

Flavius Josephus and His Testimony Concerning the Historical Jesus

Marian Hillar

Center for Philosophy and Socinian Studies, Houston, TX

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The earliest references to Christianity and Christians in non-partisan non-Christian sources were made by the Roman historians Publius Cornelius Tacitus (56 C.E.-ca 117 C.E.) and Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (ca 69 C.E.-ca 140 C.E.) who criticized Christianity as an oriental superstition and a degraded cult that disrupted the social fabric and security of the state. Tacitus wrote in *The Annals of the Imperial Rome* published ca 115 C.E.: "To suppress this rumor, Nero fabricated scapegoats – and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilate. But in spite of the temporary setback the deadly superstition had broken out afresh, not only in Judea (where the mischief had started) but even in Rome. All degraded and shameful practices collect and flourish in the capital. First Nero had the self-acknowledged Christians arrested. Then on their information, large numbers of others were condemned – not so much for incendiarism as for their anti-social tendencies."¹ Suetonius reported ca 120 C.E. in *The Lives of Twelve Caesars* that the Christians were considered Jews who produced political unrest in the imperium and for that reason were expelled from Rome by Claudius.² In another place he described them as spreading new and evil superstition: "... afflicti supplicii Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis nouae ac maleficae..."³ These are relatively late documents and the references to Christ and Pontius Pilate reflect therefore information provided by Christians themselves via the Gospel stories which were already written.

The documents concerning Jesus outside the canonical Gospels are not abundant and recently were reviewed by R. Joseph Hoffmann in a succinct scholarly outline.⁴ The most interesting are the Jewish sources found in two collections: 1. The Talmud, comprising oral teachings called Mishnah and the discussions on the Mishnah, called Gemara. They were formulated during the fifth century C.E.; 2. The Midrash, i.e., a scriptural exegesis composed itself of edifying sermons, Haggadah, and of legally binding theological decisions, Halakha. It originated in the fourth century B.C.E., but the earliest collections date from the second century C.E. though it contains some older material. The Talmud rarely refers to events of the second Temple (between 168 B.C.E and 70 C.E.). Jesus is represented there with an anti-Christian twist, thus these documents are not reliable. Most of that material is of a legendary nature, therefore useless for historical evaluation. Moreover, the Talmud and Midrash underwent papal censorship over the centuries. The material that survived in various manuscripts was restored by Gustav Dalman in 1900.⁵

The most important and the most discussed are the short passages found in the Flavius Josephus book entitled *Antiquities of the Jews* and published ca 93 C.E. If genuine they would be the earliest evidence concerning Jesus written by a writer who was not a Christian. For that

reason Josephus is the only Greek-language historian, who was widely read in the medieval West.

Flavius Josephus' Life (37-ca 100 C.E.)

All that we know about the life of Josephus comes from his own autobiography.⁶ Flavius Josephus, born as Joseph ben Matthias, “in the first year of the reign of Caius Caesar” (Caligula) in a priestly family, and through his mother he was descended from the royal Hasmonaeon family. He was educated at the rabbinic school in Jerusalem where he distinguished himself. As a young man he decided to learn the tenets of the three major Jewish sects of his time. At the age of sixteen he joined the Essenes under the influence of a religious leader Banus and spent some time conducting an ascetic way of life. Then he joined the sect of the Pharisees, akin, according to him, to the school of the Stoics, and remained faithful to this sect for the rest of his life. He learned also about the Sadducees, though he gives us little information about them. We learn that he was married three times, had three sons from his second marriage and two from his third marriage, and that he had a brother, Matthias.

In the year 64 C.E. he was sent to Rome to obtain a release of certain priests who were sent there by the Roman procurator, Felix, for a trial. During his voyage the ship went aground in the Adriatic Sea, but he and his companions managed to be rescued and landed in the Italian city of Puteoli. He succeeded in his mission with the help of a Jewish actor, Aliturus, and the emperor's wife Poppea.

During his prolonged visit to Rome, Josephus became convinced about the invincibility of the Roman Empire and futility of fighting against it, so he decided to work toward peace in order to prevent a revolt. When he returned to Palestine in 66, however, troubles arose when the Roman governor of Syria, Cestius Gallus, under whom Palestine was ruled, demanded taxes from the Jews and opposition against him arose in Caesarea. In Jerusalem Josephus opposed the nationalist party and argued against the war. That made him unpopular and he had to find a refuge in the Temple until his enemy, the extremist leader, Menachem, was murdered.

In order to stop the revolt, Gallus directed an expeditionary force against Jerusalem, but was driven out of Jerusalem and for rather unknown reasons decided to retreat. His Twelfth Legion was defeated in the autumn of 66 in the pass of Beth-horon. Now the war was inevitable and the moderates who tried to prevent it had no choice but to join it. The country was divided into six regional commands and Josephus was sent to Galilee as a legate and general in charge of the Jewish forces with a double mission to organize a regular Jewish army, fortify the towns and citadels, and, at the same time, to pacify a popular uprising and revolt against the king which was itself divided into various quarrelling factions. In Tiberias a certain Justus (d. 101 C.E.) was a leader of the war party and against the city of Sepphoris. This Justus reported later, now lost, in *The Chronology of the Kings of Judah which Succeeded One Another*, a rival to Josephus' account of the war and fall of Jerusalem.⁷ The city of Gischala was ransacked by the neighboring towns, then rebuilt by its leader, John of Gischala, and united against Romans. In Gamala a certain Philip in spite of the atrocities produced by the Romans in Caesarea, persuaded his countrymen to continue their allegiance to the Romans. Josephus had to deal with all these factions, with several bands of robbers who were recruited from among the poor people, as well as with interethnic fights between the Jews and the Greeks. There were some attempts on Josephus' life, especially by Justus, but he managed to escape to Tarichaeae. Among the specific

things Josephus reports about his stay in Galilee is the defense of the non-Jews living among the Jews and allowing them to practice their own religion: “Everyone ought to worship God according to his own inclinations, and not to be constrained by force.” Evidently Josephus learned this attitude from the Hellenes.

When Vespasian’s forces invaded Palestine in the spring of 67, Josephus’ forces deserted and he was forced to find refuge in the fortress of Jotapata where, after a siege of six weeks, he surrendered in July 67. Josephus was a valued prisoner to be sent to the emperor Nero, but he took advantage of the situation and made a prophecy that Vespasian would become emperor. Thus Vespasian kept him in his custody until 69 when his troops would declare him emperor and treated Josephus more like an interpreter than a prisoner.

With the death of Nero in 68 a period of struggle for power followed in Rome with a succession of three emperors. During this time the war with Israel was suspended. In 69, when Vespasian was pronounced emperor, he freed Josephus who assumed now the name of Flavius, the family name of Vespasian. When Titus, the son of the emperor, was named general to lead Roman forces in a renewed war against the Jews, Josephus returned to Palestine and witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem. He was used by Titus as an intermediary to convince the Jews to give up their resistance and save the city by surrendering. Jews, in spite of Josephus’ oratorical skills, regarded him as a traitor.

After the war Josephus was given a parcel of land near Jerusalem for retirement from active life. He decided instead to go to Rome and became a Roman citizen and client of the Flavian family. He was given a house in which Vespasian lived as a private citizen and a pension for life. He was commissioned to write the history of the Jewish people and the war. In his *Life*, which was added to his *Antiquities of the Jews*, he mentioned the death of Agrippa II who died in 93. Thus Josephus’ own death probably took place around 100 C.E.

The first work of Josephus, commissioned by the emperor, was the *Jewish War*, published ca 75. It was modeled on Caesar’s *Gallic War*. As he stated himself he wrote it first in Aramaic for the Jews in the eastern Diaspora and then translated into Greek with the help of some native speakers.⁸ The purpose of publishing the translation was to fulfill his obligation to the emperor and present a truthful account of the events as an eyewitness and as a person acquainted with everything that was either said or done in the war. Josephus presents the war as an event that resulted from the loss of control by the legitimate rulers of Judaea and its usurpation by self-centered tyrants, zealots, and bandits. God chose to punish the Jews using Romans as his instrument and Josephus emphasized the futility of a war with the Roman power. Some scholars claim that Josephus’ *War* represents the Roman view of the war. He mentions that he had access in Rome to the *Commentaries* on the war written by Vespasian and Titus. The completed work received an imprimatur from Vespasian and Titus, the latter even signed the copies. Josephus sent a part of his work to King Agrippa II who ruled over northern territories of Palestine and contributed troops to the siege of Jerusalem, and who was present there in Titus’ camp.

His second work, *Antiquities of the Jews*, published ca 93 C.E., was modeled on *Roman Antiquities* by Dionysius of Helicarnassus published a century earlier. This work was not written under a Roman commission. Josephus’ aim was to show the antiquity of the Jewish culture, thus making a claim to respectability and recognition. It is based almost entirely on the biblical stories from the Greek version of the Septuagint with the addition of some legendary material and a few details from his own life and that of other historians. The book is dedicated to Epaphroditus, a

scholar from Alexandria who settled in Rome and became Josephus' friend and patron.

At the end of his life Josephus wrote an autobiographical note, *Life*, in order to defend himself against the charges made by his competitor, Justus of Tiberias, concerning his conduct during the war. Josephus' goal was to tone down his anti-Roman activities in Galilee and hence it contains some discrepancies with the account in the *Jewish War*.

Josephus remained faithful to his culture and religion and he defended Judaism praising its excellence in his work originally titled *Concerning the Antiquities of the Jews*, but known since the time of Jerome under the title *Against Apion*, published ca 93 C.E. The work is a passionate apology of the Jews and their culture, their law, their religion, and their customs. It is addressed against an Alexandrian scholar who did not represent adequately Jewish history and culture. It is a valuable work because it contains many excerpts from works which are no longer available.

Testimonium Flavianum

The short passage concerning Jesus in book XVIII of Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews* is labeled Testimonium Flavianum (Flavian Testimony) and remains a center of interest since antiquity. However, this text is closely related to two other texts concerning James, the presumed brother of Jesus, and John the Baptist known from the Gospel stories. Thus these three passages should be analyzed together. They were considered until the sixteenth century as unquestionable extrabiblical evidence for the historicity of Jesus as he is presented in the Gospels. For that reason Josephus was the most widely read Greek-language historian in medieval and modern times. The first attempt at historical treatment of the accounts in the Testimonium comes from a German author, Christoph Arnold, who, in a work published in 1661, collected some pertinent ancient sources and opinions of his contemporary scholars. The authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum was questioned for the first time by Hubert van Giffen (Giffanus) in 1534. There is also a view shared by many scholars who believe that Josephus' *Antiquities* contained a passage concerning Jesus, but that it is not the one known today in the preserved Greek Testimonium Flavianum designated as the *textus receptus*. They suggest that that is a result of alterations to which the original text was subjected by zealous Christians. There were also several attempts at reconstruction of the presumed original text in Josephus' *Antiquities*.⁹

The most recent work, *Josephus on Jesus. The Testimonium Flavianum Controversy from Late Antiquity to Modern Times* by Alice Whealey is the most extensive and complete historical study of the reception of these passages.¹⁰ Whealey makes her own evaluation of the Josephus passages. She assumes that the passage concerning James, the brother of Jesus, is authentic because it could not be introduced by Christians after the second century when the idea of Jesus having brother became unacceptable in order to preserve the perpetual virginity of Mary. For the Jesus passage she presents two arguments in favor of it being only slightly modified from its original form.

The first argument is based on the suggestion that the critics of the authenticity of the Testimonium made false assumptions about the motives of the ancient authors for citing the Testimonium thus jeopardizing its authenticity. The ancient authors, and she draws this conclusion from the example of Origen, supposedly did not cite Josephus as a relevant authority on anything in the New Testament, on Jesus, James, the brother of Jesus, or John the Baptist:

“Probably the reason for this is Christians’ relative inattention to their own history during the second and third centuries.” And she dismisses the histories of Acts and of Hegesippus as no real histories of the church before Eusebius. For that reason the passage on Jesus was not cited or used before Eusebius.

The second argument is deduced from a comparison of various references to the Testimonium Flavianum in antiquity. She finds at least one variant version slightly different from the *textus receptus*. This difference could involve only the presence in the original Josephus text of a formulation about Jesus that “He was believed to be the Messiah” instead of the present version “He was the Messiah.” The Josephus original text was, according to Whealey, repeated by Eusebius but it was subsequently altered to the present form in all Eusebius’ works and in the *Antiquities* of Josephus.

Whealey’s argument does not consider the fact that using the Josephus passage, even in the dubitative form, if it existed, would be advantageous for the early Christians in their arguments with the Hellenes. Moreover, she ignores the confessional character of the remaining parts of the Testimonium found in the eastern Semitic sources and makes an assumption of the authenticity of the James passage which, however, could be interpolated very early in the second century.

1. Testimony on Jesus

Textus receptus

The passage in Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews*¹¹ (Bk. XVIII.III.3, written in 93 C.E.) concerning Jesus is generally considered by scholars either as a Christian interpolation in its entirety or at least as containing an interpolation. It is found in all extant copies of the manuscripts, but all of them are relatively recent, not earlier than eleventh century. The paragraph is inserted between a story of how Pontius Pilate, Roman procurator between the years 26 and 36 C.E., suppressed a Jewish riot against the construction of an aqueduct with the temple tax money and the story of a subterfuge used by a citizen in Rome to seduce a Roman matron through the intermediary of the priests of the Isis temple.

The Greek text reads:

Γίνεται δέ κατὰ τοῦτον Ἰησοῦς σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, εἶγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρή ἦν γὰρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής, διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τάληθῆ δεχομένων, καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ ἐπηγάγετο· οὗ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν. καὶ αὐτὸν ἐνδείξει τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν παρ’ ἡμῖν σταυρῶ ἐπιτετιμηκότος Πιλάτου οὐκ ἐπαύσατο οἱ· τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαπήσαντες· ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῶν τῶν θείων προφητῶν ταῦτα τε καὶ ἄλλα μυρία περὶ αὐτοῦ θαυμάσια εἰρηκοτῶν. εἰς ἔτι τε νῆν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ τοῦδε ὀνομασμένον οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τὸ φύλον.¹²

The English translation by William Whiston reads:

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 Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first

did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, 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.

This is clearly a Christian text, in addition it reflects the later, second century assumption about Jesus:

1. It positively asserts that Jesus, though a man, is a supernatural figure. This was not so assertively stated anywhere in the New Testament writings. Rather this opinion was established at the end of the first century and the beginning of the second.
2. His supernatural power was confirmed by his ability to perform “wonderful works,” i.e., miracles.
3. He was a “teacher” and what he taught was the “truth.” Therefore, the author of this statement denied truthfulness of any other teaching, especially Jewish in the historical context of his life. It is reminiscent of 2 Thess. 2:13.
4. He attracted many Jews and many Greeks, and in the historical context of his epoch it would be a correct statement.
5. He positively and categorically was identified as the Messiah/Christ. The formulation implies that this was the belief of the writer. The term, however, was not well defined in early Christian thought and its Jewish meaning was of an earthly human who was charged with a special political mission.
6. He was condemned to be crucified by the Roman procurator Pilate, though through evidence presented by the Jewish leaders.
7. There is a positive statement that he appeared alive to his disciples on the third day after the crucifixion.
8. All this concerning Jesus was predicted by the prophets.
9. Christians, his followers named after him, still exist.

All scholars agree that a statement like this requires an uncompromised commitment. Thus it amounts to a confession of faith in Jesus as the Christian Messiah. If it were written by Josephus, the question could be: Was Josephus a Christian? There is nothing in his writings that would indicate this. On the contrary, he was solidly committed to his Jewish faith, and he interpreted prophecies in a quite different way from the standard Christian interpretation. For example, he agreed that Daniel predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, but he believed that the messianic prophecy, which was known even to Roman historians, was referring to Vespasian and his son Titus.¹³ His general attitude was in fundamental opposition to messianic personalities and looked for a literal sense in biblical interpretations. Thus the question remains, who wrote this Testimonium and how did he write it? Was there an original text in Josephus? If so what was the nature of this text and what changes did it undergo?

This version of the Testimonium was quoted by Eusebius in his works, *Demonstratio evangelica*, *Theophania*, and *Historia Ecclesiastica (Ecclesiastical History)*.¹⁴

There are only three known variants in the Testimonium Flavianum. One is a slightly different from the Eusebius quote by Jerome in his *De viris illustribus*,¹⁵ and the other two are references found in the Arabic chronicle of the world *Kitāb al-'Unwān* written by Agapius, Melkite bishop of Hierapolis, in Asia Minor, dated 942 C.E., and in the Syriac *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian,

Patriarch of Antioch, dated from 1195.¹⁶

The quote of Jerome:

Its Latin text reads:

Eodem tempore fuit Jesus vir sapiens, si tamen virum oportet eum dicere. Erat enim mirabilium patrator operum, et doctor eorum, qui libenter vera suscipiunt : plurimosque tam de Judaeis quam de gentibus sui habuit secatores, et credebatur esse Christus. Cumque invidia nostrorum principum, cruci eum Pilatus addixisset, nihilominus qui cum primum dilexerant perseveraverunt. Apparuit enim eis tertio die vivens. Multa et haec alia mirabilia carminibus Prophetarum de eo vaticinantibus et usque hodie christianorum gens ab hoc sortita vocabulum, non defecit.

The quote of Jerome in English translation:

In this same time was Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it be lawful to call him man. For he was a worker of wonderful miracles, and a teacher of those who freely receive the truth. He had very many adherents also, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, and was believed to be Christ, and when through the envy of our chief men Pilate had crucified him, nevertheless those who had loved him at first continued to the end, for he appeared to them the third day alive. Many things both these and other wonderful things are in the songs of the prophets who prophesied concerning him and the sect of Christians, so named from him, exists to the present day.¹⁷

In this variant the difference is that Jesus “was believed to be Christ” instead of “he was the Christ” in the *textus receptus* of the Greek Josephus and that he was crucified “through the envy” instead “at the suggestion.”

The quote from Arabic history by Agapius:

For he [i.e. Josephus] says in the treatises that he has written on the governance [i.e. Antiquities] of the Jews:

At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. His conduct was good, and [he] was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive; accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.¹⁸

In this text we find a statement that Jesus was a wise man, of good conduct and virtuous. There is no suggestion here about his supernaturalism; nothing about him being a teacher of those who receive the truth; nothing about his power to make miracles; moreover, there is no mention of the Jewish leaders conspiring to condemn him, but there is an explicit statement about his death. There is a statement, however, that he was reported to have appeared alive and

therefore perhaps that he was the Messiah (or he could be thought to be the Messiah) about whom the prophets spoke.

The quote from the Syrian *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian

The writer Josephus also says in his work on the institutions [i.e. Antiquities] of the Jews: In these times there was a wise man named Jesus, if it be fitting for us to call him a man. For he was a worker of glorious deeds and a teacher of truth. Many from among the Jews and the nations became his disciples. He was thought to be the Messiah. But not according to the testimony of the principal [men] of [our] nation. Because of this, Pilate condemned him to the cross, and he died. For those who had loved him did not cease to love him. He appeared to them alive after three days. For the prophets of God had spoken with regard to him of such marvelous things [as these]. And the people of the Christians, named after him, have not disappeared till [this] day.¹⁹

The words in brackets are corrections according to the version in the al-Makin manuscript. This version differs from the *textus receptus* only by the change of the expression “He was the Messiah/Christ” to “He was thought to be the Messiah/Christ.”

2. Testimony on James, the supposed brother of Jesus.

Another passage refers to James (*Antiquities* Bk. XX.9.1) as “the brother of Jesus who was called Christ [Messiah], whose name was James” who was condemned by the Sanhedrin to be stoned with some of his companions “as breakers of the Law” at the time when Ananus Jr. was the high priest. We can date this event more precisely at 62 C.E.

The text in Josephus:

When, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition [being rigid in judging Jewish offenders], 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 Sanhedrim of the 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: 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.²⁰

This is a puzzling text and many scholars assume it to be authentic written by Josephus himself. It cannot be analyzed, however, in isolation from the Jesus passage. In the New Testament writing, Jesus is said to have brothers and sisters and one of them is James. There is, however, nowhere any indication that he was killed. There is a mention in Acts 12:1-3 of another James, the brother of John who was put to the sword by Herod Agrippa I, shortly before his death in 44 C.E. The Acts are considered to be written ca 85 C.E. therefore, if the James of Acts were the same as James of Josephus, he would be mentioned in there. There is no independent

identification of the James from Josephus with James of the New Testament writings, the brother of Jesus.

The question of his identity remains tied to the authenticity of the Jesus passage. In one hypothesis, if Jesus represents a real person, and is not a composite figure, there is a real possibility that he had a brother and if Josephus mentioned Jesus in his Jesus passage, he also could have explained who that James was by writing “the brother of Jesus.” In the other hypothesis, however, if Josephus did not mention Jesus in the Jesus passage, then the expression “the brother of Jesus who was called Messiah” would be also a Christian addition. The title given to Jesus was the common expression used in the Gospels (Matt. 1:16, 27:17, 22; John 4:25). The James in Josephus, however, is a historical figure and it seems that he could be a religious revisionist, and we do not know what was his infraction of the Jewish Laws. As far as we can say, James, the New Testament brother of Jesus, is not reported to have broken any law.

It is most likely that the Christians identified him with James of Josephus and altered the original text. This alteration would have to be done relatively early since from the middle of the second century the idea of Jesus having a brother was becoming unpopular. They also created other stories about his death and his role in the destruction of Jerusalem, discussed below, that do not fit into Josephus’ account and are clearly a Christian religious interpretation of history.

3. Testimony on John the Baptist.

There is a third testimony describing John the Baptist and his mission (*Antiquities* Bk. XX.V.2). John, an ascetic preacher, probably a member of one of the Essene sects, was “commanding the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God.” The text states that Herod Antipas (4-39 C.E.) had him imprisoned and killed fearing a rebellion against the ruler imposed by the Romans which could be produced by large gatherings of crowds that John attracted.

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; for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards each other, and piety towards God, and so come to baptism; for that the washing would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away of some sins only, but for the purification of the body: supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified by righteousness. Now, when others came to crowd about him, for they were greatly moved hearing his words, Herod, who feared that 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.²¹

The picture of John the Baptist presented in the Gospels does not correspond to the picture given by Josephus. Josephus presents a different nature of John’s baptism which was a purification of the body, while the soul was purified by righteous behavior; also, different

motives for his imprisonment and killing by Herod Antipas than those known from the scripture. There is no relation between Jesus and John the Baptist in Josephus' account. Moreover, it is placed after the story of Pilate's dismissal thus its chronology does not correspond to that of the Gospels. This passage is also cited by Origen. There is no reason to doubt its authenticity, but it throws some light on the way the Gospel stories were written. John the Baptist was most probably one of many religious preachers and activists inspired by the political and social situation in Palestine of the first century, full of religious fervor not unlike that seen in modern times among the televangelists prophesying disasters, wars, social upheavals and calling their adherents to repentance for imaginary sins. He was imprisoned and executed by Herod Antipas for fear of political upheaval. Christians linked him and his death later with the supposed prophecies that the Messiah would be preceded by a messenger.

Testimony of Josephus among Christian writers

There is no evidence in the preserved documents that any Christian writer before Origen read in its entirety *Antiquities* of Josephus or was aware of the passage about Jesus. The first evidence of the use of Josephus by a Christian writer is by Theophilus of Antioch who, in his apology *To Autolycus* written ca 170-186, used *Against Apion*. A similar use of *Against Apion* we find in Tertullian's *Apology* dated ca 197. Minucius Felix (fl. ca 200 C.E.) in his apology, *Octavius* (33.4), recalls the theme of *The Jewish War* with Rome that the Jews lost because of their own sinfulness. There is some indication that Irenaeus (ca 130-ca 200) may cite a small fragment of Josephus' *Antiquities* directly or from secondary sources. He states that according to Josephus, Moses was raised in Egyptian palaces and married an Egyptian princess (*Antiquities* Bk. II. 9-11). But he could not be familiar with book XVIII because he erroneously places Jesus' death and Pilate's rule in the reign of Claudius, the date he derived from John 8:57.²² Clement of Alexandria (Titus Flavius Clemens, d. ca 225) in *Stromateis*,²³ written ca 190-210, quotes Josephus' calculations for the years from Moses to David and from David to Vespasian. He was probably familiar with *The Jewish War* and indirectly with *Antiquities*. At best Josephus is cited as an authority on Jewish history and religion and not on things pertaining to Christianity. He was read primarily by the Hellenes,²⁴ as he had a bad reputation among the Jews. His works cited are *Against Apion* and *The Jewish War* which were apologetic and addressed to the Greek and Roman contemporaries of Josephus. *Antiquities* was a much larger work and its first part concerned with biblical history was of interest to the Hellenes and to the church fathers. Therefore, probably readers rarely went through the twenty volumes.

Origen

Origen (185-254) is the first author who knew all the works of Josephus and cites him as an authority on Christian figures. He is also the first Christian writer who refers to Josephus citing the exact book number.

The first reference Origen gives is in his book *Contra Celsum* written ca 248 C.E. and addressed to the Hellenes:

I would like to tell Celsus, who represented the Jew as in some way accepting John as a baptist who baptized Jesus, that someone who lived not so long ago after John and Jesus wrote that John was a baptist, baptizing for a remission of

sins. For in the eighteenth book of Jewish Antiquities Josephus testifies that John was a baptist, who promised purification to those who were baptized. The same author while not believing in Jesus as the Christ, in seeking for the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple ought to have said that the plot against Jesus was the reason these things came upon the people. However, although not far from the truth, he says that these things happened to the Judeans for killing James the Just, who was the brother of Jesus called the Christ, since they killed one who was so righteous.²⁵

Origen's statement is a reply to a rather complicated and convoluted discussion with Celsus concerning Jesus' baptism, descent of the Holy Spirit, and as a trustworthy witnesses of these events. The point which Origen wants to make is 1. that John the Baptist was the baptizer of Jesus. Josephus testifies about John as being a baptist in his eighteenth book of *Antiquities* (Bk. XVIII.5.2). However, Josephus does not make the connection with Jesus. 2. Josephus also, though not believing "in Jesus as the Christ [Messiah]," is a witness by his testimony to the killing of James the Just, the brother of Jesus "called the Christ [Messiah]" as the cause of the fall of Jerusalem, whereas, according to Origen, he should have said that it was the plot against Jesus. According to Origen, what actually is important is what Josephus said. The purpose of Origen's using these two points is to prove to the Hellenes that Jesus was really the Messiah (in the later Christian sense) proven by what Josephus testifies, in spite of his otherwise negative opinion.

That Josephus did not believe in Jesus as the Christ [Messiah] does not follow from the neutral statement that Jesus was called Christ (ὁ ἀδελφὸς Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ) which is contained in the twentieth book of *Antiquities* (Bk. XX.9.1). A Jew such as Josephus could make such a statement without any compromise because he understood Christ/Messiah in the Jewish sense of a royal figure either apocalyptic or contemporary. There is plenty of evidence from his (Jewish) interpretation of the biblical prophecies that this would be the meaning of the term by Josephus if he used it. On the contrary, the Christian writers and interpreters, modern and ancient from the second century interpreted this term as divinity.²⁶

Origen wants to say here that the baptism by John was a visible sign of Jesus as being the Christ/Messiah as well as of the destruction of Jerusalem. Origen did not have to refer to the miracles performed by Jesus because Celsus already accepted the miracles performed by Jesus though he explained them as Jesus' use of magic and trickery. But it would be favorable for Origen's position if he used a statement about Messiahship, even if dubitative, and a statement about the resurrection if they were in Josephus. Thus it is puzzling that he does not refer to them in any of his works while reading into Josephus the Christian interpretations. For example, he identifies a certain Zechariah, son of Baruch, who was killed in the temple by Zealots, as reported by Josephus,²⁷ with Zechariah, son of Barachiah, father of John the Baptist.²⁸ It seems that the same process was involved in identifying James in Josephus with James in the Gospels. The Gospels, in spite of being a late literary product, do not say anything about James' death.

There are several points of divergence with the description of James' death by later Christian sources. They do not mention "the others" who were killed with him. They do not give any specific information about James' opponents. Josephus simply states that they were Saducean priests with Ananus as the instigator. Christian sources in Acts and the Gospels describe the

scribes and Pharisees who were the opponents of Jesus. In the Josephus account the law-observing Jews, i.e., the Pharisees are sympathizers of James. Also, later accounts of James' death do not mention anything about the political consequences of James' death for the high priest. This indicates that the story of James in Josephus (except his identification as "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ") is not an interpolation by Christians, but it also puts under a question mark the identification of Josephus' James with the one in Acts and the Gospels.

The question, now, which scholars developed about the whole issue of the Testimonium Flavianum following the statement by Origen is: What was the exact expression of Josephus through which he denied the Messiahship of Jesus? This is an artificial question, a result of speculations derived from Origen's comment on Josephus. Josephus did not have to express his denial of Messiahship of Jesus in any special, singular or specific way. The issue simply did not exist for him, for this it is sufficient to pay attention to what he says about the Jewish religion and prophecies in *Antiquities* or in *Against Apion*. Thus it cannot be surmised that the text of Josephus known to Origen contained any reference to Jesus as the Messiah. Probably it contained an extended paragraph on James since Eusebius also quotes Josephus as saying: "Those things [the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple] happened to the Jews in requital for James the Righteous, who was the brother of Jesus known as Christ, for though he was the most righteous of men, the Jews put him to death."²⁹ If it is true that there was such a statement in Josephus it could only be an interpolation done already before Origen. One more point should be emphasized – it means that the text was available to the public if Origen could read it in Palestine. Whealy makes a special note that the text of Josephus could not be interpolated or modified before Eusebius because it was not available. As we indicated before, Christians identified a certain James listed in the Josephus work with the James of the Christian tradition and amended the text accordingly. This modification about James is probably the earliest change introduced to Josephus.

There is no statement in the present Josephus works indicating that he put the blame for the fall of Jerusalem on the killing of James. On the contrary, Josephus stated in the Preface to his *Jewish War*: "For that it was a seditious temper of our own that destroyed it; and that they were the tyrants among the Jews who brought the Roman power upon us, who unwillingly attacked us, and occasioned the burning of our holy temple." Such an interpolation was probably inspired by the second century Christian historian Hegesippus, whose works survived only in a few quotations in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. Eusebius quotes Hegesippus as well as Josephus attributing the fall of Jerusalem to the killing of James.³⁰

The other occasion for quoting Josephus by Origen is in his *Commentary on Matthew*. Origen's purpose here is commenting on the statement in Matthew 13:55: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?" His objective is to collect all the extrabiblical information on James, and the other brothers of Jesus. He approves of the tradition found in the Gospel of Peter and the Protoevangelion³¹ for reasons of piety claiming that Jesus' brothers were actually his stepbrothers. The other tradition concerning James was the work of Josephus' *Antiquities* about which he writes:

And James is he whom Paul says that he saw in the Letter to the Galatians 'but I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother' (Gal.1:19). And

this James was so celebrated with the people for his righteousness that Flavius Josephus, who wrote the *Jewish Antiquities* in twenty books, when wanting to seek for the reason why such great calamities befell the people that even the temple was destroyed, said that they happened because of God's anger at what they did to James the brother of Jesus called the Christ [Messiah]. And the wonderful thing is that, although not accepting that our Jesus is Christ, he testified to the great righteousness of James.³²

In this passage Origen repeats the same statement as before concerning "James the brother of Jesus called the Christ [Messiah]." Again he claims that Josephus attributed the destruction of Jerusalem to the killing of James. This idea is found in Hegesippus³³ and was repeated by Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Jerome.³⁴

Attribution of the destruction of Jerusalem could not be written by Josephus who discusses it at length in quite a different light. But there is also the possibility of another explanation of Origen's statements. There is no evidence that Origen cites exactly the words of Josephus, rather he reads into the Josephus account of James' death the standard Christian interpretation. The impulse for such interpretations could arise from Josephus' own evaluation of the Jewish socio-political situation at this time when the sicarii became highly active and even gained a concession from the Roman procurator, Albinus, to release their prisoners: "This was the beginning of greater calamities; for the robbers perpetually contrived to catch some of Ananias' servants..."³⁵ Moreover, he certainly was familiar with the Hegesippus account either directly or through Clement of Alexandria, his teacher, who is reported by Eusebius to repeat the Hegesippus account.³⁶

Eusebius of Caesarea

Eusebius is probably the most important witness to the testimony of Josephus because he is the first Christian writer who uses Josephus extensively to confirm events described by him as historical facts of the first century. But in his eagerness to Christianize all reports he is utterly uncritical in the evaluation of his sources. Though he found many parallels between the New Testament text and Josephus' writings, he ignores completely the chronological discrepancies. Eusebius is also important because he cites the sources which are no longer available, especially Hegesippus, who lived in the first half of the second century and was the author of the first history of the Christian church.

The Jesus paragraph is not quoted by any writer before Eusebius of Caesarea (260-ca 341 C.E.). He quotes it in three of his works: *Demonstratio evengelica* (Bk. III.5.124; written ca 303 and 313), in his *Ecclesiastical History* (Bk. I.11.6-7; books 1-7 were written between 311 and 313), and in *Theophania* (Bk. V.44) considered the last work written during the years between 333 and 340. The most important is the quote in his *Ecclesiastical History* as it was used in later citations of the Testimonium rather than directly from Josephus. This work is known in seven primary manuscripts from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. It exists also in a Syriac translation and a Latin version by Rufinus.

Eusebius quotes the Jesus paragraph together with the John the Baptist paragraph (*H. E.* I.11.4-5) at the occasion for disputing the date of the Jesus passion in a document which was made a requirement for reading in schools by emperor Maximin in the early fourth century (*H. E.* IX.5.1). This document which Eusebius calls *Memoranda* was probably the apocryphal text of

Acta Pilati in which the time of the passion of Jesus was dated as the year 21 C.E. It does not correspond to the dating of Pilate by Josephus since he was appointed procurator for Judaea in 26 C.E. Eusebius' goal was to harmonize the Josephus chronology with that found in the Luke (3:2) chronology about the beginning of John's mission and baptism of Jesus. This would explain why he quoted first the John paragraph and followed it by the Jesus paragraph, though they are in reverse order in the Josephus text. For that reason he does not comment on the content of the Jesus paragraph in *Ecclesiastical History*, but emphasizes only the positive view of these figures. At the same time, Eusebius ignores many contradictions found between Josephus and New Testament chronology. In quoting the Jesus passage the Messiahship of Jesus was not in question or disputed, it was obvious to Eusebius.

Eusebius, however, introduces comments in the paragraph (Bk. I.11.1) preceding the description of the death of John the Baptist falsifying the meaning of the Josephus text in a clear attempt to Christianize John. Thus he reads into Josephus the Gospels' interpretation claiming that Josephus said that "For her sake [Herodias'] ... he put John to death and was involved in war with Aretas, whose daughter he had slighted." Josephus linked the marriage to Herodias with the war with King Aretas, but not with the death of John.

In *Demonstratio evangelica* (Bk. III.2.102-5.124) and in *Theophania* (Bk. V.1-45) Eusebius enters into a polemic with his contemporary Jews and Hellenes in an attempt to show Jesus' divine side through his high ethical standard and his miracles. In the part directed at the Jews he intended to demonstrate that the Old Testament prophecies referred to Jesus. In the part directed towards the Hellenes, the unbelievers in the prophecies, he explicitly says that he will "argue about Christ as an ordinary man." First he argues against those who treat Jesus as a deceiver from Jesus' own teaching and high moral standards. Then he will argue for the divine side of Jesus from miracles, and from trustworthiness of the disciples. He enters into a polemic with the docetists asking rhetorical questions in an attempt to confirm Jesus' human appearance and passion. For that reason he quotes the Testimonium as a very useful tool for him and as historical evidence for proving his point.

But in explaining the text of the Testimonium he draws attention only to: 1. The fact that Jesus "attracted to himself many Jews and Greeks." 2. Therefore, he must "have had some extraordinary power beyond that of other men" that is expressed in miracles. And to confirm the fact that Jews indeed joined Jesus, he refers to the Acts of the Apostles and to the existence of a church in Jerusalem entirely Jewish until the time of Hadrian, claiming that mission to the Gentiles began only after the resurrection (*Theophania*, Bk. IV.27-31). It seems that this insistence on the explanation of gathering the Jews and the Gentiles by Jesus is related to the fact that in Eusebius' time it would be less intelligible, since practically only Gentiles were joining Christians then. But considering that the text referred to Jesus' time it was nothing unusual. 3. Thus these facts reported by Josephus constitute and are "independent" of the disciples' testimony that persuaded "many thousands of Jews that he was that Christ of God, who had been predicted by the Prophets."³⁷

The other passage Eusebius quotes is in reference to "James the brother of Jesus known as Christ." The occasion for quoting it is a narration of the episode in the history of the early church in Jerusalem after Paul was sent to Rome for a trial. According to Eusebius the Jews killed James because "they could not endure his testimony any longer" "declaring that our Savior and Lord, Jesus, was the Son of God." Next Eusebius makes reference to Clement of Alexandria who

mentions as in his *Outlines* (Book VIII) James “the Righteous, who was thrown down from the parapet and beaten to death with a fuller’s club.” Afterwards Eusebius cites a fifth book of Hegesippus:

Control of the Church passed to the apostles, together with the Lord’s brother James, whom everyone from the Lord’s time till our own has called the Righteous, or there were many Jameses, but this one was holy from his birth He alone was permitted to enter the Holy Place, for his garments were not of wool but of linen. He used to enter the Sanctuary alone, and was often found on his knees beseeching forgiveness for the people A representative of the seven popular sects already described by me asked him what was meant by “the door of Jesus,” and he replied that Jesus was the Saviour. Some of them came to believe that Jesus was the Christ: the sects mentioned above did not believe either in a resurrection or in One who is coming to give every man what his deeds deserve, but those who did come to believe did so because of James. Since therefore many even of the ruling class believed, there was an uproar among the Jews and Scribes and Pharisees, who said there was a danger that the entire people would expect Jesus as the Christ.

In a continuation Hegesippus tells the story how James was tricked by the Scribes and Pharisees and killed. The quote ends with the following:

Such was his martyrdom. He was buried on the spot, by the Sanctuary, and his headstone is still there by the Sanctuary. He has proved a true witness to Jews and Gentiles alike that Jesus is the Christ. Immediately after this Vespasian began to besiege them.³⁸

Thus the death of James would occur in 70 C.E. What is interesting now is that Eusebius emphasizes “that even the more intelligent Jews felt that this was why his martyrdom was immediately followed by the siege of Jerusalem, which happened to them for no other reason than the wicked crime of which he had been the victim. And indeed Josephus did not hesitate to write this down in so many words: ‘These things happened to the Jews in requital for James the Righteous, who was a brother of Jesus known as Christ, for though he was the most righteous of men, the Jews put him to death.’” Next Eusebius proceeds to quote the known passage from *Antiquities* concerning the trial of James by the Sanhedrin.

From the above we might suggest a hypothesis that a likely source of the Testimonium Flavianum and the passage on James is Hegesippus. We find in him most of the necessary elements found in the extant Josephus text.

Whealey argued that Christians “could not have tampered with the official copies of *Antiquities* before 313 A.D. ” and that “an unofficial version of *Antiquities* ... would have been of limited use.”³⁹ Well, if Origen writing in Palestine could have a copy of the text, and he mentions twenty books of *Antiquities* which were placed in the library in Rome,⁴⁰ he certainly had one, and it could be copied and modified.

We can draw several conclusions from Eusebius testimony. If it is true that Origen and

Eusebius accurately quote Josephus concerning the siege of Jerusalem, the Josephus text existed already in a modified form available to them. By the same token the texts of the Jesus passages were interpolated as a logical result of the Christianization of the Josephus account of history, and it was easy to adjust the passage on James to the Christian version known from the Gospels. There was no need to modify the Josephus text on John the Baptist since his account is neutral. However, it was interpreted in a Christian way twisting the meaning of Josephus' story.

We may safely say that some interpolations, such as the one concerning James, were done already before Origen and that probably there existed several versions of the Josephus modifications.

Jerome of Stridon

Jerome's (340-420 C.E.) work *De viris illustribus*, published in 392 C.E., survived in over one hundred manuscript copies which attests to its great influence on Christian thought. The motive for writing it was to impress the non-Christians and to indicate that they, too, had intellectuals and erudites. Jerome quotes Josephus with a few variations from the *textus receptus* found in Eusebius: 1. instead of saying "he was the Christ" Jerome wrote "he was believed to be Christ" (*credebatur esse Christus*); 2. in the following sentence the *textus receptus* says "at the suggestion" which is a liberal translation of the Greek ἐνδείξει (it really means "by the presented evidence" or "at the indictment"), Jerome uses the Latin *cumque invidia* (in translation "through the envy"). Jerome followed here the text of Matthew 27:18 and Mark 15:10 which says διὰ φθόνου ("through the envy"). The Syriac versions of the Testimonium use the expression "according to [or upon] the testimony." 3. Jerome uses the term "*de gentibus*" instead of "many from ... the Greeks" which is closer to the Syriac versions.

Jerome is known not to quote Josephus directly but to follow the citations of Josephus by others.⁴¹ Thus we can confidently state that he quoted the Testimonium Flavianum from Eusebius rather than the original Josephus' text. The only significant change he made is the one from "he was Christ" to "he was believed to be Christ." One possible explanation for it is that it could refer to the adherents mentioned in the preceding part as "he had many adherents ... and was believed to be Christ [by them]." Such a modification does not change the sense of the *textus receptus*, it is only an explanatory alteration, similar to the change in the following sentence. Moreover, the lack of an explicit statement about the death of Jesus in Jerome's version and in the *textus receptus*, in contrast to such a statement present in the Michael, Agapius, and early Latin versions of Pseudo-Hegesippus, supports the hypothesis that Jerome himself was the author of the modification concerning the Messiah. Whealey argued that the Testimonium Flavianum originally contained the expression "he was believed to be Christ" in the Josephus text and in the Eusebius transcriptions in his *Ecclesiastical History*. Only later was it changed to "he was Christ" in the Josephus text as well as in all the works of Eusebius. Such a hypothesis assumes the other parts of the Testimonium to be original. If Josephus wrote them, they would attest to his being a Christian.

Pseudo-Hegesippus

Pseudo-Hegesippus (fl. in the fourth century C.E.) is the author of the work on the fall of Jerusalem entitled *De Excidio Hierosolymitano*, written around 370 C.E. This work is an

adaptation of *The Jewish War* and is known from the oldest manuscript dating to the sixth century. Whealey assumes that he did not know Eusebius' works quoting Josephus. All his sources, except Josephus, are in Latin and in his time Eusebius was not yet translated into Latin. In this work based on Josephus' *The Jewish War*, he makes reference to the Testimonium Flavianum giving its extensive summary:

Luebant enim scelerum suorum supplicia, qui postquam Iesum crucifixerant divinorum arbitrum, postea etiam discipulos eius persequebantur. Plerique tamen Iudaeorum, Gentilium plurimi crediderunt in eum, cum praeceptis moralibus, operibus ultra humanam possibilitatem profluentibus invitarentur. Quibus ne mors quidem eius vel fidei vel gratiae finem imposuit, immo etiam cumulavit devotionem De quo ipsi Iudaei quoque testantur dicente Iosepho historiarum scriptore, quod fuerat illo in tempore vir sapiens, si tamen oportet, inquit, virum dici mirabilium creatorem operum, qui apparuerit discipulis suis post triduum mortis suae vivens secundum prophetarum scripta, qui et haec et alia innumerabilia de eo plena miraculi prophetaverunt. Ex quo coepit congregatio Christianorum et in omne hominum penetravit genus, nec ulla natio Romani orbis remansit, quae cultus eius expers relinqueretur. Si nobis non credunt Iudaei, vel suis credant. Hoc dixit Iosephus, quem ipsi maximum putant, et tamen ita in eo ipso quod verum locutus est mente devius fuit, ut nec sermonibus suis crederet. Sed locutus est propter historiae fidem, quia fallere nefas putabat, non credidit propter duritiam cordis et perfidiae intentionem. Non tamen veritati praeiudicat, quia non credidit sed plus addidit testimonio, quia nec incredulus et invitus negavit. In quo Christi Iesu claruit aeterna potentia, quod eum etiam principes synagogae quem ad mortem comprehenderant Deum fatebantur.

They were suffering the punishments for their crimes, those who, after having crucified Jesus, the arbiter of divine affairs, then were also persecuting his disciples. For many Jews and even more Gentiles believed in him and were attracted by his teaching of morals and performance of works beyond human capability. Not even his death put an end to their faith and love, but rather it increased their devotion.... Of this the Jews themselves give the testimony, Josephus the writer saying in his history that there was at that time a wise man, if it be appropriate, he says, to call man the creator of miraculous works, who appeared alive to his disciples three days after his death according to writings of the prophets, who prophesied both these and innumerable other things full of wonders about him. From him began the congregation of Christians, even infiltrating every race of humans, nor does there remain any nation in the Roman world that is without his religion. If the Jews do not believe us, they might believe one of their own. Thus spoke Josephus, whom they esteem a very great man, and nevertheless so devious in mind was he who spoke the truth about him, that he did not believe even his own words. Although he spoke for the sake of fidelity to history because he thought it wrong to deceive, he did not believe because of his hardness of heart and faithless intention. Nevertheless it does not prejudice truth because he did not believe, rather it adds to the testimony because, unbelieving and unwilling he did not deny it. In this the eternal power of Jesus Christ shone

forth, that even the leading men of the synagogue who delivered him up to death acknowledged him to be God.⁴²

This reference is important because it provides independent of Eusebius evidence on the existence of some text in Josephus concerning Jesus. That it is used directly from Josephus is confirmed by the Pseudo-Hegesippus using also the reference concerning the deceived Roman matron, Pauline, which follows the Jesus passage in *Antiquities* (Bk. XVIII.9.4; *De excidio* Bk. II. 4). He also makes reference to the passage on John the Baptist though the interpretation of his death is that found in the Gospels – as a punishment for admonishing Herod for his marriage to Herodias (*Antiquities* Bk. XVIII.5.2; *De excidio* Bk. II.12.2).

In the evaluation of the Pseudo-Hegesippus fragment we have to emphasize that it is not a direct quote, but contains most elements found in the *textus receptus*. Pseudo-Hegesippus insists, however, that Josephus was a non-believer, though for the sake of “fidelity to history” he spoke the truth, and “he did not believe even his own words.” Thus he could have known the version of Josephus known also to Origen (if Origen knew one). Also he puts most blame on the Jews, but he does not excuse Pilate saying “Pilate is not excused.” What that belief consists of is indicated by Pseudo-Hegesippus in the last sentence – that the leading men of the synagogue acknowledged that Jesus was God. This was obviously a Christian interpretation of Jesus from the beginning of the second century and could be deduced by interpreting the passage “there was at that time a wise man, if it be appropriate, he [i.e., Josephus] says, to call man the creator of miraculous works.” So there was no specific statement about the Messiah in the original Josephus’ text as it is present in the *textus receptus*. Even if there was in the original Josephus a passage mentioning the Messiah, the term could not be used in the meaning of God but only in the Jewish meaning of the royal figure, though highly exalted.

The other point which is discussed by Whealey is the unclear statement found in the *textus receptus* concerning Jesus as a “teacher of those who receive truth (τάληθῆ) with pleasure.” In this form it would be a confirmation of Josephus’ confession to the Christian faith. Dubarle⁴³ noticed that his phrase may be a mistake for the more intelligible phrase “teacher of those who receive other customs (τ’ ἄλλ’ ἥθη) with pleasure.” This would correspond more closely to the intelligible phrase of Pseudo-Hegesippus that Jesus attracted his followers “by his teaching of morals.”

Thus if Eusebius quotes Josephus’ paragraphs concerning Jesus from a Josephus manuscript, the discrepancy with the Pseudo-Hegesippus version would indicate that the Eusebius source was already a modification introduced by the early Messianic/Christian followers of Jesus and that Pseudo-Hegesippus may have disposed of a slightly different modification.

The Latin translations of Josephus

Josephus was a widely read Greek-language author in the Latin West primarily due to his early translations. *The Jewish War* was probably translated already at the end of the fourth century by an unknown author. Rufinus (340-410 C.E.) translated Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* into Latin and when Cassiodorus’ (Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus, 490-583 C.E.) group translated Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews* into Latin in the sixth century they used the Rufinus Latin version of Josephus’ passages on Jesus and John the Baptist instead of translating them directly from the Josephus Greek original. Certainly it is possible that they used Rufinus’ translation of the Testimonium because it was more favorable to Jesus. But because they used

also the John the Baptist passage which appears in proximity to the Jesus passage in Eusebius' book, they used it simply for the sake of convenience. Other passages in the Latin *Antiquities* do not follow Rufinus' translation of *Ecclesiastical History*. The result is that in the Latin West there were only three variants of the Testimonium Flavianum: that of the Latin *Antiquities*, of Jerome's *De viris illustribus*, and that of Pseudo-Hegesippus' *De excidio Hierosolymitano*, which are one and the same text with only slight recensional changes.

The eastern Greek Sources

Theodoret (393-457 C.E.), the fifth century theologian and historian, bishop of Cyrus, in his *Commentary on Daniel* 10 (on Dan. 12:14) states clearly that Josephus did not accept the Christian message though he did not hide the truth that Daniel had predicted the destruction of Jerusalem. Theodoret referred to Josephus' *Antiquities* Bk. X. 10.7 And he was also familiar with Eusebius' *Demonstratio evangelica* and *Ecclesiastical History*. From this Whealey draws the conclusion that he was familiar with a dubitative form of the Testimonium Flavianum in these works and perhaps in the Greek *Antiquities*. She makes a guess that it was a version "reading something like 'he was believed to be Christ.'"

Two other historians, Cedrenus of the eleventh century and Pseudo-Simon Magister of the tenth century, have a version of Testimonium slightly different from the *textus receptus* in ascribing to the disciples of Jesus that they considered him Christ. They seem to depend on Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*.

The fifth century Egyptian monk, Isidore of Pelusium, knew quite extensively Josephus' *Antiquities*, but he does not allude to the Messiah statement, only to the statement about "the teacher of those who receive the truth." Again Whealey suggests that his version of Josephus might contain the dubitative account of Jesus' Messiahship.⁴⁴

The eastern Syriac and Arabic sources

In 1971 Shlomo Pines, an Israeli historian, wrote a treatise evaluating the Testimonium Flavianum in light of the two neglected records: 1. the Arabic historical work by Agapius, the Melkite bishop of Hierapolis (Manbij), entitled *Kitāb al-Unwān* and dated 942 C.E., and 2. the Syriac *Chronicle* authored by Michael the Syrian, patriarch of Antioch, dated 1195. Both works were edited earlier but ignored by scholars studying the problem of Testimonium Flavianum.⁴⁵

Agapius' work is known in a single manuscript but is also quoted by a thirteenth-century Christian Coptic historian Jūrijis al-Makin. It deals with the history of the world from the beginning to the tenth century. The occasion for quoting Josephus' *Antiquities* is a discussion of the philosophers who referred to the day of the crucifixion of Christ (al-mashich) and who described fantastic cosmic and astronomical events that supposedly occurred. Among them he refers to the letters of Pilate to Emperor Tiberius in which the cause of these events is ascribed to the crucifixion of Jesus. Immediately afterwards Agapius cites the Testimonium and discusses the succession of the high priests in Jerusalem following the Eusebius account in his *History* (*H.E.* Bk. I.10.1-6).

From the philological and comparative studies, we know that Agapius' text of the Testimonium is in all probability translated from a Syriac version of the Greek original. Agapius used Syriac rather than Arabic sources. One of his sources was the writings of Theophilus of Edessa, who died in 785.⁴⁶

The Syriac version of the Testimonium is found in the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (1126-1199). He lived over two centuries after Agapius and probably used as his source for the Testimonium a translation or adaptation into Syriac of Eusebius' *Chronicon* by James of Edessa who died ca 708 C.E. James of Edessa also seems to be the source for Theophilus of Edessa.⁴⁷ Michael's version has several points in common with the *textus receptus*, especially with the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. Philological studies suggest that both these versions come from the same translation of the Greek original. This assumption is based on the occurrence of the expression that Jesus' disciples came from "other nations" in all these versions: the Syriac translation of the Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and Michael's version. The major difference is in the formulation "He was thought to be the Messiah [or 'Perhaps he was the Messiah']" against "He was the Messiah" in the *textus receptus*. Since both texts go back eventually to a Greek original, it was postulated by A. Merx in order to explain the differences, that Michael's version reflects the original text of Eusebius, which was "afterwards to some extent modified and so brought into the form which is now preserved in the Greek manuscripts."⁴⁸ This explanation would fit with the existence of the Jerome version of the Testimonium but not necessarily with the Origen and Pseudo-Hegesippus evaluation of Josephus.

Another possibility, less likely, is that the Michael text was the result of Agapius' version contaminated by the Syriac translation of the *textus receptus* in the Eusebius *History*.

Comparing the Michael Syriac version with the Arabic Agapius version we find similarity in the assessment of Jesus' messiahship "he was thought to be the Messiah" (or "it seemed that he was the Messiah") and "he was perhaps the Messiah" which is the meaning close to the one in the Syriac version. Also there is a similarity in the expression "from ... other nations." Thus it was suggested that the Syriac text from which Agapius' translation derives was similar or identical with Michaels' source text.

But there are also significant differences. We find in Agapius' version an omission of the positive and categorical statements about Jesus' supernatural power and status "if it is fitting to call him a man." Agapius' version states that Jesus was of good conduct and was virtuous. There is no indication here of Jesus' miraculous works. Next there is no indication that Jesus was a teacher of truth as is found in the *textus receptus* and in the Syriac translations. Such a statement would imply that the author accepts his teaching as truth. There is no reference in Agapius' version to Jesus being condemned by the principal men among the Jews. In contradiction to all other versions of the Testimonium, Agapius' version reads that the disciples "reported that he appeared to them three days after the crucifixion" alive. This statement considers resurrection as a report only not as an established fact.

Agapius' text contains the statement in the last sentence, "accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders." This phrase is a fusion of two sentences, one in the middle and the other at the end of all other versions of the Testimonium. It was suggested by Pines that in the early text of the Testimonium there was one sentence which was split into two in later versions. Moreover, Agapius' text does not have the sentence about "the tribe [or people] of the Christians." Logically, it would fit in the context, but it could have been omitted by the Arabic translator. Moreover, in the last sentence in Agapius' version, the prophecies refer to the figure of the Messiah and not to Jesus, as is stated in all other versions.

The question now arises, what was the source of these Michael and Agapius versions? Were

they derived directly from the Josephus writings or indirectly through translations and adaptations? The *Jewish War* was translated into Syriac by the eighth century, but there is no indication of a Syriac translation of *Antiquities*. Detailed philological analysis of Pines suggests that the author of the source for Michael and Agapius used Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. But eventually the source of the Testimonium has to be traced to a Greek original.

It is inconceivable, according to Pines, that Agapius or his sources weakened the references to Jesus in the first two sentences and added a skeptical phrase "reported" to the Testimonium. They must have found them in the text passed down to them. On the other hand, both versions of Jerome and Michael could be a result of contamination of the *textus receptus* with the neutral text represented by Agapius' version.

Agapius in his chronicle claims that the quote on Jesus by Josephus comes from Josephus' work "*On the Governance of the Jews*" (or "*On the Institutions of the Jews*") which is identified by using another passage as the *Antiquities of the Jews*. Michael's version of the Testimonium is also said to be extracted from the same Josephus work.⁴⁹ The tradition of these titles of Josephus' work does not derive from the known versions or from Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. Thus it has to derive from an unknown source which was used by Agapius.

The passage immediately preceding the Testimonium in both Agapius and Michael the Syrian have much in common and both may derive from a common Syriac source. But its source can not be identified – it is neither Josephus, nor Eusebius. The passages immediately following their versions of the Testimonium have a relation to Josephus' *Antiquities* and to Eusebius' *History* but they did not derive from these last writings directly.⁵⁰ The ultimate source is, however, postulated according to one hypothesis as the unchristianized version of the Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* with the exception of one statement – namely, that Herod limited the appointment of the high priest to one year only. But we find this in Eusebius' *Demonstratio evangelica*.⁵¹

Another question is the relation of Agapius' version to the original Greek version supposedly composed by Josephus himself. In this connection the statement of Origen is relevant referring in three passages to one statement from Josephus (*Antiquities* XX.9.1) "James the brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ (Messiah)." Also he claims that Josephus ascribed the fall of Jerusalem to the death of James, and Eusebius even quotes his text. There is, however, nowhere such a statement by Josephus to be found. In two of these statements Origen also claims that Josephus did not believe in Jesus though in *Contra Celsum* Origen stated that Josephus was not far from the truth ascribing the fall of Jerusalem to the death of James. Origen may have known a version of the Testimonium similar to Agapius' but it would probably have to be more negative. Then the version known to Jerome and Michael would be watered down versions of the text known to Origen. On the whole, however, it seems that he did not know any version of the Testimonium at all.

So either there was no passage in the original text of Josephus on Jesus and he was not interested in him, and his unbelief was inferred from the overall evaluation of Josephus' Jewishness, or if there was such a passage it was different from the known *textus receptus*. Then this text of Agapius may have relevance to Josephus' original text – it is noncommittal but not hostile to Jesus. Still the existence of the Agapius' version does not prove that there was an original Testimony in the Josephus' *Antiquities*.

The version of Michael the Syrian could also be regarded then as an amalgam of the Agapius' version and that of Eusebius contained in his *History*. Jerome's version also might reflect this situation through an unknown version of Eusebius' *History*, but it is unlikely. The simpler explanation of these two versions is by an introduction of a stylistic explanatory alteration.

The neutral text of Agapius would attest only to the existence of a historical Jesus. Josephus as a historian, could have written it. On the other hand, in the early years it might have been important for the Christians in arguments with Hellenes. It is possible that such a version could have escaped Christian censorship.

It could also be a Christian adaptation in a less affirmative form than the known *textus receptus* of the passage in Josephus' *Antiquities* which was much more negative or hostile to Christianity.

According to Pines the title Messiah was not applied to any eschatological figure that actually lived during the Roman period prior to Jesus. Jesus would be known to supporters and opponents under this name hence the expression "Brother of Jesus who was called Christ (Messiah)."

Now we can analyze the conclusions drawn by Alice Whealey from the analysis of the texts found in Josephus' *Antiquities* and their citations by other Christian writers:

1. There is no evidence of the use of the Testimonium originally by Christians (before Eusebius in the extant text) to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, though later Christians used it for that purpose. Whealey suggests that this was so because there was no explicit positive statement in the Josephus text to this effect.

It is equally possible that there was originally no statement about Jesus at all or at least about Jesus being the Messiah.

2. No ancient author had any doubts about the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum. This is hardly an argument because ancient Christians accepted almost any story concerning the life of Jesus.

3. Citations of the Testimonium in Syriac sources points to the existence of a skeptical variant before the time of Theophilus of Edessa in the eighth century (or James of Edessa in the sixth century).

Again, the dubitative sentence is an explanatory one and does not change the overall meaning of the passage, especially if the part relating to the supernatural character of Jesus remains.

4. Citations of the Testimonium by Theodoret, Agapius, Michael the Syrian, and Pseudo-Hegesippus indicate that there were fourth century copies of *Antiquities* independently transmitted by Pseudo-Hegesippus into his *De excidio Hierosolymitano* and by Eusebius into his *Ecclesiastical History* that contained a variant reading like "he was believed to be the Christ." This statement must have been in the past tense as it is transmitted by Jerome (*credebatur*), Pseudo-Hegesippus (*crediderunt*), Michael the Syrian, and Agapius.

Theodoret's reference like that of Origen do not indicate the existence of any negative statement denying the messiahship of Jesus in Josephus. Pseudo-Hegesippus does not quote Josephus only states that they, i.e., the disciples, "believed in him" that is in his teaching, not that they believed that he was the Christ; though at the end Pseudo-Hegesippus comments that even those who killed him believed that he was God. That is obviously a projection of his own belief. There is no

indication of a skeptical variant in the Eusebius works at all. Jerome's version is explained easily by a stylistic modification and it does not change the meaning of the whole Testimonium. The past tense is explained by the stylistics of the narrative.

5. This dubitative version of the Testimonium survived in the copies of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius which were used by Jerome and by the Syriac author who was, in turn, used by Agapius and by Michael.

1. There is no evidence that Jerome found the dubitative version of the Testimonium in his copy of Eusebius. Most likely the change he made was an explanatory one referring to the disciples who believed that he was the Christ. 2. The Syriac version of Michael and the Syriac translation of the Eusebius *History* reflect the same translation of the Greek original containing the *textus receptus* of the Testimonium. Both versions use the same wording or expressions in sentences rendering the Greek *textus receptus*, and in the point where they deviate from the Greek version, they deviate in the same direction.⁵² Moreover, Michael's version differs in that it states "He was thought to be the Messiah" and "Pilate condemned him to the cross and he died." Whealey follows the explanation of A. Merx who suggested that the Greek original of the Syriac version of *Ecclesiastical History* was the earliest redaction and afterwards was modified and brought in line with that preserved now in the Greek manuscript.⁵³ There is no indication of such a version, as Eusebius' text would have to be changed in all of his works and in their translations. It is difficult to imagine, in view of how widely he was used, that there would not survive a copy with his supposedly original dubitative Testimonium. Michael's version, "He was thought to be the Messiah," is an explanatory recension for why he had followers. 3. Whealey suggests that the Agapius' version is derived from the same Syriac translation of the presumed dubitative original *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius. The Agapius and Michael versions would be two examples deriving from the same original Syriac version. 4. This leads to a conclusion that there was only one Syriac version: the Syriac translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* (and also of *Theophania*, whose Greek original does not exist any longer) of Eusebius which represented the dubitative *textus receptus* of the Testimonium.

6. This dubitative version was the original text written by Josephus himself.

The dubitative text introduces only an explanation of why Jesus attracted followers. Still it is uncompromising in the belief of the supernatural nature of Jesus, his power, his truth, and the confirmation of his resurrection. It is hardly conceivable that Josephus would write such a statement.

7. Only a positive statement denying the belief in Jesus as the Messiah would explain why Origen, Pseudo-Hegesippus, and Theodoret characterized Josephus as an unbeliever.

The statements by Origen, Pseudo-Hegesippus, and Theodoret do not require any additional negative statement in the text of Josephus. The whole analysis of the Antiquities, if Origen and others read this work, is sufficient evidence.

8. The use of the past tense in the *textus receptus* derives from the past tense used originally rather than from the text being created *ex nihilo*. Christians and copyists in the fourth century would rather use the present tense.

However, not necessarily, the past tense is a logical stylistic consequence of a narration

introduced by “Now, there was about this time Jesus ...”

9. For the statements “if one must call him a man” and “the prophets having foretold these things,” Whealey argues that they are original since Pseudo-Hegesippus transmits them. Moreover, she claims we do not know what Josephus actually could have meant by this. He did not have to believe that Jesus was not a man or that the prophets had foretold his crucifixion and resurrection.

The first sentence, “If one must call him a man ...,” might be interpreted as non-committal. But then follows an affirmation of his supernatural character by a positive statement about his “wonderful works.” The prophecies and resurrection are again presented in an affirmative way as if they actually happened. Concerning the messianic prophecy, Josephus had a quite different view, and obviously he would not believe in the resurrection.

10. There is also some evidence from the Pseudo-Hegesippus reference that the original text read that people received with pleasure the “moral teaching” rather than “the truth.” This alteration should have taken place early in the fourth century since the Jerome, Rufinus, and Syriac Eusebius works use the word “truth.”

This reference in Pseudo-Hegesippus is not a citation of Josephus but a comment of the writer, elaborating on the source text. And such an interpretation is a logical explanation of the context of Jesus’ teaching.

In summary we may conclude that originally there was no statement about Jesus or identification of a certain James with the “brother of Jesus in the Josephus” text. These were Christian interpolations done very early, probably at the end of the first century. Additional evidence that there was no particular figure of Jesus, who would resemble the Jesus of the Gospels, comes from the text of Justus of Tiberias, a rival of Josephus. His book, *The Chronology of the Kings of Judah which Succeeded One Another*, now lost, was read by Photius (815-897 C.E.), Patriarch of Constantinople, in the ninth century. He wrote: “I have read the chronology of Justus of Tiberias He begins his history from Moses, and ends it not till the death of Agrippa, the seventh [ruler] of the family of Herod, and the last king of the Jews; who took the government under Claudius, had it augmented under Nero, and still more augmented by Vespasian. He died in the third year of Trajan, where also his history ends. He is very concise in his language, and slightly passes over those affairs that were most necessary to be insisted on; and being under the Jewish prejudices, as indeed he was himself also a Jew by birth, he makes not the slightest mention of the appearance of Christ, or what things happened to Him, or of the wonderful works that He did.”⁵⁴

The Old Russian Version of “The Jewish War”

In the Greek manuscripts of another work of Josephus, *The Jewish War*, there is no mention of Jesus or John the Baptist. As attested by Josephus himself, the work was written originally in Aramaic (no manuscript is known) to convince the Jews of the futility of resisting the Roman power. Josephus explained that it was the seditious temper of the Jews that destroyed his country and that there were tyrants among the Jews who brought the Romans, and that the Romans unwillingly attacked the Jews and burned their temple. The reason for their defeat of the Jews was that God now was on the side of the Romans.⁵⁵ Josephus then rewrote the work into Greek

(ca 75-79 C.E.) with the help of some assistants in Rome and it is puzzling why there are no passages concerning the Jesus movement if the passages in *Antiquities* are at least partially authentic.

The confusion with respect to the authenticity of the paragraphs mentioning Jesus in Josephus' *Antiquities* was introduced by the discovery of some thirty manuscripts (dating from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries) of *The Jewish War* in the Old Russian language which are modified versions of the Greek manuscripts. These are not simple translations from the Greek because they contain some material which is not in the Greek manuscripts and some material from the Greek text is omitted in the Slavonic version.

These Slavonic manuscripts of the *War* were discovered in the eighteenth century by Russian scholars, but a German scholar, Alexander Berendts, was the first who, in 1906, collected and translated them into German. However, they include eight passages which are related to the origin of Christianity and are not present in the known Greek manuscripts: three passages referring to John the Baptist, four to Jesus, one to the first Christians. Berendts worked on the translation of all of the text, but he published only books I-IV (1924-1927). The interest in these manuscripts was sharpened by the relevance of the additional material to the history and origin of Christianity. The text was then published with a French translation by Victor M. Istrin in 1934/1938 and eventually in English translation in 2003 by H. Leeming, K. Leeming, and L. Osinkina.

Scholars were divided in their opinions on the origin of this text. Berendts claimed that the text was translated from an early Aramaic manuscript of Josephus and not from the accepted Greek manuscript. Moreover, he also considered the additions in the Slavonic text as authentic, by Josephus himself. Robert Eisler accepted Berendts' view but added that some of the additions were expanded and interpolated later by Christian copyists. Eisler claimed that there were two redactions of *The Jewish War*, the first in 71 C.E., a translation from the Aramaic and the other, an adaptation after 75 C.E. for the Roman readers. Victor Istrin opened a new era in the studies of the Slavonic text and claimed that it was based on one manuscript only and was not a literal translation from the Greek as Eisler claimed. On the contrary, it represented a free translation with insertions and modifications which cannot be traced to Josephus himself, but indicate a special interest and tendency of the translator. Nikita A. Meščerskij maintained that the text is a translation from the authentic Josephus Greek text but contains many modifications. Another researcher, Alice Whealey, accepted this conclusion and suggested that the text is a medieval elaboration.

An exhaustive analysis of the Slavonic manuscripts by Meščerskij and only now available in English indicates that the Old Russian manuscripts were translated from the Greek exemplar in the eleventh century and that the translated Slavonic text represents a modification of the original text by the removal or addition of material suitable for representing the history of Christianity. This conclusion was done from a philological analysis of the Slavonic text which preserved many Greek words and from an analysis of the contents of some additions which could not have originated with Josephus. The Slavonic translation thus constitutes an impressive literary document of the early Old Russian language.⁵⁶

1. Omissions and Additions

Omissions in the Old Russian text indicate that the Slavonic translator was not interested in

the problem of the causes of the Jewish war and did not intend to fathom its social roots. His major interest was in narrating the military and historical events and he used the Josephus text as evidence and confirmation of the story about Jesus Christ. Josephus would not make such omissions himself since they would deprive the text of meaning.

Additions in the Old Russian text were originally classified by Berendts into two categories, “christological,” and “non-christological.” Meščerskij differentiated some 41 major additions but there are innumerable others. They are closely fused into the original text by the Russian translator and were used for various purposes. The Russian translator freely admits in many places in the gloss that omissions in and additions to the original text were made.

In addition, there are in the Old Russian version several transpositions of the text which were made for stylistic reasons or simply from a rearrangement of the folia of the manuscript. We shall divide the additions into several categories depending on their nature and give a brief description of them.

A. Non-christological additions.

a. Additions of detail and expansion of the story.

1). Bk. I, chap. III, pt. 1: that John Hyrcanus reigned for 37 years. 2). Bk. I, chap. XVII, pt. 3: expansion of Herod’s dream at Antioch which foretold the death of his brother, Joseph. 3). Bk. I, chap. XVIII, pt. 7: the name of the village, Avlon, in which Herod stopped to take a bath in a warm spring. Such a name does not appear in any of Josephus’ works. 4). Bk. I, chap. XXIX, pt. 2: Herod elaborates on the misdeeds of Pheroras’s wife. 5). Bk. I, chap. XXXIII, pt. 9: extension of an account of Herod’s funeral. 7). Bk. II, chap. XX, pt. 7: expansion of a speech by General Josephus recommending abandonment of corporal punishment for infractions of subordinates and using instead a verbal warning. This is, according to Meščerskij, in line with the true spirit of the Old Russian military speeches. 8). Bk. III, chap. VII, pt. 22: a reproach addressed to Roman soldiers by Vespasian for fleeing during battle. 9). Bk. IV, chap. IX, pt. 6: how, by a ruse, Jews won a battle. The reference to “conifer branches” betrays the Russian character of the insertion. 10). Bk. IV, chap. IX, pt. 9: a detail describing the internal strife among the Roman military commanders. 11). Bk. V, chap. VII, pt. 4: a detail describing the ruse by the Jewish defenders of Jerusalem. But the origin of the episode and the name of the Jewish centurion are enigmatic. They could derive from the original copy of the Greek text which did not survive. 12). Bk. V, chap. XIII, pt. 7: the Greek text mentions a certain Mannaeus, son of a certain Lazarus, who came to the side of Titus and divulged the number of people dead in the city; the translator changes the story by making this Mannaeus a “nephew of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the grave” in order to link the name “Lazarus” to the Gospel story. 13). Bk. VII, chap. I, pt. 3: a stylistic elaboration on the theme of how Romans celebrated their victory. 14). Bk. VII, chap. VII, pt. 3: embellishing the details of the story of King Antiochus’ reconciliation with the Romans and how he was treated in Rome.

b. Explanatory additions.

1). Bk. I, chap. XIV, pt. 4: the procedure and custom how the kingship of Herod the Great was conferred on him in Rome. 2). Bk. II, chap. I, pt 2: the first acts by Archelaus upon inheriting the kingdom of Herod by appealing to Hebrew traditions,

incomprehensible to the Romans. 3). Bk. II, chap. XIII, pt. 7: the argument used by the Greeks that Caesarea is a Greek city because Herod adorned it with “statues and idols” which would not be permitted if the city were Jewish. 4). Bk. VI, chap. V, pt. 4: reference to the prophecy circulating among the besieged Jews in Jerusalem that the city would be destroyed when it became “quadrangular.” Josephus explained that it happened when the tower of Antonia was destroyed. The Russian translator’s interpretation is that the Jews “themselves began to make crosses for crucifixions, which are ... quadriform.” This is an obvious reference to the link between the destruction of Jerusalem and the crucifixion of Jesus. 5). Bk. VII, chap. II, pt. 2: the story of Simon, son of Gioras, leader of the Sicarii, who appeared from the underground decked in royal purple. The Russian translator gives a mystical explanation for the episode and why Simon appeared dressed like this: “Then Simon saw a certain vision in bright robes, approaching him and saying ...”

c. Additions as a gloss to the text.

1). Bk. I, chap. XXX, pt. 3: insertion in the passage describing the struggle for power and succession among the members of Herod’s family. The sons of Alexander and Aristobulus are described as “hydra heads,” followed by an explanation why Hercules cut off the heads of the legendary hydra. 2). Bk. III, chap. VIII, pt. 7: omission a paragraph and insertion there of comments on how Josephus, by treachery, saved his own life. 3). Bk. III, chap. IX, pt. 7: explaining why Roman soldiers refused to fight the Jews in a specific situation. The Roman military law “sentenced to humiliation” those fighting without order even if they should be victorious. 4). Bk. IV, chap. III, pt. 8: after explaining how the Zealots made a mockery of the high priest’s office by electing a certain Phanni as high priest, goes on to say that such a deed fulfilled the prophecy about the destruction of the city and abomination in the holy places. 5). Bk. IV, chap. VI, pt. 1: after the death of a Jewish commander at Peraea, Niger, who cursed the “impious” “For the sake of other righteous men ... who were killed ... up to the present. For the accumulated blood drowned the city.” This is an interpretation of the translator that the ruin of Jerusalem was sent by God because of the crucifixion of Jesus. Another tradition of the cause of the fall of Jerusalem originated in Origen’s *Commentary on Matthew* (13:55) written between 244-249 C.E., where he interpreted the insertion in *Antiquities* Bk. XX.3.2 as meaning that Jerusalem was destroyed because of murder of James, the brother of Jesus. 6). Bk. IV, chap. VIII, pt. 2: after the description of the evil deeds of the Zealots and Sicarii noting that they forgot the teachings of the prophets and their own history. This comment fits in with the ideological outlook of the translator and is linked to another gloss, in Bk. VII, chap. VIII, pt. 1, where the Sicarii are described as sent “as the scourge for the whole of our land as a divine judgment.” 7). Bk. V, chap. IX, pt. 1: a reference to the prophecy of Daniel about the destruction of the city and the holy place, as related to previous comments of the translator. 8). Bk. VI, chap. I, pt. 8: a comment after a description of the exploits of a Roman centurion that the Jewish defenders “hit him with axes and stones to frighten all the Romans.” 9). Bk. VI, chap. II, pt. 1: a moral reprimand to the Jews when Josephus states that the city and the temple are full of corpses “for we have brought righteous blood on ourselves and on our race.” This is a Christian gloss linked to that in Matthew 27:25.

d. Additions as anachronistic insertions.

1). Bk. I, chap. XXXI, pt. 1: a description of the stay in Rome of Antipater, the son of Herod, and how he bribed Romans to plot against his brothers (Archelaus and Philip). There is an anachronistic reference to the bribed people as “Italians, called Latins.” Josephus never uses the term “Latins.” This term appeared in the Byzantine period when the representatives of the Eastern Roman Empire began to call themselves Romaïos. In the eleventh century, when *The Jewish War* was translated into the Old Russian and polemics between the Eastern and Western church were common, the Romans were commonly called Latins. Moreover, there is here a negative description of the Romans (called Latins): “For such are Latins. They rush to take their pay and transgress their oath for the sake of gifts; in slander they see no sin.” Josephus could not describe the Romans in such negative terms, rather, he was servile to them. 2). Bk. II, chap. VIII, pt. 7: to the oath of the Essenes resembling Christian oath.

e. Additions of moralizing character.

1). Bk. I, chap. XXXII, pt. 5: a moralistic commentary on the resolution of the story of Antipater, the son of Herod and his punishment. The Russian translator expresses his moralistic evaluation using Christian phraseology: “And no man, righteous or unrighteous, can escape His [God’s] omnipotent right [hand]. But His glorious eye rather looks upon the righteous.” Moreover, the reference in the same insertion to Abraham who as “forefather of our race, was led out of his own land because he had wronged his brother” would be incomprehensible for the Romans. 2). Bk. I, chap. XXXIII, pt. 2: to a long and solemn speech of two doctors of the law who stood for “our lawgiver.” This, too, would be incomprehensible to the Romans. 3). Bk. I, chap. XXXIII, pt. 5: a description of the disease of Herod as a punishment for his deeds, especially killing his own children. 4). Bk. II, chap. VIII, pt. 1: preaching of Judas the Galilee, founder of the Zealots “who upbraided the Jews because, although they were the seed of Abraham, they were now in thrall to the Romans.”

B. Christological additions.

1). Addition concerning whether Herod could be a Messiah.

In Bk. I, chap. XIX, pt. 2 a lengthy discussion between the priests concerning Herod whom some regarded as a Messiah. While Herod was fighting his Arab enemies with the support of his Roman protectors, the priests argued; “The Law forbids us to have a foreigner [as] king, but we are expecting the Anointed, the Meek One, of David’s line. Yet we know that Herod is an Arab, uncircumcised.” They doubt whether Herod could be a Messiah: “But is this [king] the hope of nations? We detest his misdeeds; are the nations going to have hope in him?” And one priest, Jonathan, referring to calculations of years based on Daniel’s prophecy, claims: “The numbers of years are as I said, but where is the Holy of Holies? For [the prophets] cannot be calling this Herod holy, [since he is] bloodthirsty and foul.” Also, the prophets predicted there always will be a prince in Judah “until there comes the One to whom it is given back; in him the nations will hope.” They referred to calculations based on Daniel’s prophecy and criticized a certain Levi who did not quote the scripture but repeated some “fairy stories.” He, in turn, is said to have reported to Herod their discussion; Herod got rid of the priests by killing them all.

2). About the arrival of the Persian astrologers at Herod's court and the massacre of the innocent.

This is an addition in Bk. I, chap. XX, pt. 4 which was not included in the christological fragments listed by Berendts or Istrin. The Russian translator clearly admits that this is an insertion in Bk. I, chap. XXI, pt. 13. When commenting on Josephus's statement that Herod never met adversity except by "treachery" or "recklessness of his troops" he explains that his commanders took fright "for another reason which we have already described in the search for the Christ and the slaughter of the infants." The addition of the astrologers is clearly an elaboration of the story told by Matthew (2:1-17). An interesting detail is that the priests tell Herod, when explaining the appearance of the star, that it predicts a man who shall come from Judah and "We reckon that he shall be born without a father." A certain priest (?) Levi suggested to the king to kill all the male infants to secure the kingdom for Herod's sons. Also, the place of birth of the predicted king is named as Bethlehem.

3). Fragment on preaching of John the Baptist.

In this lengthy addition in Bk. II, chap. 7, pt. 2, John the Baptist is represented as a political peaceful agitator who, through an appeal to penitence, prophesied the liberation of the Jews from their "many rulers" and the institution of a rule of the Most High. He is characterized as an ascetic orthodox Jew who was sent by the Spirit of God and who did nothing but preach and baptize the Jews. Called before Archelaus and the experts of the Law, he was accused by Simon, a scribe of Essene origin, of misleading people; he explained that he had a secret which is in their midst. But since the Jews did not listen to him they brought upon themselves disasters and persecution perpetrated by Archelaus on the Jews and Samaritans. This addition is reminiscent of the Gospel story (Matt. 3:1-11) and different from the text in *Antiquities*, Bk. XVIII.V.2. Here there is no messianic prophesying and John is killed by Herod, the tetrarch, for fear of a rebellion which could be produced by him.

4). Explanation of the dream by John the Baptist and his death.

In the second fragment concerning John the Baptist in Bk. II, chap. 9, pt. 1, John explained a dream of Philip, half-brother of the Herod Agrippa I, the tetrarch, and predicted that he would die and his wife, Herodias, would be taken by Herod, his half-brother. The same fragment describes how John the Baptist was killed by order of Herod Antipas, the new tetrarch of Galilee, for criticizing his marriage to Herodias, the wife of his dead half-brother Philip. There are conflicting reports about this affair – in *Antiquities* (XVIII.V.1) Josephus reports that Herodias divorced Philip and married Herod Antipas (Cf. Matt. 14:1-5). The pious Jews thought that for that reason God punished the Jews in their fight with the Arab king Aretas, father of the legitimate wife of Herod Antipas.

Fragments concerning Jesus.

- 1). The first fragment is inserted just after Pilate yielded to the Jews and removed the Roman standards from the city of Jerusalem. In it (Bk. II, chap. 9, pt. 3) Jesus is described as someone "more than human" "if it is proper to call him man." His miraculous actions were such that he could not be "regarded as a man," yet due to his likeness to humans, "he could not be regarded as an angel either." Whatever he did, he did by some unseen

power. The text goes on to report various views people had about him: some thought he was “the first [Jewish] lawgiver risen from the dead.” “Others thought he was sent from God.” He did not do anything reprehensible, though he opposed the Law in many ways. He was surrounded by “servants” and by “followers” who expected that he would enable the Jews to throw off the Roman yoke and set them free. They even urged him to march on Jerusalem, “kill the Roman troops and Pilate,” but Jesus refused the military action. When the Jewish authorities learned about the movement of Jesus, in order to avoid repercussions from the Romans, they asked Pilate to repress the movement. Pilate repressed the militants but refused to persecute peaceful Jesus who even cured Pilate’s dying wife. Eventually the teachers of the Law bribed Pilate with thirty talents so he gave them permission to crucify Jesus in defiance of the traditional law.

This addition is reminiscent of the insertion in Josephus’ *Antiquities* Bk. XVIII. III. 3, but is made more extensive. The translator purposely imitated the style of the latter insertion. He also refers to a tradition that Jesus was a leader of a national uprising against the Roman invaders. The reference to thirty talents is reminiscent of the bribing of Judas in Matthew 26:14-16.

- 2). The other fragment (Bk. V, chap. V, pt. 4) talks about the rending of the temple curtain and other signs “when the benefactor, man and by his actions not man, was for reward handed over to be killed” in accordance with the account found in the Gospels (Mark 15:38; Luke 24:45). This benefactor, follows the text, was rumored by some that “he was not found in the tomb,” some claiming that “he had risen,” others that “he was stolen away by his friends.” Then follows a lengthy digression in which the translator argues that rising from the dead is not possible, “Except he be an angel or one of the heavenly powers, or God himself appear as man and do what he wants.” Also, the fragment mentions the guards at the tomb composed of one thousand Romans and one thousand Jews! This is clearly Christian comment and the rhetorical questions are an imitation of the style of the insertion in *Antiquities* XVIII.III.3 just as the previous insertion.
- 3). Still another fragment reports that there was a tablet hanging over the entrance to the temple which declared in three languages, Greek, Roman, and Jewish, “Jesus a king who had not reigned, crucified by [the] Jews, because he foretold the destruction of the city and the devastation of the temple” (Bk. V, chap. V, pt. 2). This is a clear reminiscence of the trilingual inscription placed over the cross of Jesus according to the story described in the Gospels (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19-20).
- 4). The last fragment (Bk. VI. chap. V, the end of pt. 4) concerns the prophecy reported by Josephus in the standard Greek text which explains why Jews fought against the Romans: “That then should their city be taken, as well as their holy house, when once their temple should become four-square. But now, what did most elevate them in undertaking this was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, ‘about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth.’” This, according to Josephus, pushed the Jews to destroy the tower of Antonia to fulfill the prophecy. But Josephus explains that this prophecy refers to Vespasian who was appointed emperor in Judea.⁵⁷ The Russian translator adds here, “For this there are various explanations. For some thought it [meant] Herod, others the crucified miracle-worker, Jesus, others,

Vespasian.” So one and the same prophecy was utilized in various epochs and times and applied to different figures.

Fragment on the first Christians, “servants of the wonder-worker.”

There is one fragment (Bk. II, chap. 11, pt. 6) referring to the first Christians who are called by the name of “apostles” and “servants” of the “wonder-worker.” Here the author refers explicitly to his previous description of this “wonder-maker.” These “servants/apostles” were telling people that their master “was [still] alive although he had died” and that he now would free them from their servitude. Many people listened to them for though they were simple people, but they worked marvelous signs. And the Roman procurators who are mentioned by names, Cuspius Fadus (ruled in 44-46 C.E.) and Tiberius Alexander (ruled 46-48 C.E.), did not persecute them because of their actions judging them to be the work of God. Later, however, they were persuaded by the scribes to send them to Rome or to Antioch to be tried, and banished others to “distant lands.”

2. Evaluation of the additions

The fragments concerning John the Baptist and Jesus are clearly linked to the Gospel stories and show dependence on them. What is emphasized by the Russian translator is the political aspect of the messianic movement. John the Baptist as well as Jesus are represented as political agitators who follow the advice of Isaiah, the prophet, to achieve a political goal through moral renewal and repentance. The time of John’s activity is unusually extended from the time of Archelaus (he succeeded Herod the Great in 4 C.E. and was deposed in 6 C.E.) to the death of Philip who died between 33 and 34 C.E. The mention of the name of Simon, the Essene, and the secret possessed by him is interesting. It confirms the links of the messianic movement with the Essenes and the mystical Mandaean or Gnostic John-tradition. Also the ascetic image of an orthodox John suggests his association with one of the branches of the Essenes. The translator must have followed some tradition linking John the Baptist with the Essenes since they are not mentioned in the Gospels. Philip the tetrarch, presented here is in contrast to the favorable image found in *Antiquities* (Bk. XVIII.4.6).

The story of the marriage of the Herod Antipas to Herodias, the wife of Philip, his half-brother, is different in *Antiquities* and in the Gospels. In *Antiquities* Herod’s wife left him when she learned about the pact between him and Herodias. The execution of John the Baptist is ascribed solely to Antipas’ political apprehension of the John-movement: “Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into John’s 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...”⁵⁸ In the Old Russian *Jewish War* the translator follows the Gospel story where John was put to death for criticizing the marriage of Herod Antipas to Herodias.

In fragments concerning Jesus, the Russian translator acknowledges that he is a man, but at the same time, due to miraculous circumstances of his resurrection and his action, he is not a simple man, but neither is he an angel. He suggests the divinity of Jesus. These rhetorical questions are reminiscent of the insertion regarding Jesus in *Antiquities*. Probably the Russian translator

wanted to imitate the presumed Josephus style. The striking thing here is, just as with John, there was a political aspect to the Jesus movement. We find such elements in the Gospels as well, but there they are subdued, as if their writers tried to hide this aspect and put to the fore the future messianic role of Jesus.

These elements were brilliantly analyzed by George Wesley Buchanan⁵⁹ and his analysis thus is confirmed by the Slavonic text. Jesus in the Slavonic fragments is viewed by his followers (who counted 150) as a political leader. They expect from him political military action, and they are ready to fight with the Romans. But Jesus opted for the peaceful way advised by Isaiah. His death is described as a scheme of the Jewish leaders in order to pacify the Romans and prevent repressive reaction.

The trilingual inscription over the entrance to the temple is connected with the Jewish tradition which required by law that charges should be displayed thus in all cases of capital punishment, as is reported in the Gospels. The author of this fragment knew about the trilingual inscription over the entrance warning the visitors before the entrance to the inner court of the temple.

Rending of the curtain of the temple has its antecedents in similar events recorded in Jewish tradition. Josephus mentions a mysterious opening of the iron temple gate forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem. The following discussion concerning the resurrection is an elaboration on the theme from the Gospels.

In the last fragment concerning the first Christians, the Russian translator may have put together different traditions and placed them in a different chronological period. If the statement that some Christians were sent to Rome for trial is meant to represent Paul and his deportation, then the period of almost two decades described in Acts is reduced to four years, 44 to 48 C.E., during which the two governors mentioned in the text, Cuspius Fadus and Tiberius Alexander, had ruled.

We may summarize, after Meščerskij, that: 1. There is no evidence that the additions to the Old Russian version of *The Jewish War* were made from some other edition of the text. At best, the translator might have had a copy of the Greek text with some marginal comments by earlier readers and included them in his translation. 2. These additions are a product of his literary creativity and derive from his ideological and stylistic inclinations. 3. They reveal why the Old Russian translator and his Christian readers were interested in *The Jewish War*. This work was widely read by orthodox Russian Christians and constituted a written document from the epoch validating the claim to the historicity and truth of Christianity and its victory over Judaism. It constituted a confirmation of their point of view that the destruction of the Jewish nation was a just divine retribution for the rejection of Christ. Moreover, for the Russian readers *The Jewish War* was also a saga recounting the formation of the “second Jerusalem,” Constantinople, which they viewed as an inspiration for their own national aspirations. And the continued interest from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries Meščerskij explains in these words:

From the standpoint of the representatives and defenders of official ideology in the period of the formation of a centralized Russian state, events of world history such as the capture of Jerusalem by the Roman emperor Titus and the devastation of Constantinople by the Turkish sultan Mohammed II, were compared as events of one and the same significance. If for the ideologues of the Great-Russian centralized autocratic state, Moscow had become the “third Rome” after the fall of the “second, new Rome” – Constantinople, – then to no less a degree, from

their point of view, did Moscow deserve to be called also the “third, new Jerusalem” and the “new Israel” after the devastation of the “second Jerusalem” of the Byzantine Empire. The fall of Constantinople, like the fall of Jerusalem in the earlier era regarded as divine retribution for apostasy and lawlessness of its inhabitants, gave the glory of these ancient centers of orthodoxy and piety to the “third Rome” and the “new Jerusalem” of Moscow in the minds of the ideologues defending their view of the world role of the Muscovite autocratic realm. The *History* of Flavius Josephus was so widely read in Russian society in the 15th – 16th centuries precisely because it happened to be included in a series of works that aided the interpretation and justification of the world-historical role of the centralized Moscow state and thus raised the prestige and increased the glory of Russian aristocracy.⁶⁰

We will close the discussion with a quote from Meščerskij:

When considered in their entirety, interlinked by ideology and style, these additions represent a complete and sustained literary and artistic achievement, which found a broad response among Old Russian readers. And so, although the Old Russian Josephus is formally classified as translated literature, it can be regarded as the work of a Russian author.⁶¹

3. Jewishness of the Slavonic War

Recently Étienne Nodet⁶² presented arguments in support of the idea that the source for the Slavonic *War* text is the authentic Greek text of Josephus. His argument is based on two assumptions: 1. The Old Russian text preserves special aspects of the ancient Jewish exegesis of the scripture which could not, according to him, either be known or repeated by a Christian. 2. It also has stylistic features with an unmistakable Jewish character, therefore it could not be a Christian interpolation. Both indicate, according to Nodet, that the Slavonic text was not based on some Christian interpolation into the Greek text. But most of his arguments about the knowledge of some special interpretation of Judaism are taken from the text of *Antiquities*, thus they do not have any relevance for the text of *The Jewish War*.

Nodet gives only two examples from the Slavonic *War*. One is on the messianic prophecy already mentioned. This ancient prophecy is mentioned by Tacitus (55-ca 120 C.E.) and Suetonius (ca 69-ca 122 C.E.) as being professed by priests in Judaea and linked with the fall of Jerusalem: “The majority [of people] were convinced that the ancient scriptures of their priests alluded to the present as the very time when the Orient would triumph and from Judaea would go forth the men destined to rule the world.”⁶³ Suetonius adds that the Judaeans thought that man would be of their race. But they explain, as Josephus does, that it referred to the Vespasian (and Titus) who was declared emperor when he was in Judaea.⁶⁴ Eusebius (*H.E.* 1.6.1) and Epiphanius (*Panarion* 20.2) refer to the prophecy of Genesis 49:10 that the expected Messiah would come when there would be no native ruler from Judaea. Such a situation arose when Herod became king.

The Old Russian version of *The Jewish War* (Slavonic *War* VI.19.2) adds many details which explain that Herod could be at one time considered as Messiah through the analysis of the Law

and teachings of the prophets. “The Law forbids us to have a foreigner as king (Deut. 17:15), but we are expecting the Anointed, the Meek one, of David’s line (Amos 9:11) (Zech. 9:9). Yet we know that Herod is an Arab, uncircumcised.” And the anointed is characterized by reference to the scripture (Isa. 35:5; 61:1). Also “in him the nations will hope (Genesis 49:10).” These texts were interpreted in Jewish tradition to mean that the expected Messiah might be either the last king from Judaea or a newcomer after the last Judaeian king provided that he appears in Judaea. This may explain why Herod or Vespasian may have been as “the one to come.” But in the Old Russian text, Jewish priests are quoted as despairing: “But is this [king] the hope of nations? We detest his misdeeds. ... Alas God has abandoned us and we are forgotten by Him (Isa. 49:14), and he wishes to commit us to desolation and ruin.” And the priests also discuss whether scriptural prophecies are fulfilled or not with the advent of Herod. In the end Herod killed the priests and appointed new ones.

The context of this explanation is the fulfillment of the scripture. The prophecy was widely spread and known in the Hellenistic world. The priests began to search for the time when the expected Messiah was to come and considered Herod. Everything indicates that for some time Herod was considered to be the Messiah, at least at the beginning of his reign until he started a civil war around Jerusalem in 37 B.C.E., three years after his appointment by the Roman Senate. Nodet argues that the text in Old Russian *War* could hardly be a Christian interpolation. He is right that this could not be a Christian idea, meaning the “Christian” interpretation of the Messiah in the post-Nicaean sense. He forgets, however, that there is nothing in this text that could not be known to Christians in the eleventh century. The text of the addition reports only the thoughts of the Jewish priests and the whole logic here is based on the texts of the Old Testament scripture and concept of the Messiah where this term could apply to any king or priest or even prophet. Christians obviously were familiar with such interpretations. There is in the *Antiquities of the Jews* statement about Herod that a member of the Sanhedrin, a certain “righteous man,” Sameas, predicted during the trial of Herod that Herod one day would be in power to punish the members of the Sanhedrin and the high priest-king Hyrcanus himself. Moreover, Josephus recounts a story how an Essene named Menachem prophesied to the child Herod that he would be the king of the Jews.⁶⁵

There is one point worthy of mentioning. Even if we admit that this addition was introduced by a Christian to the Greek text early in the first century or at the beginning of the second, these Christians were Jews, therefore, they operated completely in the ideological framework of Judaism. As to the Jewish character of the style of the Slavonic *War*, this is not substantiated by Nodet. On the contrary the text displays many borrowings from the Greek language and typical characteristics of the eleventh century Russian, with only spurious similarities to the Aramaic or Hebrew.

4. The question of the Essenes

The second example in favor of the Josephus’ authenticity of the additions to the Old Russian text concerns the Essenes.⁶⁶ They were known from the information given by Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.E.-50 C.E.), Josephus (*The Jewish War* II.8.1-12) and Pliny the Elder (23-79 C.E.). The discovery of the community at Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls suggested that this community could be a research center of a larger Essene community. However, the differences in their doctrines and expectations are so great that they do not warrant such a conclusion.⁶⁷ The

most detailed description of the Essenes was given by Josephus and it is close to the description given by Hippolytus (*Refutation of all Heresies* 9:18-29).⁶⁸

In the Greek version Josephus stresses their piety and philanthropy which are the major aspects of Jewish apologetics in *Apion*⁶⁹ and that emphasis is lacking in the Slavonic version which is shorter by half. The other peculiarity is that in the Greek version Josephus stresses that they are Jewish “by birth” which, according to Nodet, is rather his wish because he himself admits that “They neglect wedlock but choose out other persons’ children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning; and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners.”⁷⁰ Nodet claims that this text indicates that through education the children belong to their group and not through the genealogy. But this is an artificial point created by Nodet. Only one segment of the Essenes chose celibacy, still they recruited their members from people who were Jews by birth and there is no indication that the Essenes abolished the practice of circumcision. Essenes were exemplary Jews. Moreover, the text indicates that the Essenes are subdivided into four classes and the junior members are considered inferior to the senior members. Being touched by a junior member conveys impurity as being touched by an alien. And purification is achieved by washing with water. Oil is considered defiling.

The same characteristics of the members of the group are found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁷¹ The Covenant is not attached to circumcision as in Genesis 17:8, but to the purification pedagogy indicated by baptism and full admission to the community which was most probably celibate. Still circumcision was a separate issue.

In the Greek version the Essenes are described as all forming one community though dispersed in various towns. In the Slavonic text they form many communities in various towns though they have the same observances. The Greek terms for Essenes, as Nodet claims, *Essaios* (*Essaioi*) or *Essēnos* (*Essēnoi*), are direct translation from the Hebrew *Hassidim*, which means “faithful to” or “disciples of.” This would indicate, according to Nodet, that each community had its master, founder and its disciples faithful to him. They may have a general pattern but have minor differences in their customs. Thus “the legislator” (“lawgiver”) whom they were “to blaspheme” in the Greek version may be the founder of the united movement, the so-called Teacher of Righteousness, and in the Slavonic version, the leader or founder of the individual group.⁷² Nodet links this fact with the origin of rabbinical Judaism which arose by formation of dispersed groups, many being Essene-like.⁷³ The other interpretation of the term “lawgiver” against whom the Essenes refused to blaspheme would be Moses or even the Judaeen God himself. Josephus applies the term “lawgiver” to Moses as well (*Antiquities* III.1.7, III.V.4, III.XIV.3, IV.VIII.4, IV.VIII.49; *Against Apion* II.2). Josephus, however, meant with respect to the Essenes, the founder of the Essene community, the Teacher of Righteousness since he refers to a specific lawgiver of the sect. The Essenes would be persecuted by the Romans only for political reasons since the Romans might see in their Messianic expectations a threat to their domination. In addition some of the Essenes joined the Zealots during the insurrection against the Romans. Nodet is clearly bending the meaning of the term *Hassidim* to suit his purpose. Moreover, it is not clear whether the term *Essenes* derives from the term *Hassidim* or from the Aramaic term *Asa* (pl. *Asayya*) which means “healer,” “physician.”⁷⁴

In the Greek version the Essenes form a perfect society. In both versions they do not have personal use of money, nor private property. This was considered by Josephus as the salvation of the city since these things were introduced by Cain (the name means according to Josephus a

possession) as acts of his wickedness.⁷⁵

The Slavonic version contains an addition about the night prayer. Nodet claims that this is not a Christian interpolation since we find a parallel custom among the members of the Qumran community in the Rule of the Community: “And the many shall be on watch together for a third of each night of the year in order to read the book, explain the regulation and bless together.”⁷⁶ It does not exclude the fact that Christians could be acquainted with the customs and habits of the Essene or similar sects.

In the observance of feasts, the Slavonic version adds in addition to the seventh day, the seventh week, seventh month, and seventh year. The seventh week is the Pentecost which coincides with the main festival in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the feast of the Covenant represented by the community itself, the day of receiving the new members, the feast of the first fruits. The seventh day and the seventh year are cycles based on the biblical tradition thus constitute a common knowledge. The solar calendar of the Dead Sea Scrolls includes a cycle of Pentecosts and pentecostads falling always on Sunday. Also the Therapeutae described by Philo (*De vita contemplativa*, 65) have a cycle of pentecostads.

The Essenes are for Josephus a model of Jewish life, and it is more obvious in the Greek version where the main features of that life are emphasized: piety, philanthropy, and unity. The Slavonic version has more legal and ritual contact with the Dead Sea Scrolls. Though the Essenes cannot be positively equated with the Qumran community, there are some suggestions that they could celebrate Passover and renew the Covenant.⁷⁷

The conclusion which Nodet makes is that the Slavonic version of the *War* is not an interpolation by the Christian copyists and develops an interesting hypothesis of its origin. In the prologue to the Greek version, Josephus states that he wrote the text originally in his language and then translated it into Greek and sent it to the Barbarians of the interior.⁷⁸ In *Apion*⁷⁹ he stated that he wrote *War* after being released from captivity in Rome where he learned Greek and was helped in writing the *War* in Greek by some learned assistants. They were not Judaeans so we have to assume that he provided them with a first draft of the translation by himself. This was probably the first publication of the Greek version, shorter and much closer to his culture. This version, according to Nodet, probably found an outlet in the Slavonic translation. But this hypothesis does not explain those clearly Christian additions based on the New Testament writings.

Thus, in conclusion, as was indicated by Meščerskij, most of the additions if not all, are elaborations of the Old Russian translator. This, however, does not exclude the possibility of some earlier insertions either directly to the text of the Greek manuscript or marginal comments which later were incorporated by the copyists.

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 32. Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, Bk. X.17, (Matt. 13:55). (*Komentarz do ewangelii według Mateusza*, przekład Katarzyna Augustyniak, wstęp i opracował Emil Stanula (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 1998).
 33. Hegesippus, in Eusebius *H.E.*, Bk. II.1.3-18.
 34. Jerome, *De viris illustribus, op. cit.*, 2,13.; Eusebius *H.E.*, Bk. II.1.3-5; Bk. II.23.19.
 35. *Antiquities*, Bk. XX.9.3.
 36. Clement of Alexandria, in Eusebius *H.E.*, Bk. II.1.4-5.
 37. Comment of Eusebius in *Demonstratio evangelica* (Bk III.5.124-125): "If, then, even the historian's evidence shews that He attracted to Himself not only the twelve Apostles, nor the seventy disciples, but had in addition many Jews and Greeks. He must evidently have had some extraordinary power beyond that of other men. For how otherwise could He have attracted many Jews and Greeks, except by wonderful miracles and unheard-of teaching? And the evidence of the *Acts of the Apostles* goes to shew that there were many myriads of Jews who believed Him to be the Christ of God foretold by the prophets. And history also assures us that there was a very important Christian Church in Jerusalem, composed of Jews, which existed until the siege of the city under Hadrian [reigned 117 to 138]. The bishops, too, who stand first in the line of succession there are said to have been Jews, whose names are still remembered by (125) the inhabitants. So that thus the whole slander against His disciples is destroyed, when by their evidence, and apart also from their evidence, it has to be confessed that many myriads of Jews and Greeks were brought under His yoke by Jesus the Christ of God through the miracles that He performed."
- Comment of Eusebius in *Theophania* (Bk. V.45): "If therefore, as (this) author attests of Him, He was the doer of wonderful works, and that He made His Disciples,--not only the twelve Apostles, or the seventy Disciples, but also attached to Himself,--myriads of others both of the Jews and Gentiles; it is clear, that He possessed something excellent beyond the rest of mankind. For, How could He have otherwise attached to Himself the many, both of the Jews and Gentiles, unless He had made use of miracles and astonishing deeds, and of doctrines (till then) unknown? The Book of the Acts of the Apostles also attests, that there were many thousands of the Jews, who were persuaded that He was that Christ of God, who had been preached of by the Prophets. It is also on record, that there was a great Church of Christ at Jerusalem; which had been collected from among the Jews, even to the times of its reduction by Hadrian. The first Bishops too who were there, are said to have been, one after another, fifteen (in

number), who were Jews; the names of whom are published to the men of that place, even until now. So that by these, every accusation against the Disciples may be undone; since, what was prior to them, and independent of their testimony, these attest of Him, (viz.), that He, the Christ of God, did by means of these wondrous works which He performed, reduce many, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, beneath His power.”

38. Eusebius *H.E.*, Bk. II.23.4-18.
39. Whealey, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
40. Eusebius *H.E.*, Bk. III.9.3.
41. Whealey, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
42. Pseudo-Hegesippus, *De excidio hierosolymitano (Hegesippi qui dicitur historiae libri V)* in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1932; reprint by Johnson Reprint Corporation, New York, London: 1960). Vol. 66, pt 1, 2. Bk. II:12.1. Translation by Whealey, *op. cit.* pp. 31-32.
43. A. M. Dubarle, « Le témoignage de Josèphe sur Jésus d’après des publications récentes,» In *Révue biblique* 84 (1977) 52.
44. Whealey, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-38.
45. Agapius, *Kitāb al-‘Unwān. Agapius Episcopus Mabhugensis : Historia Universalis* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum : Scriptures Arabici, X), edited by L. Cheiko, (Louvain, 1954). Agapius, *Kitāb al-‘Unwān, Histoire Universelle*, écrite par Agapius (Mahboub) de Menbidj (Patrologia Orientalis, V.4), edited with French translation by A. Vasiliev, (Paris 1912). Michel le Syrien, *Chronicle*, edited in facsimile with French translation by J. B. Chabot,; Vol. 1: Translation, (Paris 1899); Vol. IV: Syriac Text, (Paris 1910)..
46. Shlomo Pines, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
47. Whealey, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
48. A. Merx quoted in Shlomo Pines, *op. cit.*, p. 61-62.
49. Pines, *op. cit.*, p. 77-79.
50. Ibid. p. 94.
51. *Demonstratio evangelica*, VIII.2.99.
52. Pines, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-62.
53. Pines, *op. cit.*, p.p. 61-62.
54. Photius, in *op. cit.*, vol. 1, chap. 33, pp. 18-19 as quoted by Whiston in Josephus, *op. cit.*, note on p. 18.
55. Flavius Josephus, *op. cit.*, *The Jewish Wars*, Bk. VI.2.1.
56. Alexander Berendts und Konrad Grass, *Flavius Josephus vom Jüdischen Kriege*. Buch I-IV, nach der slavischen Überzetzung deutsch herausgegeben und mit dem griechischen Text verglichen, (Teil I; Dorpat, 1924-1926; Teil II, Dorpat 1927). Victor M. Istrin, André Vaillant et Pierre Pascal, *La "Prise de Jérusalem" de Josèphe le Juif* (Paris: Institut d’Études Slaves, 2 vols, 1934-1938). Nikita Aleksandrovich Meshcherskij, *Istorija Iudejskoj Vojny Iosifa Flavija v Drevnerusskom Perevode (History of the Jewish War by Joseph Flavius in the Old Russian Translation)* (Moscow-Leningrad: Akademia Nauk SSSR, 1958). H. Leeming, K. Leeming, ed., *Josephus’ ‘Jewish War’ and its Slavonic Version: A Synoptic Comparison of the English Translation by H. St. J. Thackeray with the Critical Edition by N. A. Meščerskij of the Slavonic Version in the Vilna Manuscript Translated into English by H. Leeming and L. Osinkina*, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003). Robert Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist* (London: 1931). Roger Pearse, “Notes on the Old Slavonic Josephus,” in <http://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/josephus/slavonic.htm>.
57. Flavius Josephus, *op. cit.*, *The Jewish Wars*, Bk VI.5.4.
58. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVIII.5.2.
59. George Wesley Buchanan, *Jesus the King and His Kingdom* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984).

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60. In H. Leeming and K. Leeming, eds, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
62. In an appendix to the work of Henry St. J. Thackeray, *Josèphe, l'homme et l'historien, adapté de l'anglais (Josephus, the Man and Historian, 1929)* par Étienne Nodet avec un appendice sur la version slavone de la Guerre, (Paris: Éditions de Cerf, 2000), pp. 129-247.
63. Tacitus, *The Histories*, a new translation by Kenneth Wellesley (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1980), V.13.
64. Suetonius, *Lives of Twelve Caesars*, with English translation by J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), *Vespasian* 8, p. 273.
65. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities*, *op. cit.*, XIV.IX.4, XV.X.5.
66. Steve Mason "What Josephus says about the Essenes in the Judean War," in Stephen G. Wilson and Michael Desjardins, eds., *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Peter Richardson* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), pp. 423-455.
67. Steve Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 450-452.
68. The political and religious situation in Palestine at the time is described by Flavius Josephus, (37-100 C.E.), a Jewish politician, general and historian in *The Antiquities of the Jews* and in *The Wars of the Jews*; in *Complete Works*, translated by William Whiston, foreword by William Sanford (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981). In addition the information about the Essenes or similar groups comes from the writings of: Pliny the Elder (23 - 79 C.E.), Roman historian and naturalist, *Natural History*, with English translation, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), V.14, V.15, V.17; and Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.E. - 50 C.E.), Jewish philosopher and historian who lived in Alexandria, *The Works of Philo*, Complete and Unabridged. New Updated Edition Translated by C.D. Yonge, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1993). *Every Good Man is Free*, 12.13; 12.75-79; *Hypothetica*, 11.1-18.
69. Josephus, *op. cit.*, *Apion* I.12.
67. Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, *op. cit.*, II.8.1.
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72. Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, *op. cit.* Bk. II.8.10.
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74. John M. Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Myth*, (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1984), pp. 12, 55.
75. Josephus, *Antiquities* in *op. cit.*, I.1-2.
76. *Dead Sea Scrolls, Rule of the Community*, 1 QS6:7-8.
77. Dominique Barthélémy, "Notes en marge de publications récentes sur les manuscrits de Qumran." RB 59 (1952), p.p. 193-203. He cites Al Biruni, an Arab historian of 11th century who quotes DSS discovered around 800 C.E. in which it is stated that the Passover must be celebrated within the Land of Israel.
78. Josephus, in *op. cit.*, *Jewish Wars* I.3.
79. Josephus, in *op. cit.*, *Apion* I.9.