higher Criticism the outlines of the life, character, and teaching of Christ, remain reasonably clear, and constitute the most fascinating feature of the history of Western man.

Schaff, P., & Schaff, D. S. (1997). *History of the Christian Church*.

The oldest heathen testimony is probably in the Syriac letter of Mara, a philosopher, to his son Serapion, about a.d. 74, first published by Cureton, in *Spicilegium Syriacum*, Lond. 1855, and translated by Pratten in the "Ante-Nicene Library," Edinb. vol. xxiv. (1872), 104–114. Here Christ is compared to Socrates and Pythagoras, and called "the wise king of the Jews," who were justly punished for murdering him. Ewald (l.c. p. 180) calls this testimony "very remarkable for its simplicity and originality as well as its antiquity."

[N.B. The manuscript mentioned below (written 73 - 200 A.D.; copy from the 6th or 7th centuries) is now held by **The British Library**; <http://www.bl.uk/>.

Extract: The following Manuscripts in Syriac, from No. 14,425 to No. 14,741 inclusive, were obtained from the Syrian Monastery of St. Mary Deipara, in the Desert of Nitria, or Scete. They form the larger portion of the same collection, of which a part was previously obtained in 1841.]

Cureton, Rev. William (1855). *Spicilegium Syriacum: Containing Remains Of Bardesan, Meliton, Ambrose And Mara Bar Serapion*. (available online at <http://www.ccel.org/>)

PREFACE.

THE Manuscript from which the materials for the present volume have been chiefly derived, is one of those which were obtained by Archdeacon Tattam from the Syrian convent in the desert of Nitria in the year 1843. It is now numbered 14,658 amongst the Additional Manuscripts in the British Museum. Several leaves were added in 1847 from fragments subsequently acquired by M. Pacho; and four more were again supplied from other fragments procured also by him from the same source in the year 1850. At present the volume consists of one hundred and eighty-eight leaves. Originally it must have had more than two hundred and twenty; for the last gathering as it now stands is numbered the twenty-second, and each gathering consisted of ten leaves. It is imperfect both at the beginning and the end, has suffered mutilations in several parts of the volume, and some of the leaves have been much stained by oil. It is written in a large bold hand in two columns: the headings of chapters and the titles of separate works are distinguished by red letters. It appears to have been transcribed about the sixth or seventh century of our era.

... MARA, SON OF SERAPION.

We have no information respecting this author beyond what is supplied in the letter itself addressed to his son. Mara, or as Assemani writes it in Latin, Maras, is not an uncommon appellation amongst the Syrians, and there have been many who have borne the name of Serapion.

The author speaks of himself as one whose city had been ruined, and himself also taken and detained as prisoner in bonds by the Romans, together with others whom the victors treated in a tyrannical manner, as distrustful of their fidelity to the Roman government. He describes the misery of his friends and companions belonging to the city of Samosata, and the distresses which he and they suffered when they joined themselves together on the road to Seleucia. He alludes to the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews as an act of divine vengeance for their having murdered Jesus; but he makes no direct mention of the name of Christ, and only designates him as the "wise king," who, although put to death, still lived in the "wise laws which he promulgated."

From these facts it is evident that the author wrote at a time when the Romans not long before had been making fresh conquests, or repressing rebellion in the parts of Syria about Samosata and Seleucia, and

probably at a period when, on account of the persecution of the Christians, it would not have been prudent or safe to have spoken in more direct terms of Christ. Comagena and its capital Samosata were taken by the Romans in the reign of Vespasian, A.D. 72, or two years after the capture of Jerusalem by Titus. About twenty-three years later the persecution under Domitian began, A.D. 95. There would be nothing therefore incongruous in assigning, from its internal evidence, the date of this Epistle to the close of the first century. Nor would the allusion to the catastrophe of Samos at all militate against this, if it be referred to the earthquake in the reign of Augustus, from which several of the neighbouring islands also suffered.

The mention, however, of that island having been covered with sand, as a punishment for the burning of Pythagoras, seems to me to have a direct reference to the Sibylline verses; ...

I cannot therefore, in my own mind, come to any other conclusion than that this Epistle ought to be assigned to a period when the Sibylline verses were frequently cited, the age of Justin Martyr, Meliton, and Tertullian. This date, too, will perhaps otherwise coincide quite as well with what is read in the letter as the former. The troubles to which the writer alludes as having befallen himself and his city will apply to those inflicted by the Romans upon the countries about the Tigris and Euphrates which had been excited to rebel against them by Vologeses, in the Parthian war under the command of Lucius Verus, A.D. 162-165. I have not found the name of Samosata especially mentioned as having suffered more than other cities in this war; but it is stated that Seleucia was sacked and burned by the Romans, and five or six thousand slain. The persecution under Marcus Antoninus followed very close upon this war, and as these facts equally agree with the allusions made in this Epistle of Mara, it may perhaps be nearer the truth to assign its date to the latter half of the second century rather than to the close of the first.

If indeed such be the period at which this Letter was written, there is no improbability in supposing, that the Serapion, to whom it is addressed, may be the same as he who succeeded Maximinus as eighth Bishop of Antioch, about the year 190, and who himself also wrote short epistles, similar to this in purpose and tendency, for which indeed his father's might have set him a pattern.

... THE EPISTLE OF MARA, SON OF SERAPION.

MARA, SON OF SERAPION, TO SERAPION MY SON, GREETING.

... For what else have we to say, when wise men are forcibly dragged by the hands of tyrants, and their wisdom is taken captive by calumny, and they are oppressed in their intelligence without defence? For what advantage did the Athenians gain by the murder of Socrates, the recompense of which they received in famine and pestilence? Or the people of Samos by the burning of Pythagoras, because in one hour their country was entirely covered with sand? Or the Jews by the death of their wise king because from that same time their kingdom was taken away? For with justice did God make recompense to the wisdom of these three: for the Athenians died of famine; and the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea without remedy; and the Jews, desolate and driven from their own kingdom, are scattered through every country. Socrates is not dead, because of Plato; neither Pythagoras, because of the statue of Juno; nor the Wise King, because of the laws which he promulgated.

Alternate Translation: (Robert C. Newman, 1980)

What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise king? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea; the

Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching of Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise king die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given.

[N.B. The original work, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, was written 90-100 A.D. The earliest extant manuscript copies of this work are: Latin (9th century), Greek (10th or 11th centuries), and Arabic (10th century) The first passage is also known as *Testimonium Flavianum*. Most secular scholars dismiss this passage as a Christian interpolation of the original work by Flavius Josephus (Josephus ben Matthias). Some Christian scholars believe that only part of this passage is a late interpolation.]

Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1996, c1987). *The Works of Josephus*: Complete and unabridged. Peabody: Hendrickson.

Book 18, Chapter 3.3

3. (63) Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; (64) and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross,^{b1} those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day,^c as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.

Book 18, Chapter 5.2

2. (116) Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist; (117) for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. (118) Now, when [many] others came in crowds about him, for they were greatly moved [or pleased] by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it should be too late. (119) Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure against him.

[N.B. For those scholars who accept this passage as original to Josephus, the debate is over whether this text refers to one man named Jesus, or two different men named Jesus, one who was the brother of James and another man who was the son of Damneus.]

Book 20, Chapter 9.1

1. (197) And now Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator; but the king deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. (198) Now the report goes, that this elder Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons, who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and he had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any

^{1b} A.D. 33, April 3.
^c April 5.

other of our high priests: (199) but this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees,^a who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; (200) when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned; (201) but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; (202) nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrin without his consent;^b —(203) whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.

a It hence evidently appears that Sadducees might be high priests in the days of Josephus, and that these Sadducees were usually very severe and inexorable judges, while the Pharisees were much milder, and more merciful, as appears by Reland's instances in his note on this place, and on Josephus's *Life* 34, and those taken from the New Testament, from Josephus himself, and from the rabbis; nor do we meet with any Sadducees later than this high priest in all Josephus.

b Of this condemnation of James the Just, and its causes, as also that he did not die till long afterwards, see *Prim. Christ. Revived*, 3, chs. 43–46. The sanhedrin condemned our Savior, but could not put him to death without the approbation of the Roman procurator: nor could therefore Ananias and his sanhedrin do more here, since they never had Albinus's approbation for the putting this James to death.

[N.B. written ca. 109 A.D.; earliest extant manuscript copy is from the 11th century]

Gaius Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals (Annales), Book XV*

(translation by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb; available at <http://classics.mit.edu>)

Such indeed were the precautions of human wisdom. The next thing was to seek means of propitiating the gods, and recourse was had to the Sibylline books, by the direction of which prayers were offered to Vulcanus, Ceres, and Proserpina. Juno, too, was entreated by the matrons, first, in the Capitol, then on the nearest part of the coast, whence water was procured to sprinkle the fane and image of the goddess. And there were sacred banquets and nightly vigils celebrated by married women. But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed.

Alternate Translation: (available online at <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/>)

Therefore, to stop the rumor, he falsely charged with guilt, and punished with the most fearful tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius, but the pernicious superstition - repressed for a time, broke out yet again, not only through Judea, - where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly first those were arrested who confessed they were Christians; next on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of hating the human race.

In their very deaths they were made the subjects of sport: for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and when the day waned, burned to serve for the evening lights. Nero offered his own garden players for the spectacle, and exhibited a Circensian game, indiscriminately mingling with the common people in the dress of a charioteer, or else standing in his chariot. For this cause a feeling of compassion arose towards the sufferers, though guilty and deserving of exemplary capital punishment, because they seemed not to be cut off for the public good, but were victims of the ferocity of one man.

[N.B. The earliest extant manuscript copy of the the correspondence between Pliny the Younger and Emperor Trajan (Book 10) is from the 9th century. A late 5th century manuscript fragment of Books 2 and 3 is owned by the **The Morgan Library & Museum**, New York. (Accession Number: MS M.462; Title: Epistolae, Book 2, XX, 13 to Book 3, V, line 10; <http://www.morganlibrary.org/>]

Sell, H. T. (1998, c1906). *Studies in Early Church History*.

By Trajan (emperor A.D. 98–117. Special years of persecution A.D. 104–17).—As the years passed the attitude of the empire towards Christianity became more clearly defined. The more loyal the emperor was to the old forms of worship and the old gods the more bitter the persecution. Trajan was one of the great emperors who sought to uphold the Roman prestige. He was compelled to define the position of the empire upon Christianity even more closely than his predecessors. This was due to the fact of the still increasing numbers of Christians. We get great light upon this matter and period from a letter written about A.D. 112 by the governor, Pliny, the younger—of the province of Bithynia—to the Emperor Trajan. He was in great doubt in regard to what ought to be done when so many people in his province had become Christians. Pliny writes (only extracts from the letter are here quoted), “Indeed the matter seemed to me to be a proper one for consultation chiefly on account of the number of persons imperilled. For many of all ages and all ranks, aye, and of both sexes, are being called and will be called in danger. Nor are cities only permeated by the contagion of this superstition, but villages and country parts as well.” He goes on to suggest that if milder measures were used it might be possible to help matters; so little did even he comprehend the nature of Christ’s kingdom and think that its growth could be checked by means at his command.

In regard to the manner of the inquiry into the Christian faith of the accused and the harshness of the punishment meted out upon the open profession of Christianity, he says, “Meanwhile in the case of those who have been brought before me in the character of Christians, my course has been as follows: I put it to themselves whether they were or were not Christians. To such as professed that they were I put the inquiry a second and a third time, threatening them with the supreme penalty. Those who persisted I ordered to execution.” He says further that the very handling of this matter caused it to spread and that many were accused of being Christians before his tribunal. Of some of the methods used in obtaining evidence he declares that “This made me think it all the more necessary to inquire, even by torture, of two maid servants who were styled deaconesses, what the truth was.” Desiring to test certain persons he says that he caused the statue of the emperor to be introduced amongst the images of the gods and required them to worship and to offer wine and incense before them. “none of which things it is said can such as are really and truly Christians be compelled to do.” (For the belief of the Christians of which Pliny gives an account, see Study 6, section “Form of Public Worship.”)

In reply to this letter the Emperor Trajan lays down three principles of action. 1. “Christians are not to be sought out; but if formally accused and convicted, they are to be punished.” We notice here, after all, the strictness of the command and the ease with which it could be made the means of bringing torture and death to the Christians under magistrates who wished no leniency to be shown them. The principle was laid down that to be a Christian was to be a criminal. 2. “Those who deny that they are Christians and worship ‘our gods’ are to be pardoned no matter how suspicious their past history may have been.” The way of apostasy was made easy. 3. “Anonymous accusations must not be accepted.” This is the saving clause, which greatly aided the Christians. Still Christianity stood in the place of an illegal religion and its followers were constantly in danger of death. By this decree they were, however, to have the benefit of a legal trial. Trajan’s purpose was evidently to put down Christianity by being both firm and conciliatory.

Alternate Translation: (Robert C. Newman, 1980)

Pliny the Younger, *Letters*: to Trajan:

It is my rule, Sire, to refer to you in matters where I am uncertain. For who can better direct my hesitation or instruct my ignorance? I was never present at any trial of Christians; therefore I do not know what are the customary penalties or investigations, and what limits are observed. I have hesitated a great deal on the question whether there should be any distinction of ages; whether the weak should have the same treatment as the most robust; whether those who recant should be pardoned, or whether a man who has ever been a Christian should gain nothing by ceasing to be such; whether the name itself, even if innocent of crime, should be punished, or only the crimes attaching to that name. Meanwhile, this is the course that I have adopted in the case of those brought before me as Christians. I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit it I repeat the question a second and a third time, threatening capital punishment; if they persist I sentence them to death... All who denied that they were or had been Christians I considered should be discharged, because they called upon the gods at my dictation and did reverence, with incense and wine, to your image... and especially because they cursed Christ, a thing which, it is said, genuine Christians cannot be induced to do. Others named by the informer first said they were Christians and then denied it, declaring that they had been but were no longer, some having recanted three years or more before and one or two as long ago as twenty years. They all worshiped your image and the statues of the gods and cursed Christ. But they declared that the sum of their guilt or error had amounted only to this, that on an appointed day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak, and to recite a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath, not for the commission of any crime but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery and breach of faith and not to deny a deposit when it was claimed. After the conclusion of this ceremony it was their custom to depart and meet again to take food; but it was ordinary and harmless food, and they had ceased this practice after my edict in which, in accordance with your orders, I had forbidden secret societies. I thought it the more necessary, therefore, to find out what truth there was in this by applying torture to two maidservants, who were called deaconesses. But I found nothing but a depraved and extravagant superstition, and I therefore postponed my examination and had recourse to you for consultation. [*Letters 10.96*]

Trajan's Reply:

The method you have pursued, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those denounced to you as Christians is extremely proper. It is not possible to lay down any general rule which can be applied as the fixed standard in all cases of this nature. No search should be made for these people; when they are denounced and found guilty they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that when the party denies himself to be a Christian, and shall give proof that he is not, that is by adoring our gods, he shall be pardoned on the ground of repentance, even though he may have formerly incurred suspicion. Informations without the accuser's name subscribed must not be admitted in evidence against anyone, as it is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and by no means agreeable to the spirit of the age. [*Letters 10.97*]

Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*.

Suetonius, another Roman historian who lived in the first century, but whose life extended into the second, and who is considered a well informed and correct historian, writes as follows: “He (Claudius) banished the Jews from Rome who were continually raising disturbances, Christ (Chrestus) being their leader.” And in the life of Nero, he says, “Christians were punished, a sort of men of a new and magical religion.”

[N.B. written ca. 115 - 120 A.D.; the earliest extant manuscript copy is from the 10th century]

Alternate Translation: (Robert C. Newman, 1980)

Gaius Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*:

He expelled the Jews from Rome, on account of riots in which they were constantly indulging, at the instigation of Chrestus. [*Claudius 25.4*]

Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a body of people addicted to a novel and mischievous superstition. [*Nero 16.2*]

[N.B. written ca. 170 A.D.; the earliest extant manuscript copy is from the 9th or 10th centuries]

Lucian. *The Works of Lucian of Samosata (Vol. IV, The Death of Peregrine)*

(translated by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, 1905; available online at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/>)

It was now that he came across the priests and scribes of the Christians, in Palestine, and picked up their queer creed. I can tell you, he pretty soon convinced them of his superiority; prophet, elder, ruler of the Synagogue--he was everything at once; expounded their books, commented on them, wrote books himself. They took him for a God, accepted his laws, and declared him their president. The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day,--the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. Well, the end of it was that Proteus was arrested and thrown into prison. This was the very thing to lend an air to his favourite arts of clap-trap and wonder-working; he was now a made man. The Christians took it all very seriously: he was no sooner in prison, than they began trying every means to get him out again,--but without success. Everything else that could be done for him they most devoutly did. They thought of nothing else. Orphans and ancient widows might be seen hanging about the prison from break of day. Their officials bribed the gaolers to let them sleep inside with him. Elegant dinners were conveyed in; their sacred writings were read; and our old friend Peregrine (as he was still called in those days) became for them "the modern Socrates." In some of the Asiatic cities, too, the Christian communities put themselves to the expense of sending deputations, with offers of sympathy, assistance, and legal advice. The activity of these people, in dealing with any matter that affects their community, is something extraordinary; they spare no trouble, no expense. Peregrine, all this time, was making quite an income on the strength of his bondage; money came pouring in. You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on trust, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property. Now an adroit, unscrupulous fellow, who has seen the world, has only to get among these simple souls, and his fortune is pretty soon made; he plays with them.

"To return, however, to Peregrine. The governor of Syria perceived his mental warp: "he must make a name, though he die for it:" now philosophy was the governor's hobby; he discharged him--wouldn't hear of his being punished--and Peregrine returned to Armenia. He found it too hot to hold him. He was threatened from all quarters with prosecutions for parricide. Then again, the greater part of his property had disappeared in his absence: nothing was left but the land, which might be worth a matter of four thousand pounds. The whole estate, as the old man left it, would come perhaps to eight thousand. Theagenes was talking nonsense when he said a million odd. Why, the whole city, with its five nearest neighbours thrown in, men, cattle, and goods of every description, would never fetch that sum.--Meanwhile, indictments and accusations were brewing: an attack might be looked for at any moment: as for the common people, they were in a state of furious indignation and grief at the foul butchery of a harmless old man; for so he was described. In these trying circumstances, observe the ingenuity and resource of the sagacious Proteus. He makes his appearance in the assembly: his hair (even in these early days) is long, his cloak is shabby; at his side is slung the philosopher's wallet, his hand grasps the philosopher's staff; truly a tragic figure, every inch of him. Thus equipped, he presents himself before the public, with the announcement that the property left him by his father of blessed memory is entirely at their disposal! Being a needy folk, with a keen eye to charity, they received the information with ready applause: "Here is true philosophy; true patriotism; the spirit of Diogenes and Crates is here!" As for his enemies, they were dumb; and if any one did venture an allusion to

parricide, he was promptly stoned.

'Proteus now set out again on his wanderings. The Christians were meat and drink to him; under their protection he lacked nothing, and this luxurious state of things went on for some time. At last he got into trouble even with them; I suppose they caught him partaking of some of their forbidden meats. They would have nothing more to do with him, and he thought the best way out of his difficulties would be, to change his mind about that property, and try and get it back. He accordingly sent in a petition to the emperor, suing for its restitution. But as the people of Parium sent up a deputation to remonstrate, nothing came of it all; he was told that as he had been under no compulsion in making his dispositions, he must abide by them.

[N.B. The Talmud Bavli, or Babylonian Talmud, was compiled from about 200 - 500 A.D., but did not reach its final form until about 700 A.D. This work was printed in its entirety in 1520 by Daniel Bomberg in Venice, Italy.]

Within the Jewish Babylonian Talmud, there are a few possible references to Jesus Christ, however, many scholars dismiss these references for a variety of reasons. The reference most often cited is the following (available online at <http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/index.html>):

Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin

(Editor, Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein)

Chapter VI, Folio 43a

AND A HERALD PRECEDES HIM etc. This implies, only immediately before [the execution], but not previous thereto. [In contradiction to this] it was taught: On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostacy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover! — Ulla retorted: 'Do you suppose that he was one for whom a defence could be made? Was he not a Mesith [enticer], concerning whom Scripture says, Neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him? With Yeshu however it was different, for he was connected with the government [or royalty, i.e., influential].'

Our Rabbis taught: Yeshu had five disciples, Matthai, Nakai, Nezer, Buni and Todah. When Matthai was brought [before the court] he said to them [the judges], Shall Matthai be executed? Is it not written, Matthai [when] shall I come and appear before God? Thereupon they retorted; Yes, Matthai shall be executed, since it is written, When Matthai [when] shall [he] die and his name perish. When Nakai was brought in he said to them; Shall Nakai be executed? It is not written, Naki [the innocent] and the righteous slay thou not? Yes, was the answer, Nakai shall be executed, since it is written, in secret places does Naki [the innocent] slay. When Nezer was brought in, he said; Shall Nezer be executed? Is it not written, And Nezer [a twig] shall grow forth out of his roots. Yes, they said, Nezer shall be executed, since it is written, But thou art cast forth away from thy grave like Nezer [an abhorred offshoot]. When Buni was brought in, he said: Shall Buni be executed? Is it not written, Beni [my son], my first born? Yes, they said, Buni shall be executed, since it is written, Behold I will slay Bine-ka [thy son] thy first born. And when Todah was brought in, he said to them; Shall Todah be executed? Is it not written, A psalm for Todah [thanksgiving]? Yes, they answered, Todah shall be executed, since it is written, Whoso offereth the sacrifice of Todah [thanksgiving] honoured me.