

# Josephus on Jesus

The Testimonium  
Flavianum Controversy  
from Late Antiquity  
to Modern Times

ALICE WHEALEY

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# Studies in Biblical Literature

Hemchand Gossai  
*General Editor*

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PETER LANG

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Γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον Ἰησοῦς σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, εἶγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρή· ἦν γὰρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής, διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τάληθῇ δεχομένων, καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ ἐπηγάγετο· ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν. καὶ αὐτὸν ἐνδείξει τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν παρ' ἡμῖν σταυρῷ ἐπιτετιμηκότος Πιλάτου οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο οἱ τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαπήσαντες· ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῶν τῶν θείων προφητῶν ταῦτά τε καὶ ἄλλα μυρία περὶ αὐτοῦ θαυμάσια εἰρηκότων. εἰς ἔτι τε νῦν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ τοῦδε ὠνομασμένον οὐκ ἐπελίπε το φῦλον.

Flavius Josephus *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 18.63–64



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# Series Editor's Preface

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More than ever the horizons in biblical literature are being expanded beyond that which is immediately imagined; important new methodological, theological and hermeneutical directions are being explored, often resulting in significant contributions to the world of biblical scholarship. It is an exciting time for the academy as engagement in biblical studies continues to be heightened.

This series seeks to make available to scholars and institutions scholarship of a high order that will make a significant contribution to the ongoing biblical discourse. This series includes established and innovative directions, covering general and particular areas in biblical study. For every volume considered for this series, we explore the question as to whether the study will push the horizons of biblical scholarship. The answer must be *yes* for inclusion.

In this volume Alice Whealey provides a judicious and meticulously documented historical overview of Josephus' *Testimonium Flavianum*. Acknowledging that this brief document is widely considered the only extra-biblical document that attests the historicity of Jesus, Whealey notes that despite the popularity of this text, there has not been any extensive historical treatment of its reception. This present volume admirably fulfills this task, and provides for scholars an accessible resource.

The horizon has been expanded.

Hemchand Gossai  
General Editor



# Preface

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This is a history of the reception of a brief passage from the eighteenth book of *Jewish Antiquities* by the first century historian Flavius Josephus. Later known as the Testimonium Flavianum, this text is often considered the only extant extra-Biblical evidence to the historicity of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> In antiquity and the Middle Ages this text was the most commonly cited passage from the works of Josephus,<sup>2</sup> and the text played a major role in making Josephus the most widely read Greek-language historian of the medieval and early modern West.<sup>3</sup> In the sixteenth century the authenticity of the text was publicly challenged, launching a controversy that has still not been resolved today. Citing its great popularity in the pre-modern period, and its contested status beginning in the early modern period, one scholar has ventured to claim of the Testimonium Flavianum that “few historical texts, or none, have been more often quoted, more passionately rejected and denounced...more devotedly defended, more carefully edited and more variously emended.”<sup>4</sup> The great contemporary Josephus scholar Louis Feldman has even suggested that the Testimonium Flavianum is the most discussed passage in all ancient literature.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the very popular and very controversial status of this small but nonetheless clearly compelling passage, and despite Josephus’ status as the most widely-read Greek-language historian in the pre-modern West, there has been to date no historical treatment of the reception of this passage. While many scholars since the sixteenth century have attempted to evaluate critically the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum itself, no one has attempted to evaluate critically the reams of writing that the controversy over the text inspired, let alone construct more than a cursory history of this literature. This is the first attempt to construct such a history.

The first scholar to have collected some of the primary sources that will be used in this history of the reception of the Testimonium Flavianum was a German publisher named Christoph Arnold. In 1661 Arnold published in Nuremberg a collection of thirty contemporary letters, exchanged among several of his colleagues and himself, that examined the question whether the Testimonium Flavianum was

authentic.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these letters, Arnold included in his collection excerpts from some of the earliest controversial literature beginning in the sixteenth century about the authenticity of the passage. Arnold himself made no attempt to examine writers' motivations for questioning the text. Perhaps he was too close in time to the earliest scholars who participated in the controversy over the text's authenticity to attempt to place their arguments about the text into any sort of historical context. After all, these scholars were only about two generations removed from Arnold himself.

After the publication of Arnold's work, an English clergyman of Huguenot extraction named Charles Daubuz published in 1706 an essay arguing in favor of the text's authenticity. In contrast to Arnold, who simply published primary sources, Daubuz created a narrative account of the controversy using some of the earliest literature written for and against the authenticity of the *Testimonium*.<sup>7</sup> In so doing he became the first scholar to write something resembling a history of the controversial literature that the *Testimonium* inspired. Although he critically evaluated some of this literature with an eye towards bolstering his own view that the *Testimonium* was authentic, Daubuz, like Arnold, did not evaluate the motivations of participants in the controversy over the text nor did he attempt to place them in any sort of historical context.

The first major attempt to place the controversy over the *Testimonium Flavianum* into historical context was made in the twentieth century by Austrian academic Robert Eisler. In his massive *ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΣ* (1929–30), which aimed to prove the very controversial proposition that an Old Russian adaptation of Josephus' *Jewish War* was partially authentic, Eisler included a very brief summary of the history of the *Testimonium Flavianum* controversy. Eisler was the first scholar to attempt to account for the birth of a controversy over the text's authenticity in the sixteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Eisler connected the first assault on the text's authenticity to "das Erwachen der Kritik im Zeitalter des Humanismus." This "Zeitalter des Humanismus" Eisler defined more significantly as a "Zeitalter der Wiedergeburt der philologischen Forschung und historischen Kritik."<sup>9</sup> Eisler, however, did not really provide any evidence for his argument that the first attack on the *Testimonium*'s authenticity was the product of humanists' historical criticism. Rather, in attributing the attack on the

Testimonium Flavianum to the agency of humanists, Eisler seems to have drawn on the common academic assumptions of his day. These assumptions were partly the product of nineteenth century historian Jacob Burckhardt's influential study, *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, which linked Renaissance humanism to the birth of several aspects of modernity, including historical criticism.<sup>10</sup>

This study of the reception of the Testimonium Flavianum over the course of two millennia and of the birth of a controversy at the beginning of what was once called the modern age and now is sometimes called the early modern period presents a response to some of the questions raised by Robert Eisler's extremely brief history of the controversy over the text. The first two chapters of this study will attempt to address the question why the Testimonium Flavianum was such a popular text by examining what sort of writers cited the text, whether these writers used the text to prove the historicity of Jesus, to prove that Jesus was the Messiah or any other Christian dogma, whether they directed the text primarily towards Christians, Jews or pagans, and whether their motivation in citing the text changed over time, and in what ways. The next three chapters of this study will examine the controversy over the text's authenticity, addressing such questions as why its authenticity was first challenged in the sixteenth century, whether Eisler's attempt to connect the initial assault on the text's authenticity to the critical thrust of Renaissance humanism is correct, what sort of evidence was first used to impugn the authenticity of the text, why and how the nature of the evidence and arguments used against the text changed over time, and whether the authenticity of the text was initially questioned because of doubts about the historicity of Jesus or some other sort of religious skepticism.

In treating these questions, my examination of the Testimonium's reception over time should reveal not only something about the history of the text itself, but also something about how historical sources in general have been treated by scholars through the ages. Even those historians who, along with Burckhardt, connect the birth of historical criticism in the West to the Renaissance do not agree about the dating of this phenomenon: some historians date the most critical stage of the Renaissance to the period before the Reformation,<sup>11</sup> others to the sixteenth century,<sup>12</sup> and others to the seventeenth century.<sup>13</sup> Still other



historians date the birth of truly critical attitudes towards historical sources even later, to the endeavors of Leopold von Ranke in the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> This examination of the reception of the *Testimonium Flavianum* over time and the progress of the controversy over its authenticity should make some modest contribution towards resolving these questions.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> One historian remarks that the *Testimonium Flavianum* is "the major extrabiblical witness for the existence of a savior upon whom an entire civilization was predicated" (Steven Bowman, "Josephus in Byzantium," *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, Wayne State University, 1987, 363).
- <sup>2</sup> Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter*, Leiden, 1972, 199.
- <sup>3</sup> Josephus was the only Greek-language historian, aside from Biblical authors, who was widely read in the medieval West. On the numerous medieval manuscripts of the Latin translation of Josephus' works see Franz Blatt, "The Latin Josephus," *Acta Jutlandica* 44 (1958), 9–116. On the popularity of Josephus in the early modern period see Peter Burke, "A survey of the popularity of ancient historians 1450–1700," *History and Theory* 5, 1966, 135–52.
- <sup>4</sup> Shlomo Pines, *An Arabic version of the Testimonium Flavianum and its implications*, Jerusalem, 1971, 5.
- <sup>5</sup> *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, Wayne State University, 1987, 55. In so arguing, he is probably implicitly excluding passages from the Bible.
- <sup>6</sup> Christoph Arnold, *XXX epistolae philologicae et historicae, de Flavii Josephi testimonio, quod Jesu Christo tribuit lib. XII Antiq. cap. IV*. Nuremberg, 1661.
- <sup>7</sup> Charles Daubuz, *Pro testimonio Flavii Josephi de Jesu Christo libri duo*...London, 1706.
- <sup>8</sup> Robert Eisler, *ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΣ*, Vol. 1, Heidelberg, 1929, 18–24.
- <sup>9</sup> Robert Eisler, *ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΣ*, 18–19.
- <sup>10</sup> Burckhardt most notoriously tried to link the Renaissance with modern individualism. But he also argued that "it was the [humanists'] study of antiquity which made the study of the Middle Ages possible, by first training the mind to habits of impartial historical criticism....The rational treatment of all subjects by the humanists had trained the historical spirit" (Jacob Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Oxford, 1944; 1981 reprint, 146–47).
- <sup>11</sup> See, for example, E. B. Fryde, *Revival of scientific and erudite historiography in the earlier Renaissance*, University of Wales, 1974. For a recent version of the

argument that the critical thrust of early Renaissance humanism was killed by the Reformation, see Ronald Witt, "The humanist movement," *Handbook of European history, 1400–1600*, Leiden, 1995, 119.

- <sup>12</sup> George Huppert, *The idea of perfect history*, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1970.
- <sup>13</sup> Marc Bloch, *The historian's craft*, New York, 1959; Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient history and the antiquarian," *Studies in historiography*, London, 1969.
- <sup>14</sup> A good discussion of Ranke's role in the development of critical history is Leonard Krieger's *Ranke: The meaning of history*. Although Krieger concedes that a critical attitude towards sources and an insistence on original documents dates to the Renaissance, he argued for the importance of Ranke in applying "to *modern* history the documentary and philological methods which had been specifically devised for penetration into remote ages" (*Ranke: The meaning of history*, University of Chicago, 1977, 3).

# Chapter 1

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## The Testimonium Flavianum in Antiquity

According to the extant manuscripts of his works, Flavius Josephus (37–ca. 100 AD) mentioned Jesus Christ twice, once in the account of Pilate's governorship that appears in *Jewish Antiquities*, and once to identify Jesus' brother James in the same work's account of the political troubles that attended James' execution (*Ant.* 18.63–64; *Ant.* 20.199–203). The authenticity of the first passage, commonly known as the Testimonium Flavianum, has been in dispute since the sixteenth century. The textus receptus version of the Testimonium reads, “at that time there arose Jesus, a wise man, if one should call him a man. For he was a performer of marvelous works, a teacher of those who receive with pleasure the truth. And he won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. This was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by the foremost men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who first loved him did not cease. For he appeared to them on the third day alive again, the holy prophets having foretold these things and many other marvels about him. And even now the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has not disappeared.” Since all the extant manuscripts of Book 18 of *Antiquities* contain this passage, many scholars have examined its citation by other ancient authors for evidence in support of the view that the text is either authentic or inauthentic. My reexamination of these earliest citations reveals that many critics of the passage's authenticity have held mistaken assumptions about ancient authors' motivations for citing the Testimonium. This suggests that their assumptions about why some ancient author forged the text could be likewise mistaken. Furthermore there is evidence that at least one variant version of the passage differing slightly from the textus receptus was still extant in antiquity. If this variant version of the passage is taken into consideration, some of the other objections to its authenticity lose their force as well.

### Josephus

The earliest source bearing on the question whether the Testimonium Flavianum is authentic are the works of Josephus himself.

As mentioned above, in addition to the Testimonium Flavianum, there is another passage referring to Jesus in *Jewish Antiquities*. The question whether this passage, which is an account of the death of Jesus' brother James, is authentic has some bearing on the debate whether the Testimonium Flavianum itself is authentic. In contrast to the Testimonium, the authenticity of which has been in dispute for hundreds of years, the passage on James has been considered genuine by the vast majority of scholars.<sup>1</sup> Some reasons for accepting their judgment will be here reviewed.

First, Origen cites the passage on the death of James in his public apology *Contra Celsum* written circa 248 AD for his largely pagan readership, so Origen must have been pretty confident that Josephus had indeed written something about the death of James. Moreover, in Origen's day, official copies of *Antiquities* were kept in the Roman public library,<sup>2</sup> and thus could be readily checked by the sort of educated pagans to whom *Contra Celsum* is addressed, while Christians, conversely, were in no legal or social position to be tampering with them. Thus on the external evidence alone, the hypothesis that the passage about James is an interpolation is extremely weak. Furthermore, the wording that Origen uses in this text about James, "ἀδελφὸς Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ," shows that he was indeed familiar with Josephus' highly singular characterization of James as "τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰησοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ."<sup>3</sup>

In addition, the internal evidence of the passage about James itself is very damaging to the hypothesis of interpolation or alteration. For Josephus' account does not square in many ways with what had become by the mid-second century the accepted Christian tradition about the date and circumstances of James' death. The second century Jewish Christian Hegesippus dates James' death to the time of the Roman-Jewish war (70 AD).<sup>4</sup> According to *Antiquities*, however, James was killed in 62 AD. The idea that James' death and the Roman-Jewish war were connected was reiterated by Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Jerome and later Christians.<sup>5</sup> These later Christians, unlike Hegesippus, were certainly familiar with Josephus' passage on James so they could no longer claim, as had Hegesippus, that there was an immediate chronological connection between James' death and the war. Instead they stressed the causal connection: that Jerusalem was destroyed because James was killed. But since the causal connection was so important to the Christian

understanding of James' death, it is difficult to understand why an alleged Christian forger did not include a causal explanation in *Antiquities* if he had indeed forged its account of James.

Moreover, the later sources on James' death do not mention, as does Josephus, that "others" were killed along with James, and unlike Josephus they give no specific information about James' opponents. For example, in the Gnostic Second Apocalypse of James, James' opponents are simply called "priests,"<sup>6</sup> and in Hegesippus' work, James' opponents are "scribes and Pharisees." Clearly Hegesippus has been influenced to use this term by the gospels which several times call the intellectual opponents of Jesus "scribes and Pharisees" (Matt 23:1–36; Mark 7:1–5). In contrast, Josephus claims that it was the Sadducean high priest Ananus, the son of the Annas of John 18:13, Luke 3:2 and Acts 4:6, who took the initiative to have James condemned by a council of judges (συνέδριον κριτῶν), while "those of the inhabitants of the city who were considered the most fair-minded and who were strict in observance of the law" objected to Ananus' action (*Ant.* 20.201). Since the Christian Hegesippus had made James' opponents strict Pharisees, and since the New Testament and later Christian tradition tended to characterize Pharisees as the strictest observers of the law (Phil 3:5, Acts 26:5), and since Josephus was simply labeled a Pharisee by later Christians, it is highly improbable that a Christian forger would have characterized the sympathizers of James as strict observers of the law, and included the Pharasaic-leaning Josephus among these sympathizers. This is especially the case since later Christians, on the basis of the gospels' largely hostile portrayal of Pharisees and the persecution of the church by Paul the erstwhile Pharisee, tended to stereotype Pharisees and other strict exponents of the Jewish law as the implacable foes of Jesus and his followers. We can, in fact, see this tendency already in Hegesippus.<sup>7</sup>

Just as later Christian accounts of James' death are characterized by vagueness about James' opponents, they know nothing specific about the public repercussions which, according to Josephus, the execution of James caused: that both King Herod Agrippa II and the Roman governor Albinus moved to depose the high priest for his move against James. It is completely incredible that later Christians, who were themselves dependent on Josephus for understanding the political background of first-century Palestine, would have composed an entire passage with this kind of political information, and it is difficult to imagine that it could

have even occurred to them to replace some other name with “James the brother of Jesus called the Christ” in a passage focused on the sort of high politics that no later Christians at all associated with the death of James.

The implausibility that some Christian could have composed the entire passage on James is further indicated by the fact that it obscurely alludes back to something Josephus had earlier written about Sadducees. Modern scholars have decided that this must be *Ant.* 13.294, but no early Christian would have been familiar enough with Josephus’ works to allude to such a remote passage.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, it has been observed by many others that Josephus’ names for James and Jesus are quite unusual for a Christian. By the time of Hegesippus, Christians typically call James “the Just.” Even as early as the 50s AD Paul, who was personally acquainted with James, calls him and Jesus’ other brothers “brothers of the Lord” (Gal 1:19; 1 Cor 9:5). Moreover, the expression “Jesus called the Christ” (*Ant.* 20.200), although not derogatory, certainly implies some distance from the Christian affirmation that Jesus is the Christ. This is even true of its use in the New Testament, where the expression ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός is used four times. Once it is used to explain to Greek readers that Messiah means Christ (John 4:25); twice the expression is put in the mouth of Pilate, who was not, of course, a Christian (Matt 27:17, 22); and once it is used by Matthew at the very beginning of his gospel to introduce Jesus to his readers (Matt 1:16).<sup>9</sup>

While many others have remarked on the unusual names for Jesus and James in *Ant.* 20.200, no one, to my knowledge, has pointed out the implausibility of a second or third century Christian at all forging a passage about one of Jesus’ brothers. Yet already by the mid to late second century, the mere fact that Jesus had brothers or even half-brothers was becoming highly problematic in Christian circles. The Protevangelium of James and the Gospel of Peter were written in this period, and both of these Biblical apocrypha make Jesus’ brothers into step-brothers because they are concerned to maintain the idea that Mary was a perpetual virgin, without contradicting Luke 2:7 that Jesus was her first-born son. Although the Protevangelium was never canonized, its influence on Christian understanding about Jesus’ family even in this early period was enormous. Origen, who clearly did not consider it scripture, nevertheless approved of its ideas about Mary’s perpetual

virginity.<sup>10</sup> Even Hegesippus, who is concerned to pass on information about the brothers of Jesus rather than ignore them like most of his Christian contemporaries, uses an ambiguous circumlocution about one of them, namely that he is “said to have been his brother according to the flesh (τοῦ κατὰ σάρκα λεγομένου αὐτοῦ ἀδελφοῦ).”<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Origen evidently found it difficult to believe that Jesus had a biological half-brother: when citing Josephus’ passage on James in his public apology *Contra Celsum*, he hastens to assure even its mainly non-Christian target audience that Paul described “him as the Lord’s brother, not referring so much to their blood relationship or common upbringing as to morality (ἡθως) and understanding (λόγος).”<sup>12</sup> By the late fourth century, even the idea that Jesus’ brothers are no more than half-brothers was beginning to border on heresy in the West, as we learn from Jerome’s *Adversus Helvidium*, in which Jerome insisted that Jesus’ New Testament brothers are actually maternal cousins. Jerome’s idea that the brothers mentioned in the New Testament are actually Jesus’ cousins was not challenged in the Western church even during the Reformation. Only in the last two centuries has it become commonplace for Protestants to affirm that they must be at least half-brothers.<sup>13</sup> Given the reluctance of many Christians to affirm openly that Jesus had brothers or half-brothers even as early as the middle to late second century, the idea that Josephus’ passage about “James the brother of Jesus called the Christ” was composed by some ancient Christian can be safely laid to rest.

In addition to the passage on James the brother of Jesus, Josephus’ passage on John the Baptist has also always figured indirectly in the debate about the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum. As is the case with the passage on James, scholars have overwhelmingly judged this passage too to be authentic. Reasons include the fact that, like the James passage, it is cited as early as the third century by Origen in his public apology *Contra Celsum*; that it is almost twice as long as the textus receptus Testimonium Flavianum, which may contain interpolations; that the account appears to contradict extant manuscripts of Mark on the identity of Herodias’ former husband;<sup>14</sup> and that it gives generally different information about the nature of John’s baptism and Herod Antipas’ motivation in executing John than does the Bible.

For example, Mark 1:4 calls John’s baptism a “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” The formulation “forgiveness of



sins" is repeated by Luke 3:3, but is suppressed by Matthew (Matt 3:2, 11). It was also evidently lacking in both the hypothetical Q source probably used by both Matthew and Luke (Matt 3:8 // Luke 3:8), and the source underlying Acts 19:4. In contrast, Josephus writes of those baptized by John that "they must not employ it to gain pardon for whatever sins they had committed, but as a consecration of the body implying that the soul was already cleansed by right behavior" (*Ant.* 18.117).<sup>15</sup>

Regarding Herod's motivation in killing John, Mark and Matthew relate that Herod and Herodias felt threatened by John's criticism of their unlawful marriage, while Josephus relates that Herod was afraid that John's popularity could lead to political sedition. It has already been pointed out that there is no necessary contradiction between the sources here: charges of immorality against a ruler were inherently political. And Matthew is aware that John's popularity was threatening to Herod: "he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet" (Matt 14:5). But as with the case of the passage about James in *Ant.* 20.200, it is scarcely credible that a Christian before Eusebius of Caesarea would have composed a passage so intensely focused on the workings of high politics. Regrettably, early Christians largely neglected to elucidate the political background of the gospel narratives, which is why later Christians were dependent on Josephus for understanding it.

Finally, it has long been pointed out that it is difficult to imagine that a Christian could have composed Josephus' passage on John the Baptist since it in no way alludes to his relationship to Jesus, and since it does not appear in *Antiquities* until after Pilate's dismissal from office has already been related. How would it have even occurred to Christians, who always see John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus, to insert a passage about John in such a peculiar place? But these observations on the position and content of the John passage have some bearing on the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum as well. If a Christian forged the Testimonium *ex nihilo*, one might well ask why he did not mention that Jesus had some relationship to John, or otherwise allude to Josephus' laudatory passage on John.

### **Christian Writers on Josephus before Origen**

One objection that has been leveled against the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum by its modern and early modern critics is that

Christian writers before Origen do not allude to it, and that it is not quoted before Eusebius. This silence has sometimes been considered significant because of the assumption that the Testimonium, written by a Jew, would have been particularly useful in Christian debate with Jews.<sup>16</sup> As we shall see, however, it is not at all certain that Christian writers before Origen were even aware of Josephus' passage on Jesus. Indeed, it is not even clear that any Christian writer before Origen had read *Antiquities*, and no extant work from this period cites material from *Antiquities* 18. Finally, there is no evidence that any works of Josephus in this early period were used in Christian controversies directed at Jews.

The first clear Christian use of one of Josephus' works appears towards the end of the second century in the writing of Theophilus of Antioch. Theophilus draws on material from Josephus' anti-pagan apology *Against Apion* to illustrate the theme of Judaism's great antiquity in his own anti-pagan apology entitled *To Autolycus*, written sometime between 169 and 186 AD. A similar use of *Against Apion* appears in chapter 19 of Tertullian's anti-pagan *Apologeticus*, which has been dated 197 AD. *Octavius*, the anti-pagan apology of Minucius Felix, dating from around 210 AD and itself apparently dependent on Tertullian's *Apologeticus*, cites Josephus among others as an authority proving that it was the Jews' own "wickedness (*nequitia*) which brought them to misfortune, and that nothing happened to them which was not predicted in advance, if they continued in rebelliousness (*contumacia*)."<sup>17</sup> In the context of the apology it is clear that Minucius Felix is here recalling the main thesis of Josephus' *Jewish War*: that the Jews lost their temple in the war with Rome because of sinfulness. However, Minucius' reference is so general that it is impossible to know whether he had actually read *Jewish War* or whether he was merely aware that this was its main argument, and that Josephus had argued that omens had clearly been sent by God portending the disastrous outcome of the war. Using this theme from Josephus' *Jewish War* to castigate Jews for rebelliousness against God was to become a favorite device of anti-Jewish Christian polemic. After Minucius, "rebelliousness" against God would be defined more specifically by Christians familiar with Josephus to mean rejecting Christ.

It is possible that Irenaeus used the first part of *Antiquities*, or at least an intermediary source that drew from it. In a very small fragment attributed to him it is noted that, according to Josephus, Moses was

raised in Egyptian palaces and married an Ethiopian princess. This is evidently a citation of *Ant.* 2.238–253, and the fragment appears to be part of an exegetical work on Numbers. As with so many other patristic fragments of such small size, however, its authenticity is practically impossible to verify. Even if its attribution to Irenaeus is correct, it is extremely unlikely that Irenaeus could have been familiar with Book 18 of *Antiquities*. For he erroneously places Jesus' death and Pilate's rule in the reign of Claudius,<sup>18</sup> while *Ant.* 18.89 makes it clear that Pilate was deposed shortly before the death of Tiberius.

Clement of Alexandria cites Josephus in *Stromateis*, a treatise written circa 190–210 AD aiming to delineate the proper relationship of Christianity towards Hellenistic pagan philosophy and Gnosticism. The context is a passage comparing Biblical and pagan chronologies. Like Josephus in *Against Apion*, Clement here aims to prove that the Hebrews were older than the Greeks. Clement writes: "Flavius Josephus the Jew, who composed the history of the Jews, calculating the periods (ὁ τὰς 'Ιουδαϊκὰς συντάξας ἱστορίας καταγὰν τὸν χρόνον) wrote that from Moses to David there were 585 years, and from David to the second year of Vespasian 1179 years" (*Strom.* 1.147).

While the latter number is evidently taken from *Jewish War* 6.440, the former number is not found in extant manuscripts of Josephus' works. The simplest explanation is that Clement knew directly or indirectly the statement of *Ant.* 8.61 that there were 592 years between the exodus from Egypt and the building of the Temple, and subtracted the four years of Solomon's reign before the building of the Temple. A copying error would then have been responsible for 585 rather than 588.<sup>19</sup> After all, *Stromateis* exists in only one independent manuscript known to contain numerical errors,<sup>20</sup> and another church father, who probably also used the first half of *Antiquities*, wrote that there were 588 years between the exodus and Solomon.<sup>21</sup>

The relationship between *Antiquities* and Julius Africanus' *Chronographia* is more complex than the question of other patristic use of Josephus. Complicating the problem are the facts that so little of the work has survived, and that it was not always quoted directly. Moreover, *Chronographia*, which was an attempt to coordinate Biblical chronology with Greek, Egyptian and other extant chronologies, is mainly known through Eusebius of Caesarea, who himself used Josephus as well as other sources, and the ninth century chronicler Georgius Syncellus, who

independently used Josephus, Eusebius and Africanus. As a consequence, some scholars have dubiously attributed some passages to Africanus rather than to other sources.

Although most recent commentators have taken it for granted that Africanus used Josephus,<sup>22</sup> in the extant fragments that can without question be attributed to Africanus, Josephus is not named as an authority, even though quite a few other historians are so named. Two fragments do indeed share some details with parts of *Antiquities* 12, 14 and 15.<sup>23</sup> However, these parts of *Antiquities* are not Josephus' original composition; rather they are heavily dependent on Nicolas of Damascus and other sources.

Moreover, because Africanus knows some traditions about the same subjects that are quite independent of Josephus' traditions, it has been argued that Africanus must have used another Jewish chronicle, possibly that by Josephus' infamous rival Justus of Tiberias.<sup>24</sup> The theory of another chronicle is strengthened by the fact that Eusebius and Syncellus juxtapose information from Africanus against information from Josephus, indicating that they did not consider Africanus dependent on Josephus.<sup>25</sup> This is also suggested by the fact that in his *Chronicon* Eusebius criticizes Africanus' chronology of Hebrew history, but has no such harsh words for Josephus' Hebrew chronology.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, according to Photius, a ninth century scholar who clearly had read the work, Africanus' *Chronographia* covered the period from creation to Christ in detail, and the period from Christ to Macrinus very briefly.<sup>27</sup> This focus on the period before Christ is borne out by the extant fragments. In addition, Africanus' other undisputed extant works, letters to Origen and Aristides, indicate that he was particularly interested in Judaism, and was more concerned with the Old Testament than with specifically Christian history. So even if Africanus used *Antiquities* 12–15, it does not follow that he was necessarily familiar with *Antiquities* 18–20, which contain the Testimonium and other parallels with the New Testament. Without more evidence, at best we can only conclude that Africanus may have used *Antiquities* directly, he may have used an epitome of it, he may have directly used some of Josephus' own sources, or he may have used entirely independent sources that covered some of the same material, such as Justus of Tiberias' writings.

An extended passage about ancient Jewish sects from Hippolytus of Rome's early third century anti-heretical and anti-pagan treatise *Refutatio omnium haeresium* closely parallels *Jewish War* 2.119–166, although Hippolytus never credits Josephus or any other source with his information (*Ref.* 9.18–31). However, because Hippolytus' passage contains additional material not found in *Jewish War* most recent scholars believe that Hippolytus and Josephus used a common source, the former having abbreviated less than the latter.<sup>28</sup> Although it has further been suggested that Hippolytus might have used an intermediary Christian compilation because elements of Hippolytus' account are more Christianized than the account in *Jewish War* 2.119–166, it is natural that Hippolytus himself might have consciously or unconsciously Christianized expressions in his source. Moreover, Hippolytus' "Christian" expressions are really only Jewish: he uses the word Sabbath rather than seventh day, and refers to the resurrection of the flesh and conflagration at judgment day, while Josephus speaks of the immortality of the soul and is silent about conflagration. Josephus could well have been the one who changed these expressions in the interest of making Jewish sectarian beliefs more palatable to a Hellenized audience. Another indication that Josephus avoided offending Roman sensibilities in his use of the same source is that he does not report Hippolytus' testimony that certain Essene sects refused to handle coins with images and that they forcibly circumcised the uncircumcised in their midst (*Ref.* 9.21).

One plausible candidate for the common source of Josephus' and Hippolytus' accounts of Jewish sects is Nicolas of Damascus.<sup>29</sup> Since *Ant.* 13.171–173 explicitly places the sects in the time of the Hasmonean dynasty and since Josephus is likely dependent on Nicolas' history for this period, it is not implausible that Josephus' treatments of Jewish sects are abbreviations or modifications of Nicolas' own treatment. Certainly Nicolas of Damascus' work could still have been extant in the time of Hippolytus. One indication that Hippolytus used a source older than *Jewish War* 2.116–166, such as Nicolas' work, is that he reports that the Essenes will withstand torture rather than breaking the law, without making Josephus' additional observation that the Essenes were particularly heroic in withstanding the tortures inflicted on them in the recent war with the Romans (*War* 2.152).

In conclusion, before Origen Christian writers typically cited Josephus as an authority on things Jewish in works that were ostensibly addressed to pagans or to heretics whose views were considered by church fathers to be too close to paganism or Hellenistic philosophy. Josephus is not cited as an authority on any specifically Christian figure. There is no evidence that Josephus was at this time used in works directed at Jews or Jewish Christians. Apparently, Josephus was also rarely cited in works exclusively addressed to Christians such as sermons or Biblical commentaries. The only possible example of this sort of use of Josephus is the fragment dubiously attributed to Irenaeus. In this period, Christians cite mainly *Jewish War* and *Against Apion*. There is only one indisputably direct use of *Antiquities*: again in the fragment dubiously attributed to Irenaeus. However, we have shown that Irenaeus was clearly not familiar with *Antiquities* 18.

Why was Christian use of Josephus' works in this early period so limited? We must remember that Josephus wrote for a pagan audience. Thus Josephus' reputation in this early period was surely much greater among pagan readers than among even Christians, let alone Jews. Indeed, Josephus probably had a bad reputation among Jews even in this early period because of his questionable role in the Roman-Jewish war. This would explain why contemporary Christian works directed at Jews do not cite Josephus. In this period, Josephus' reputation seems to have rested more on *Jewish War* and *Against Apion* than on *Antiquities*. The only pagan author, Porphyry, known to have quoted Josephus quotes from *Jewish War*.<sup>30</sup> Much more than *Antiquities*, both *Jewish War* and *Against Apion* are in some sense apologies directed at the pagan Roman world: both are written with the intent of refuting contemporary Greek and Roman misconceptions about Jews and the war (*War* 1.1–16; *Apion* 1.1–5). This suggests that Josephus intended both works to circulate outside libraries, as apologies evidently did in the ancient world.

In contrast, *Antiquities* was written to encourage "love of learning" and respect for God (*Ant.* 1.19–23). It is less probable that this voluminous, antiquarian work circulated so widely. Given the size and nature of *Antiquities*, it is not implausible that no Christian, pagan or Jew had gotten all the way through the entire work even by the end of the second century. Certainly the sparse citation of *Antiquities* by the extant early sources suggests as much. It is furthermore suggestive that the probable citations of *Antiquities* in this early period, that attributed to

Irenaeus and that by Clement, are from Josephus' treatment of the Old Testament found in the first part of the work. Not only was this part of *Antiquities* likely to have been read first simply because it came first, but it was more congenial to early patristic commentary than the later historical books because it most resembled what early church fathers themselves did: comment on something that was already clearly considered scripture. From *Against Apion* 1.1, we learn that the earliest pagans who read *Antiquities* also focused on its first books rather than its later books because they dealt with a popular apologetic theme, namely the relative antiquity of οἱ βάρβαροι.

These observations are relevant to early modern and modern arguments about the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum. Patristic silence about the Testimonium before Origen if not Eusebius has been cited both in the early modern and modern period as evidence that the text is entirely an interpolation. Yet before Origen no Christian writer apparently found it worthwhile to cite Josephus as a relevant authority on anything in the New Testament; not only did they not cite Josephus on Jesus, they did not cite Josephus on James the brother of Jesus, John the Baptist, the several parallels shared by Luke-Acts and Josephus' works, and perhaps most surprisingly, they did not even name Josephus as an authority on King Herod, a figure who dominates three and a half books of *Antiquities*. Probably the reason for this is Christians' relative inattention to their own history during the second and third centuries. As far as we know, there were no real histories of the church in the period after Acts (circa 85 AD) and before Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* (circa 320 AD).<sup>31</sup>

### Origen

Origen marks a new stage in the use of Josephus by ancient Christian writers for he is the first known to have cited Josephus as an authority on specifically Christian figures rather than figures from the Old Testament. Origen also appears to have been more extensively acquainted with the Josephan corpus than earlier church writers: he shows familiarity with *Against Apion*, *Jewish War*, and both the first and second halves of *Antiquities* whereas earlier individual writers rarely draw from more than one work. In addition, Origen is the first patristic writer to give precise citations, i.e. the ordinal number of the book in which a passage can be found. This fact, and the almost verbatim

citation Origen makes of *Jewish War* 6.299 in *Commentary on Lamentations* 109 indicates that he knew Josephus' works first-hand rather than through an intermediary source.

It is from Origen's *Contra Celsum* and *Commentary on Matthew*, that we have clear evidence that the Testimonium known from extant manuscripts of Josephus' works is unlikely to be exactly the same as that known to Origen.<sup>32</sup> Both of these works were written near the end of Origen's life, which would suggest that Origen may not have known about Josephus' two references to Jesus earlier. *Contra Celsum* is dated with reasonable confidence around 248 AD, and the *Commentary on Matthew* was his other major work before death around 254.<sup>33</sup> Of the two, the reference to the Testimonium in *Contra Celsum* is more important because it is made in a work directed to a largely pagan public, who would have been able to check an uninterpolated copy of *Antiquities* in the public library.<sup>34</sup>

Origen's allusion to the Testimonium appears at the beginning of this apology in a very complex context. After rehashing some of the stock pagan anti-Jewish and anti-Christian polemic of the day, Origen's opponent Celsus turns to the technique of criticizing Jesus through a fictional Jewish character. He represents the Jew as having a conversation with Jesus, charging him with, among other faults, having been born of a destitute, adulterous woman, and having learnt magic in Egypt. After Origen responds to these charges with predictable indignation, Celsus' fictional Jewish character charges Jesus: "When you were bathing near John, you say that you saw what appeared to be a bird flying towards you...What trustworthy witness saw this apparition, or who hear a voice from heaven adopting you as son of God? There is no proof except for your word and the evidence which you may produce of one of the men who were punished with you" (*Cels.* 1.41).

Origen first tells Celsus that it is difficult to substantiate with certainty that many things even in pagan literature actually happened, including, for example, the Trojan War, and thus a reader may decide that parts of narratives, including parts of the gospels, are meant to be taken allegorically. Origen then levels a very different objection at Celsus: that he has unrealistically attributed skepticism of the Theophany miracle to a Jew rather than a Peripatetic, Epicurean or follower of Democritus. After all, Origen points out, Jews accept the much more incredible miracles of Moses. Origen then takes a break from



addressing Celsus directly, saying, “since it is a Jew who raises difficulties in the story of the Holy Spirit’s descent in the form of a dove to Jesus, I would say to him: who is the speaker in Isaiah that says ‘And now the Lord sent me and his spirit?’ ” (Isaiah 68:16) Naturally Origen directs this rhetorical question about Hebrew prophecy to the fictional Jew rather than directly to Celsus. Immediately after this, Origen readdresses Celsus directly:

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 long after John and Jesus wrote that John was a baptist, baptizing for the 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 (ὁ ἀδελφὸς Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ), since they killed one who was so righteous.<sup>35</sup>

After this Origen argues that everyone who accepts the idea of providence will accept that people can have divine visions. Finally, he claims that once more Celsus has revealed that he does not understand Jews: he has erred in having the fictional Jewish character refer to John the Baptist as “one of the men who was punished” with Jesus, “for the Jews do not connect John with Jesus, nor the punishment of John with Jesus” (*Cels.*, 1.48).

As with earlier church fathers it is evident here that Origen is not citing Josephus to impress Jews. Origen indicates that *Contra Celsum* as a whole is directed at pagans and lapsed Christians (*Cels.*, Praef. 6), and he directs this passage in particular at Celsus as a representative of educated heathendom. It is, however, unclear exactly why Origen directs these kinds of readers to Josephus’ passage on John. The sentence “I would like to tell Celsus who represented a Jew as in some way (πῶς) accepting John as a baptist who baptized Jesus, that a man who lived not long after John and Jesus, wrote that John was a baptist, baptizing for the remission of sins” may imply that Celsus himself, rather than his fictional Jew, had expressed some sort of doubts about John.

Origen's passage on James was to play a significant role in the later controversy about the authenticity of the Testimonium. Beginning in the seventeenth century (Ch. 4 *infra*) it has been argued that Origen's claim that Josephus did not believe in Jesus as the Christ does not match the statement of the textus receptus Testimonium "ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν." On the other hand, it has also been argued that Origen's certainty that Josephus did not believe in Jesus as the Christ must be derived from some sort of Testimonium. It cannot have been based on Josephus' only other reference to Jesus (*Ant.* 20.200), since this is neutral about Jesus' Messiahship. Another indication that Origen had read some kind of Testimonium in Josephus' *Antiquities*, although less conclusive, is his statement that "the Jews do not connect John with Jesus, nor the punishment of John with that of Jesus." It is precisely *Antiquities* 18 that mentions both the execution of Jesus and of John without in any way connecting the two events or figures.

What was the nature of this original Testimonium known to Origen? Some have suggested that it must have been negative, or at least less complimentary than the textus receptus. For example, one scholar has argued that it cannot have referred to Jesus' miracles, or else Origen would have used Josephus' mention of them as defense against Celsus.<sup>36</sup> However, if the original Testimonium was very negative, it is highly unlikely that Origen would have directed Celsus to Josephus' works in the first place. As for the specific suggestion that it cannot have referred to Jesus' miracles, the mention of Jesus' παραδόξα in the textus receptus would not necessarily have been useful against Celsus since Celsus in fact accepted that Jesus performed miracles, although he argued that Jesus used magic and trickery to accomplish them (*Cels.* 1.39; 1.68). That Jesus performed his miracles through magic was apparently a stock charge of pagans. Like Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea would make a concerted effort to answer this charge. In contrast to Origen, however, Eusebius does use the Testimonium Flavianum in this effort, but it is significant that he uses another part of the Testimonium than the statement that Jesus was παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής as we shall see.

In contrast to *Contra Celsum*, Origen's *Commentary on Matthew*, as an exegetical rather than apologetical work, was evidently not intended to be read by anyone but Christians. Therefore, the fact that Origen does not cite the Testimonium in the extant portion of this work does not

mean that he did not know a Testimonium. For nothing in the laconic Testimonium would necessarily have been adequate to the purpose of this enormous twenty-five volume, line-by-line commentary on a single gospel's account of Jesus. Rather, Josephus is cited on the minor figure of James who is featured in only one line in the entire gospel: "is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?" (Matt 13:55)

In commenting on this single line Origen's concern, in contrast to his apologetic citation of Josephus in *Contra Celsum*, is to collect all the extra-scriptural references to Jesus' family that he knows. First he mentions the traditions in the Gospel of Peter and the Protevangelium of James that Jesus' brothers were actually stepbrothers. Origen notes that these traditions are motivated to uphold the idea of Mary's perpetual virginity, and although these works clearly are not scripture to Origen, he nevertheless approves of their traditions about Mary's virginity, saying of them "οἱμαὶ λόγον ἔχειν." Then Origen cites the other extra-gospel traditions about James that he knows:

And James is he whom Paul says he saw in the Letter to the Galatians 'but I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.' And this James was so celebrated with the people for his righteousness that Flavius Josephus, who wrote 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. And the wonderful thing is that, although not accepting that our Jesus is the Christ, he testified to the great righteousness in James.<sup>37</sup>

Origen then identifies Judas the brother of Jesus with the author of the Epistle of Jude, since its author calls himself the brother of James (Jude 1:1). Then he notes that he knows no extra-gospel traditions about Jesus' other brothers, Joseph and Simon.

First, the manner in which Origen introduces Josephus should be carefully noted. His use of the name "Flavius," suggests that Origen is citing him for the first time in this work.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, his explanation to his Christian readers that Josephus wrote a work called *Jewish Antiquities* in twenty books suggests that they were not familiar with the historian. In contrast, in *Contra Celsum* Origen seems to assume that his readers have already heard of Josephus (*Cels.* 1.16; 1.47). This is yet

another indication that Josephus was more famous among educated pagans than educated Christians in this early period.

Second, we should not conclude, as have many scholars since the seventeenth century (Ch. 4 *infra*), that Josephus was necessarily hostile to Jesus from the fact that Origen cites Josephus' favorable opinion of James and not Josephus' opinion of Jesus. It seems very unlikely that Josephus would have had a relatively sympathetic opinion of James but a hostile opinion of Jesus, although his portrayal of Jesus would have been completely inadequate from a Christian point of view, since he did not consider him Messiah, let alone son of God.

Likewise we should not conclude, as have many scholars since the seventeenth century (Ch. 4, 5 *infra*), that Origen must have known a passage about James different from the one extant in manuscripts of *Antiquities* because he attributes an opinion to Josephus that he does not actually express, namely that the destruction of Jerusalem was brought about because of James' execution. It is more plausible that Origen simply erred in attributing this opinion to Josephus. There are many plausible explanations for this error. One possibility is that Origen confused Josephus' passage about James with his statement about John the Baptist's execution bringing about the destruction of Herod's army.<sup>39</sup> More plausible is the suggestion that Origen simply overread into Josephus what had become the standard tradition in Christian circles. So strong was this tradition that Origen's over-interpretation was repeated by Eusebius, and Eusebius' repetition was then repeated by Jerome.<sup>40</sup> The tradition is at least as old as Hegesippus, who wrote that after the death of James "immediately Vespasian began to besiege them."<sup>41</sup> Origen may not have actually read Hegesippus for he does not cite his traditions about Jesus' brothers in *Commentary on Matthew*, but Clement of Alexandria, who was a mentor of Origen, recorded a version of James' death that was itself apparently based on Hegesippus.<sup>42</sup> The tendency to overread into Josephus Christian tradition about James was aided by the position of the James passage within *Antiquities*, as Zvi Baras has pointed out. Immediately after the passage on James, Josephus begins to discuss the troubles that would lead to the war. This discussion includes the statements "this was the beginning of greater troubles" and "from that moment especially sickness fell upon our city, and everything steadily went from bad to worse" (*Ant.* 200.210; 214). Baras argues, quite plausibly, that these statements simply reinforced Origen's prior

assumption that the relationship between James' death and the war was a case of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*.<sup>43</sup>

Elsewhere, too, there is evidence that Origen tended to overread Christian interpretative traditions into Josephus' writing. According to one catena, Origen attributes to Josephus the identification of Zachariah son of Barachiah "killed between the altar and the sanctuary" (Matt 23:35) with John the Baptist's father.<sup>44</sup> Josephus does mention that one Zachariah son of Baris was killed in the temple by Zealots, but of course he does not identify this Zachariah as John's father (*War* 4.333). Assuming that this catena has been accurately transmitted,<sup>45</sup> it is evident from the old Latin translation of *Commentary on Matthew* that Origen would have been thinking of the tradition in the Protevangelium of James, which, expanding imaginatively on the first chapter of Luke and on Matt 23:35//Luke 11:51, relates that John's father Zachariah was killed in the temple by Herod's hit men.<sup>46</sup> We have seen from his *Commentary on Matthew* that Origen was well-disposed towards the Protevangelium despite its non-canonical status. That Origen had a rather weak sense of history despite his great talent for abstract philosophy might explain how he could have confused a death in 66 AD with a death that the Protevangelium places around the time of Jesus' birth; it is stunning how often Origen will insist upon interpreting even the non-miraculous portions of gospel narrative in an allegorical rather than historical sense.

### **Eusebius of Caesarea**

The works of Eusebius of Caesarea represent yet another stage in the Christian use of Josephus. Not only does Eusebius use Josephus much more than any earlier or later church father, but Eusebius is the first Christian really to have used Josephus as Josephus probably hoped to be used, namely as an historian of his own times. It is not surprising that Eusebius should have been so receptive to the works of a fellow historian. Eusebius has been considered only the second churchman after Luke to have consciously written church history. It is therefore also not surprising that it was Eusebius who first remarked upon the several parallels between Josephus' major works and Luke-Acts: the Quirinius census and the uprising of Judas of Galilee, Theudas the rebel (Acts 5:34; *Ant.* 20.97–98), the famine under Claudius (Acts 11:29–30; *Ant.* 20.101), Herod Agrippa I's death (Acts 12:19–23; *Ant.* 19.343–351), and

the Egyptian false prophet (Acts 21:38; *War* 2.261; *Hist. Eccl.* 1.5; 2.10–12; 2.21).

Most importantly for our inquiry, Eusebius is the first person to quote the Testimonium Flavianum. If the Testimonium is entirely an interpolation or has been wholly rewritten, Eusebius must be considered the prime suspect since he is the first writer to have produced the text. Moreover, modern stylometric studies have shown that the text's language is quite close to that of Josephus.<sup>47</sup> It is not likely that any other Christian before Eusebius would have been familiar enough with Josephus' works to craft *ex nihilo* something so Josephan. Also, Eusebius is the first Christian to use Josephus' works who could have even conceivably had any opportunity to tamper with the manuscripts of Josephus' works, a fact overlooked by those who have quite improbably suggested that Origen or some other third century Christian forged the Testimonium.<sup>48</sup> Given the history of Christians' legal status and given the fact that Josephus' works were until the time of Eusebius kept in the Roman public library to benefit a largely pagan readership,<sup>49</sup> it can be safely assumed that Christians could not have tampered with official copies of *Antiquities* before 313 AD. Even an unofficial version of *Antiquities* with an interpolated Testimonium for a Christian library would have been of limited use since uninterpolated copies would have been accessible to other Christians, to say nothing of pagans and Jews.

Moreover, if the Testimonium was indeed forged or rewritten, then Eusebius' works are the only real evidence we have to indicate why the Testimonium was forged or rewritten in the first place. As we shall see, early modern and modern commentators who have considered the entire Testimonium a forgery have made very large assumptions about why the text was forged. They have overlooked the role the Testimonium plays in the works of the first Christian who considered it important enough to cite or even compose. In fact, some of the later assumptions about why the Testimonium Flavianum was forged are not supported by Eusebius' use of the text. Therefore, we turn to an examination of Eusebius' motivation in citing the text.

The Testimonium Flavianum appears in three works by Eusebius: *Demonstratio Evangelica*, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and *Theophania*. Unfortunately, we do not have exact dates for these works, although it is certain that they were written in this chronological order. Because of its allusions to ongoing persecution, *Demonstratio* has been dated between

303–313 AD. The dating of *Historia Ecclesiastica* is complex but scholars seem to agree that Books 1–7, which include the Testimonium, were begun before 313 and Books 8–10 were added later, apparently in stages. The final version of the work is dated after 313 but before the Council of Nicaea. *Theophania*, which recycles parts of *Historia*, *Preparatio Evangelica*, *Demonstratio* and *De laudibus Constantini*, is considered Eusebius' last work and is dated 333–340 AD. Of the three works by Eusebius containing the Testimonium, *Historia Ecclesiastica* had by far the most influence: many later citations of the Testimonium Flavianum derive from *Historia Ecclesiastica* rather than directly from *Antiquities*.

In *Historia Ecclesiastica* the Testimonium appears at the end of a long section in which Josephus is cited several times as a corroboration of the general chronology and historical setting of the gospels and Acts. In this section, as elsewhere in his works, Eusebius consciously or unconsciously ignores the complications and uncertainties of both Josephus and New Testament chronology. Eusebius begins by pointing out that Luke dates the birth of Jesus at the time of the Quirinius census, and that Josephus mentions the Quirinius census. However, Eusebius ignores the fact that Josephus places the Quirinius census during the reign of Archelaus, which contradicts Matthew's account that Jesus was born before the death of Herod the Great. Eusebius then notes that both Acts and Josephus connect the Quirinius census to the uprising of Judas of Galilee, although Eusebius ignores the fact that Luke dates Theudas' uprising before that of Judas of Galilee, while Josephus dates it after. Eusebius then explains that Christ's birth around the time of Herod the Great was a fulfillment of Gen 49:10, "there shall not fail a ruler from Judah nor a leader from his loins until he come for whom it is reserved," since according to both Josephus and Africanus, Herod's parents were not Judean. Eusebius then writes: "these points must suffice as preliminary observations necessary to establish the truth of the date (τῆς τῶν χρόνων ἀληθείας)" (*Hist. Eccl.* 1.6.11). As we shall see, this concern with dating is connected to Eusebius' use of the Testimonium in *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

After treating the different genealogies of Christ in Luke and Matthew, Eusebius once again cites Josephus for the purpose of corroborating the general setting and chronology of the New Testament. In support of Matthew's story of the massacre of infants, Eusebius points

to Josephus' overall picture of a depraved and cruel monarch. Since Josephus shows Herod suffering a gruesome disease shortly before dying and Matthew dates the massacre shortly before Herod's death, Eusebius connects the two events, although Josephus does not mention the massacre and Matthew does not mention that Herod died of a particularly gruesome disease. Next Eusebius notes that Matt 2:22 reports that Archelaus succeeded Herod, and that Josephus "corroborates the accession to power of Archelaus after Herod" (*Hist. Eccl.* 1.8.5). Then Eusebius draws from Josephus information that is crucial to his motivation in citing the Testimonium in *Historia Ecclesiastica*:

In the eighteenth book of *Antiquities* the same Josephus explains how Pontius Pilate was given the administration of Judea in the twelfth year of Tiberius...and for ten whole years he remained in office, almost until the death of Tiberius. So that there is clear proof of the forgery of those who formerly and recently have issued reports against our Savior; for in them the dates convict the forgers of untruth. They relate that the crime of the Savior's death fell in the fourth consulship of Tiberius, which was the seventh year of his reign, but at that time it has been shown that Pilate was not yet in charge of Judea, if Josephus may be used as a witness, for he clearly shows in his writing that it was actually in the twelfth year of the reign of Tiberius that Pilate was appointed procurator of Judea by Tiberius.<sup>50</sup>

There can be little doubt that the forged reports mentioned in this passage are the same as those which, according to Eusebius, the Emperor Maximin made required reading for school children during his persecution of Christians in the early fourth century (*Hist. Eccl.* 9.5). As Eusebius relates, these pagan *Acta Pilati* evidently erred in dating Jesus' death in 21 AD, whereas according to Josephus, Pilate was only first appointed to his Judean post in 26 AD. Eusebius then points out that Luke 3:2 places John's baptism of Jesus no earlier than the fifteenth year of Tiberius (29 AD), further convicting the pagan *Acta Pilati* of major chronological error.

Using Josephus' information about the succession of high priests from Annas to Caiaphas, Eusebius then attempts to make the case that Jesus' ministry could not have lasted more than four years, a feat only possible with a careless reading of *Antiquities*. Next Eusebius notes that the gospels and Josephus agree that Herod Antipas felt threatened by John the Baptist and had him killed, and that Herod unlawfully married his brother's wife Herodias. However, Eusebius does not discuss the



differences in the sources' information about John, Herod, Herodias, and her former husband. Eusebius notes that "Josephus admits that John was peculiarly righteous and a baptist, confirming the testimony recorded in the gospels concerning him." Then he quotes Josephus' passage about John. Immediately following the quotation he writes, "having gone through these things about John (ταῦτα περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου διελθὼν) he records the following about our Savior." Then the Testimonium Flavianum is quoted, and Eusebius concludes: "when a writer sprung from the Hebrews themselves handed on in his own writing these details concerning John the Baptist and our Savior, what alternative is there but to convict of shamelessness those who have concocted the reports about them?" (*Hist. Eccl.* 1.11.9)

Thus Eusebius draws on Josephus again to convict of inaccuracy the pagan *Acta Pilati*, in which John the Baptist as well as Jesus and Pilate apparently figured. However, it is not clear whether Eusebius is here only alluding once again to the *Acta Pilati*'s chronological errors concerning Jesus and thus John, or whether Eusebius is hinting at graver misrepresentations. For example, he may have pointed out Josephus' positive views of John and quoted the Testimonium because the *Acta Pilati* cast John and Jesus in a bad light. What is clear—and what has been ignored by so many early modern and modern commentators—is that in *Historia Ecclesiastica* Eusebius does not comment on the specific content of the Testimonium Flavianum. While Eusebius does draw from the passage about John that Josephus thought he was "peculiarly righteous and a baptist," as far as we can tell from the context of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the only important thing about the Testimonium is that it confirms that Jesus was killed under Pilate, which is important because elsewhere in *Antiquities* one can figure out that Pilate held office well after the period alleged by the contemporary anti-Christian *Acta Pilati* whose chronology Eusebius wants to refute.

It is ironic that Eusebius uses Josephus' passages on John and Jesus to convict the contemporary anti-Christian *Acta Pilati* of chronological inaccuracy, since Josephus' own chronology concerning John is so ambiguous. From *Antiquities* alone readers could not know that John the Baptist had died during Pilate's rule prior to Jesus' own death, as the gospels relate, for Josephus first completes his account of Pilate's governorship, and only then flashes back to John's death when discussing Herod's military defeat by King Aretas, a digressive

technique that is not uncommon in *Antiquities*. So inured is Eusebius to viewing John in Christian terms that he puts Josephus' account of John before his account of Jesus, and even implies, erroneously, that the latter appears after the former. This sort of mistake, like the discrepancies between Luke-Acts and *Antiquities* regarding the date of the Quirinius census and Theudas' rebellion, casts some doubt on the notion that Eusebius simply created the entire Testimonium Flavianum *ex nihilo*. If Eusebius had no compunction about tampering with texts in a major way, one wonders why he did not rearrange *Antiquities* to better reflect New Testament chronology and thereby better refute the chronology of the pagan *Acta Pilati*.

Finally, there is no warrant for the claim of one recent commentator that Eusebius cited or forged the Testimonium because "Eusebius sees Josephus' Jewishness as proof of the Christian claims for Jesus' Messiahship."<sup>51</sup> In fact, Eusebius never comments on the Testimonium's statement about Jesus' Messiahship, either in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, or, as we shall see, in his other works. In *Historia Ecclesiastica* Eusebius does not draw attention to any of the Testimonium's specific statements. This prompts the question whether Eusebius actually recorded the same text as that which now appears in extant manuscripts of *Historia Ecclesiastica*. This question will be addressed when the translations and manuscripts of Eusebius' works are examined. At this point we can only be certain that the Testimonium known to Eusebius must have appeared in the section of *Antiquities* dealing with Pilate's governorship, as indeed the extant Testimonium does. Otherwise there would have been no point in citing it, since it would not have been useful against the pagan *Acta Pilati*'s chronological errors.

In *Demonstratio Evangelica* and *Theophania* the context in which Eusebius cites the Testimonium differs significantly from the context of its citation in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, allowing us to learn more about Eusebius' motivation in using the text. Since the context of the Testimonium's use in *Theophania* is basically a repetition of the same arguments appearing in the earlier *Demonstratio*, we can confine ourselves to an examination of Eusebius' motivation in using the Testimonium in the latter.

Most of the extant portion of *Demonstratio* is concerned with showing that select portions of the Old Testament do indeed refer to the coming of Christ, a technique that goes back to the earliest followers of

Jesus and abounds in the New Testament. Thus much of the work is ostensibly directed at Jews, as Eusebius himself intimates (*Dem. Ev.* 1.1). It is therefore all the more noteworthy that Eusebius cites the Testimonium in the one portion of the work that is not about Hebrew prophecy or directed at Jews. For after the first of several long sections on Old Testament prophecy, Eusebius concludes “such arguments from the sacred oracles are only intended for the faithful. Unbelievers in the prophetic writings I must meet with special arguments. So that I must now argue about Christ as about an ordinary man” (*Dem. Ev.* 3.2.102). Clearly the unbelievers referred to could not have been Jews since the Jews of Eusebius’ day accepted Hebrew prophecy.

Eusebius then notes of these pagan unbelievers that “many call him a wizard and a deceiver” and he resolves to refute them by citing Jesus’ “own words and teaching” (*Dem. Ev.* 3.2.102). Then follows a section showing that Jesus’ ideas are of too high an ethical and philosophical standard to come from a deceiver. As we shall see, Eusebius’ concern to refute this conception of Christ as deceiver is bound up with his citation of the Testimonium. Eusebius concludes this section of *Demonstratio* with the remark: “this inquiry has had to do with Christ as if he only possessed ordinary human nature, and has shown forth his teaching as weighty and useful—let us proceed and examine its diviner side” (*Dem. Ev.* 3.2.107).

Eusebius then briefly reviews some of the miracles attributed to Jesus in the gospels, calling them “proofs of his divinity.” Then he announces he will use a “logical method...arguing with those who do not accept what we have said, and either completely disbelieve in it, and deny that such things were done by him at all, or hold that if they were done, they were done by wizardry for the leading astray of spectators as deceivers often do” (*Dem. Ev.* 3.2.109). A long rhetorical section follows in which Eusebius asks such questions as whether it is plausible that those attracted by the high ethical standards of Jesus—including his standard about truth-telling—would simply have fabricated the miracles of a deceiver; or whether they would have even risked death for someone they knew to have been a fraud. “How then could his disciples, if he was really a deceiver and wizard, recognized by them as such, with their own minds enthralled by still worse viciousness, undergo at the hands of their fellow-countrymen every insult and every form of punishment on account of the witness they delivered about him? This is all quite foreign

to the nature of scoundrels" (*Dem. Ev.* 3.2.112). Eusebius then tries to make a case for the generally trustworthy character of the disciples and the evangelists, including the fact that they left some record of their own failings in the gospels. Then he asks why those who reject the accounts of Jesus' miracles do not also reject the accounts of the Passion. Eusebius argues that it is not consistent to "reject the glorious and more dignified parts, and yet to believe in these as truth itself" (*Dem. Ev.* 3.5.123).

Here Eusebius is referring to what seems to have been a commonplace of contemporary pagan anti-Christian polemic. Certainly we learn that Celsus argued that Jesus' miracles were only performed by wizardry, while he largely accepted the account of the Passion, since this allowed him to argue that Jesus was a criminal who feared his own death, and was unable to escape the agony of the cross, as God's son should have done.<sup>52</sup> Celsus was surely not the first or last to so argue. Along with pagans, Eusebius is also implicitly targeting the composers of apocryphal gospels and legends, who like so many in the pre-modern world—both those hostile towards Jesus like some pagans and some Jews, and those reverent towards him like Docetists and Muslims—found absurd and disturbing the idea that the chosen one of God could have suffered trial, torture, gruesome death and burial. Both the pieties of the apocryphal gospels and the disbelief of pagans are condemned in this statement about the evangelists:

Why, then, did they not lie, and say that Judas who betrayed him with a kiss, when he dared to give the sign of treachery, was at once turned to stone?...And why did they not all tell the lie that nothing disastrous happened to him at all, but that he vanished laughing at them...and that they who plotted against him, the victims of an hallucination divinely sent, thought that they were proceeding against him still though he was no longer present? Would it not have been more impressive, instead of making up these inventions of his miraculous deeds, to have written that he experienced nothing of the lot of human beings...but that after having settled all things with divine power he returned to heaven with diviner glory? For of course those who believed their other accounts would have believed this.<sup>53</sup>

Immediately after this Eusebius introduces the *Testimonium Flavianum* with the comment: "and here it will not be inappropriate for me to make use of the evidence of the Hebrew Josephus as well, who in the eighteenth book of *Jewish Antiquities*, in his record of the times of

Pilate, mentions our Savior in these words.” After quoting the Testimonium Eusebius says: “if then even the historian’s evidence shows that he attracted to himself not only 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?” (*Dem. Ev.* 3.5.124) Eusebius then hastens to assure his readers that according to Acts “myriads” of Jews “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. The bishops too...are said to have been Jews, whose names are still remembered by the inhabitants.” Eusebius concludes: “thus the whole slander against his disciples is destroyed, when by their evidence, and apart 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 (παράδοξων ἔργων) that he performed.”

Now the only part of the Testimonium to which Eusebius explicitly draws attention is Josephus’ statement that “he gathered many of the Jewish and many of the Greek race.” Despite the fact that it is so pertinent to his topic, Eusebius does not explicitly draw attention to the Testimonium’s straightforward statement that Jesus was a παράδοξων ἔργων ποιητής, although he does seem to allude to it in his conclusion that many were brought to Christ through the παράδοξων ἔργων that he performed. Rather, he uses the Testimonium’s statement that Jesus managed to attract both many Jews and many Greeks to argue that Jesus must have performed wonderful miracles. For the mere statement that Jesus performed παράδοξα was apparently inadequate to Eusebius’ purpose since so many detractors accepted that he performed them, while insisting that it was by trickery. And it is worth noting that the term παράδοξα is not at all the preferred term for Jesus’ miracles in the New Testament: it is used only once, and in a context that does not preclude the connotation of magic (Luke 5:26).

It is interesting that the only part of the Testimonium to which Eusebius draws explicit attention is its statement that Jesus had many Jewish and Greek followers. As one scholar has recently pointed out,<sup>54</sup>

this statement is problematic as the composition of the late third or early fourth century Christian supposed to have forged the entire Testimonium. For it neither reflects the New Testament gospel accounts of an almost exclusively Jewish following during Jesus' life, nor does it reflect the late third or fourth century church, which included few Jews indeed. In fact, the only period for which one can readily speak of Jesus' "many Jewish and many Greek" followers is the period from the missions of Paul to the failure of the Bar Kochba rebellion, after which Jews were barred from Jerusalem, causing the church there to become entirely Gentile (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.6.4). Now Josephus, who certainly was aware of the Jerusalem church (*Ant.* 20.200), was writing during this unusual period. It has been plausibly argued that he projected the church of 93 AD back onto Jesus' own ministry, an anachronism which, it is worth noting, was not committed by his contemporary, Luke, either in his account of Jesus' ministry or in his history of the early church.

Eusebius seems to have sensed that contemporary readers would have had trouble believing the Testimonium's statement about Jesus' "many Jewish and Greek" followers: indeed Eusebius seems to have been puzzled by it himself. For why else does he think it necessary to assure his readers that Acts mentions "myriads" of Jewish believers, and that the Judean church, including bishops, was entirely Jewish up until Hadrian? Conversely, Eusebius can point to no evidence that supports the Testimonium's statement about "many Greek" followers during Jesus' own life. Eusebius himself argues that during Jesus' life, his following was entirely Jewish, while mission to the Gentiles did not begin until after the resurrection (*Theophania* 4. 27–31). Of course this is relevant to the question of the authenticity of the entire Testimonium Flavianum. It is not clear why Eusebius would have composed a statement that was problematic both with respect to contemporary perceptions of the followers of Christ, and with respect to the canonical gospels' portrait of Jesus' ministry.

We may conclude, then, that Eusebius was motivated to cite the Testimonium by certain kinds of contemporary writings threatening the church. These included a pagan *Acta Pilati* satirizing the gospels, and pagan polemicists who charged that Jesus had not performed miracles, or had performed them only through trickery. Eusebius used the Testimonium and information about Pilate in Book 18 of *Antiquities* to

expose the chronological errors of the *Acta Pilati*, while he used some of the Testimonium's content against the detractors of Jesus' miracles. It is possible, although far from clear, that Eusebius cited the laconic Testimonium to juxtapose against the extravagant details of some apocryphal gospels or Christian legends.

As with earlier Christian writers who used Josephus, Eusebius did not use the Testimonium for polemics against Jews. In centering argumentation with Jews on Hebrew prophecy about the Christ rather than Josephus' opinion of Jesus, Eusebius was more perceptive than later writers, who, as we shall see (Ch. 2–4 *supra*) have thought that the Testimonium would be useful for controversies with Jews, or who have assumed that it was created for that very purpose. Eusebius was more perceptive than they in seeing that the Hebrew Bible would have mattered far more to most Jews of antiquity than anything Josephus said, particularly since Josephus' reputation among Jews was likely to have been tarnished by his dubious role in the war.

Finally, there is no evidence that Eusebius cited the Testimonium for theologically weighty reasons, either to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, or even to claim that Josephus thought that Jesus was the Messiah, still less to prove that Jesus had existed. As we shall see, ever since doubts have been raised by the Testimonium's authenticity in the early modern period, it has been widely assumed that the purpose for forging the Testimonium was to prove that Josephus thought Jesus was the Messiah. Although later Christians have used the Testimonium for that purpose, there is no evidence at all that Eusebius, the first person to use the text and the only viable suspect as its forger, did so.

Since Eusebius draws explicit attention to so little of the Testimonium it might be questioned whether he actually cited the same text as that appearing in extant manuscripts of Eusebius' works. However, because of the extraordinary antiquity of some of the relevant manuscripts, we can establish that the *terminus ad quem* for the Eusebian Testimonia is quite early, and thus not likely to have been, as some have suggested, the product of several different glosses that have crept into the text over the years.<sup>55</sup> The manuscript of the Syriac *Theophania* is dated 411 AD, at most eighty years later than Eusebius' autograph, while one Syriac manuscript of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which contains a translation of the Testimonium independent of that in *Theophania*, is dated 462 AD. In addition, Rufinus' translation of

Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* into Latin in 402 AD contains a Testimonium that is basically the same as that in Eusebius' *Theophania* and *Historia Ecclesiastica*, including the problematic statement "he was the Messiah." Since Syriac and Latin writers did not read or copy each other's works, the logical conclusion is that there must have been Greek copies of Eusebius' works with the entire textus receptus Testimonium by the end of the fourth century. This is confirmed by the fact that Sozomen, writing about 440 AD, knew a textus receptus version of the Testimonium affirming that Jesus was the Christ that was evidently taken from Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, when we examine works by Jerome, Theodoret, and later Semitic Christians, we will see that there is some evidence for Greek copies of Eusebius' works containing a Testimonium that must have read something like "he was believed to be the Messiah" rather than "he was the Messiah."

### Jerome

After *Antiquities* itself and Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the most important work citing the Testimonium Flavianum is Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*. Dated 392 AD, this work was immensely influential in the medieval West, as proven by its survival in over one hundred manuscripts, including two from as early as the sixth or seventh century. *De Viris* is a list of information about various Christian saints and scholars, although it also includes three non-Christian Jewish erudites: Josephus, Philo, and Josephus' rival, the historian Justus of Tiberias. Jerome composed the list ostensibly to impress erudite pagans, "who think that the church has had no philosophers or orators or men of learning," that they might "cease to accuse us of such rustic simplicity," and he modeled the work on such pagan works as Cicero's *Brutus*, a catalog of Latin orators (*De Viris*, Praef). By including Josephus in *De Viris* it is therefore clear that Jerome followed his patristic predecessors in assuming that Josephus' authority would impress educated pagans rather than Jews.

The most significant fact about the Testimonium quoted by Jerome in *De Viris* is that it differs from the textus receptus Testimonium in its most problematic statement. After closely following the first two lines of the textus receptus, Jerome's Testimonium reads "plurimos quoque tam de Iudaeis quam de gentilibus sui habuit sectores et credebatur esse Christus."<sup>57</sup> In response to those who are confident that the textus



receptus Testimonium Flavianum is full of Christian alterations, it can be pointed out that all of the many manuscripts of *De Viris* contain this variant of the Testimonium reading “et credebatur esse Christus” or “he was believed to be the Christ.” None has been brought into conformity with the textus receptus Testimonium, a fact that indicates that textual passages of a sensitive theological nature were not deliberately altered by Christian copyists at every opportunity.

Because Jerome’s variant reading of the Testimonium is so important, the question must be considered whether it was translated directly from Josephus’ *Antiquities*. The fact that *De Viris* is elsewhere heavily dependent on Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* would suggest that he simply copied the Testimonium he found in this work. Elsewhere, too, Jerome is known to have followed others’ citations of Josephus rather than checking Josephus first-hand.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, as we shall see, the recensions of the Testimonium in later Semitic sources suggest independently of Jerome’s *De Viris* that there once were Greek copies of Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* that read something like “he was believed to be the Christ.”

### **Pseudo-Hegesippus**

One of the most significant pieces of evidence about an early version of the Testimonium comes from *De Excidio Hierosolymitano*, a late antique adaptation of *Jewish War* that is sometimes erroneously called a loose translation or plagiarism of *War*. However, as the foremost contemporary expert on the work, Albert Bell, has pointed out, unlike a pseudepigrapher, the author does not attempt to impersonate Josephus, and he nowhere calls himself a translator. Rather he claims to be writing an original history, openly acknowledging and even criticizing Josephus as his major source. The fact that *De excidio* is by modern standards a plagiarism of *Jewish War* does not mean that it should be so termed. Ancient standards about the use of sources were different from modern standards: we do not call Josephus’ *Antiquities* 15–17 a plagiarism of Nicolas of Damascus. As Bell has shown, the author of *De excidio* was indeed a writer of original history, albeit not a very talented one, rather than a plagiarizer, pseudepigrapher or translator.

The author of *De excidio* was known in medieval and early modern Europe as Hegesippus. The work was probably assigned the name out of the mistaken belief that it was written by the second century Greek

Jewish Christian named Hegesippus.<sup>59</sup> It certainly was believed to be by Hegesippus even as late as the early modern period.<sup>60</sup> Like Pseudo-Hegesippus, Hegesippus was a Christian who wrote a work in five books that apparently included, although in much milder form, the theme that the destruction of Jerusalem was retribution for most Jews' rejection of Jesus. To distinguish him from the Greek Jewish Christian Hegesippus of the second century, I will call our author Pseudo-Hegesippus, with the understanding that "Pseudo" refers to misattribution rather than impersonation.

*De excidio Hierosolymitano* was written around 370 AD and first quoted around 430 AD; the oldest manuscript containing the Testimonium dates from the sixth century. Its Testimonium is significant because it is the only version of the text that has been transmitted by an author who could not also have been exposed to Eusebius' Testimonia. Nothing in the work unequivocally proves that its author knew the Eusebian works quoting the Testimonia. Other than Josephus, its sources are all Latin or, like the Bible, available in Latin translation. For example, it used the Latin rather than Greek version of 1 Maccabees.<sup>61</sup> Eusebius' works were not yet available in Latin when it was written in the late fourth century.

Pseudo-Hegesippus paraphrases the Testimonium quite loosely, giving its separate parts in an order different from the *textus receptus*. While a paraphrase is generally considered less valuable than a quotation, for our inquiry a paraphrase actually has one advantage, namely that it is more difficult for a later scribe to bring it into conformity with a *textus receptus* than a quotation. Because of its importance as an early text independent of Eusebius, I will cite the entire relevant portion of the passage:

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 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.<sup>62</sup>

After paraphrasing the Testimonium, Pseudo-Hegesippus paraphrases Josephus' testimony on John the Baptist. Thus Pseudo-Hegesippus follows the order of *Antiquities*: the passage on John the Baptist appears after the passage on Jesus rather than before as in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. That Pseudo-Hegesippus used *Antiquities* 18 directly rather than through the medium of Eusebius is also shown by his including a portion of it that had been ignored by earlier Christian commentators, namely an anecdote about a Roman matron named Paulina, which immediately follows the Testimonium Flavianum in *Antiquities* (*De excidio* 2.4; *Ant.* 18.65–80).

First, it should be noted that Pseudo-Hegesippus' Testimonium seems to allude to every part of the *textus receptus* Testimonium except the sentence "this was the Christ," and the sentence about Pilate sentencing Jesus to death. This point has been easily overlooked because the passage is paraphrased, put in a different order, and contains Pseudo-Hegesippus' own editorial asides. Here is a matching of Pseudo-Hegesippus' paraphrase to relevant portions of the *textus receptus* Testimonium:

fuerat illo in tempore vir sapiens, si tamen oportet virum dici mirabilem creatorum operum

// Γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον Ἰησοῦς σοφὸς ἀνὴρ εἶγε ἀνδρὰ λέγειν χρή. ἦν γὰρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής

plerique tamen Iudaeorum, gentilium plurimi crediderunt in eum, cum praeceptis moralibus, operibus ultra humanum possibilitatem profluentibus invitarentur, quibus ne mors quidem eius vel fidei vel gratiae finem imposuit

// ἦν γὰρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τάληθῃ δεχομένων καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ ἐπηγάγετο...οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο οἱ τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαπήσαντες

principes synagogae quem ad mortem comprehenderant

// τῶν πρῶτων ἀνδρῶν παρ' ἡμῖν...ἐπιτετιμηκός.

Finally, the sentence “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” follows fairly closely the two concluding sentences of the Testimonium.

Some of the differences between the textus receptus and Pseudo-Hegesippus’ version of the Testimonium can be readily explained. Pseudo-Hegesippus avoids repeating the Testimonium’s claim that Pilate sentenced Jesus because he is eager to place most of the blame for Jesus’ death on Jews, although he does not absolve Pilate either, as he says: “non excusatur Pilatus” (*De excidio* 2.12). Conversely, it is hard to believe that Pseudo-Hegesippus would have omitted an apparent testimony to Jesus’ Messiahship, namely the statement “he was the Messiah,” if it had stood in his text of *Antiquities*, for he is inclined to exaggerate the significance of the Testimonium, especially in his claim that it shows even the leaders of the synagogue acknowledged Jesus to be God. If it had stood in his text, one wonders why Pseudo-Hegesippus is so adamant that Josephus still did not believe. Indeed, his strident designation of Josephus as an unbeliever suggests that Pseudo-Hegesippus knew Origen’s version of the Testimonium. Moreover, Pseudo-Hegesippus’ statement that “plerique tamen Iudaeorum, gentilium plurimi crediderunt in eum” is reminiscent of Jerome’s Testimonium in *De Viris Illustribus* 13 which reads “plurimos quoque tamen de Iudaeis quam de gentilibus sui habuit sectatores et credebatur esse Christus.” This strongly suggests that Pseudo-Hegesippus knew a Testimonium that read something like “he was believed to be the Christ,” perhaps as an implicit conclusion to the statement that Jesus had “many Jewish and many Greek” followers.

One other aspect of Pseudo-Hegesippus’ Testimonium is noteworthy for the history of its early transmission and variation. One recent scholar has suggested that the Testimonium’s statement that Jesus was a “teacher of those who receive τὰληθῆ with pleasure” could easily have been mistaken for a “teacher of those who receive τ’ ἅλλ’ ἡθη (other customs) with pleasure.”<sup>63</sup> And Pseudo-Hegesippus’ phrase “cum praeceptis moralibus” corresponds more closely to the latter than former phrase. It may well be that Eusebius also makes an allusion to τ’ ἅλλ’ ἡθη in *Demonstratio Evangelica* when he asks how Jesus could have attracted both many Jews and many Greeks, except by

“παράδοξις ἔργοις” and “ξενιζούση...διδασκαλία” (*Dem. Ev.* 3.5.124). Certainly the expression “ξενιζούση διδασκαλία” sounds more characteristic of a teacher of those who receive other customs with pleasure, than a teacher of those who receive the truth with pleasure.

Finally, to Pseudo-Hegesippus belongs the dubious credit of being the first Christian who thought that the Testimonium might be useful in anti-Jewish polemic. The use of the Testimonium for this purpose would become commonplace well into the early modern period. That the author was among those ancient Christians least sensitive to Jews suggests that Pseudo-Hegesippus could well have been mistaken in his assumption that Jews “esteem Josephus a very great man” (*De excidio* 2.12). Earlier Christian writers were probably more perceptive in not citing Josephus in works directed at Jews.

### **The Latin Josephus**

Josephus bears the distinction of being the only Greek language ancient historian whose works were widely read in the medieval West after the demise of Greek. This was in no small part due to the fact that his works were translated into Latin at a relatively early date. *Jewish War* was probably translated into Latin as early as the late fourth century; the task of translating *Antiquities* and *Against Apion* was undertaken by Cassiodorus’ group. Writing in the mid to late sixth century, Cassiodorus observes that there had long been extant a Latin translation of *Jewish War*, variously ascribed to Ambrose, Rufinus or Jerome. Cassiodorus knows that Jerome cannot have been the translator, citing his letter in which he denies translating Josephus’ “prolix” works (*Inst.* 1.17; *Jerome Ep.* 71.5). In early modern Europe the Latin *Jewish War* was still being ascribed to Rufinus of Aquileia. However, a comparison of its parallel passages with the excerpts from *Jewish War* in Rufinus’ translation of Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* reveals that the translations are different. The ascription of the Latin *Jewish War* to Rufinus, therefore, is surely incorrect.

The comparison of other excerpts from Josephus’ works in Rufinus’ translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica* to the Latin *Antiquities* reveals a significant and heretofore unremarked fact, namely that the translation of both the Testimonium Flavianum and the passage about John the Baptist in the Latin *Historia Ecclesiastica* are the same as those in the Latin *Antiquities*. Since Rufinus’ translation of Eusebius’ *Historia*

*Ecclesiastica* was known to Cassiodorus, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Cassiodorus' group chose for some reason to transmit Rufinus' Testimonium into the Latin *Antiquities* rather than translate the Testimonium directly from copies of *Antiquities*. It certainly is possible that Cassiodorus' group used Rufinus' Testimonium because it was more favorable towards Jesus than the Testimonium that they found in their manuscripts of *Antiquities*, which was presumably Josephus' original Testimonium.<sup>64</sup>

However, the fact that the John the Baptist passage as well as the Testimonium in Latin *Antiquities* follows Rufinus' translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and that the two passages appear right next to each other in *Historia Ecclesiastica* suggests a more benign explanation than that Cassiodorus' group drew on Rufinus' translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica* for both passages out of a duplicitous intent to censor the presumably less laudatory Testimonium written by Josephus himself: it is possible that they drew on Rufinus rather than make their own translations out of sheer laziness. For it is not clear why Josephus' John the Baptist passage would have prompted Cassiodorus to substitute Rufinus' translation of the same passage. Given its discrepancies with the gospels, it is unlikely that Josephus' John the Baptist passage was altered in a significant way, and the hypothesis of interpolation, is, we have determined (*supra*), not plausible. Furthermore, other passages in the Latin *Antiquities* do not follow Rufinus' translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, including the passage on James the brother of Jesus. Significantly, unlike the passage about John the Baptist, the passage on James does not appear in the same location as the Testimonium in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

Given the large number and wide geographical dispersal of the manuscripts of the Latin *Antiquities*, it is not likely that later copyists rather than Cassiodorus' own group were responsible for harmonizing the Testimonium and the John the Baptist passage in the Latin *Antiquities* with the same passages in Rufinus' Latin *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Moreover, there are manuscripts of both works dating from the eighth century, so the *terminus ad quem* for such a procedure would have had to have been very early. In any case, whether or not the decision by Cassiodorus or others to substitute Rufinus' Testimonium rather than make a direct translation of the passage from *Antiquities* was made out of ulterior motives, it had the practical effect of limiting the

variants of the Testimonium Flavianum known in the medieval West to only three, that of the Latin *Antiquities*, that of Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*, and that of Pseudo-Hegesippus' *De excidio Hierosolymitano*.

### **The East: Greek Sources**

In contrast to the West, in the East there apparently remained after the time of Eusebius Testimonia which had not yet been brought into conformity with the *textus receptus*. Or so one might conclude from Theodoret's fifth century *Commentary on Daniel*, which states that Josephus τὸ μὲν Χριστιανικὸν οὐ δεξάμενος κήρυγμα, even though he did not "hide the truth," namely that Daniel had predicted the destruction of the temple by Romans (*Comment. Daniel* 10 on Dan 12:14). Theodoret's choice of verb (οὐ δεξάμενος) is reminiscent of Origen's statement in his *Commentary on Matthew* that Josephus τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἡμῶν οὐ καταδεξάμενος εἶναι Χριστόν. In using the verb δέχομαι both statements appear to allude by way of contrast to the Testimonium's statement about those who do accept Jesus, namely that they are ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τάληθῃ δεχομένων.

In contrast to many later Greek authors who knew the Testimonium and other citations from *Antiquities* only through Eusebius, it is clear that Theodoret himself used *Antiquities* 10 and 12 in his *Commentary on Daniel*. It is also clear from the same work that Theodoret was familiar with Eusebius' *Demonstratio Evangelica* since he draws upon it for his commentary on Dan 9:25.<sup>65</sup> It is possible, therefore, that Theodoret was familiar with the Testimonium in Eusebius' *Demonstratio*. In addition, Theodoret must have been somewhat familiar with the contents of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, including, presumably, its Testimonium, since he alludes to the work in the church history that he himself wrote to succeed it.<sup>66</sup> Theodoret's confidence that Josephus did not accept the Christian message, and his acquaintance with Eusebius' *Demonstratio Evangelica* and *Historia Ecclesiastica* as well as parts of *Antiquities* suggest that he might have known copies of Eusebius' works or perhaps a copy of *Antiquities* that contained Testimonia reading something like "he was believed to be the Christ" rather than the *textus receptus*' statement that "he was the Christ."

The hypothesis of a Greek copy of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* with this reading may also explain why the Testimonia in both the eleventh century chronicle of Cedrenus and in the tenth century

chronicle of Pseudo-Simon Magister differ from the *textus receptus* in emphasizing that it was Jesus' followers who considered him Christ. For they read πολλοὺς γὰρ καὶ ἀπὸ Ἑλλήνων ἡγάγετο Χριστός. One scholar has already noted that Cedrenus and Pseudo-Simon are dependent on Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* rather than on *Antiquities*. It is generally assumed that Cedrenus used Pseudo-Simeon, rather than that both used a common earlier source.<sup>67</sup>

In contrast, Isidore of Pelusium, writing about the same time as Theodoret, probably was familiar with the entire *textus receptus Testimonium*." Before quoting the *Testimonium*, Isidore writes:

Since the witness of enemies rightly appears to be noteworthy to Greeks, non-Greeks and all humankind, the Jews, going beyond every iniquity, not only failed to believe the prophets, but even God. But there was a certain Josephus, a noble Jew and a zealot for the law, who faithfully paraphrased the Old Testament, and who battled bravely on behalf of the Jews, showing that all their things were better than words can express, and who considered it worthwhile to yield to the truth of matters. For as he was not a partisan of the opinion of the impious, I think it necessary to set down his words.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, it is clear that, like Theodoret, Isidore knew Josephus' *Antiquities* directly; he did not know Josephus only through the medium of Eusebius, for he cites some relatively obscure passages from *Antiquities*, namely *Ant.* 1.24 (*Ep.* 3.19), *Ant.* 8.186 (*Ep.* 2.66), and *Ant.* 18.136 (*Ep.* 4.96). In contrast, it is not clear that he had read Eusebius' works for he does not appear to cite them. That a fifth century Egyptian monk, even a very scholarly one like Isidore, should know *Antiquities* so intimately indicates that Josephus' works were diffused quite rapidly among at least some Greek Christian circles after Eusebius. Perhaps Isidore encountered a copy of *Antiquities* in Alexandria, where he definitely had contacts: several of his letters are written to Cyril of Alexandria.

The earliest manuscript of Isidore's letters dates only to the tenth century, which raises the question whether his *Testimonium* could have been brought into conformity with the *textus receptus* by later scribes. Isidore actually draws attention to only one part of the *Testimonium*, namely the statement that Jesus was a teacher of those who accept the truth with pleasure. After quoting the *Testimonium*, he writes: "now I marvel (θαυμάζω) greatly at this man's love of truth in many respects, but chiefly where he said teacher of those who receive the truth with



pleasure.” This would suggest that his copy of *Antiquities* read “τᾱληθῆ” and not the conjectured “τ’ ἄλλ’ ἦθη,” for it is unlikely he would have drawn attention to the latter ambiguous phrase. On the other hand, the fact that Isidore does not allude to the Testimonium’s statement “this was the Christ” despite his use of the Testimonium to censure Jewish disbelief<sup>69</sup> may possibly suggest that his copy of *Antiquities*, like that known to Origen, Jerome, Pseudo-Hegesippus and possibly Theodoret, contained a more dubitative statement about Jesus’ Messiahship than the *textus receptus*.<sup>70</sup>

### **The East: Semitic Sources**

In 1971 the erudite Semiticist Shlomo Pines first alerted scholars’ attention to the fact that two independent Semitic sources, the Arabic chronicle *Kitab al-Unwan* of Agapius, Bishop of Hierapolis, which is dated 942 AD, and the Syriac chronicle of Michael the Syrian, Patriarch of Antioch, which is dated 1195 AD, contain Testimonia that refer to Jesus’ Messiahship in a dubitative manner.<sup>71</sup> Agapius’ Testimonium reads that Jesus “was perhaps the Messiah” and Michael’s Testimonium reads that Jesus “was believed to be the Messiah.” Although these chronicles date from after the ancient period, the survival of their Testimonia in medieval sources provides further evidence that there was a version of the Testimonium circulating in the East after the time of Eusebius that read something like “he was believed to be the Messiah” instead of the *textus receptus*’ “he was the Messiah.” As we shall see, Agapius’ and Michael’s Testimonia most likely derive ultimately from the same ancient source, namely Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, transmitted through the medium of a later Syriac writer.

It is clear that both Agapius and Michael used Syriac sources to compile their chronicles. A comparison of Michael’s and Agapius’ entire chronicles reveals that they in fact both followed the same Syriac source to the point where Agapius’ chronicle breaks off in the late eighth century.<sup>72</sup> Thus neither Michael nor Agapius pulled his Testimonium independently out of copies of Josephus’ *Antiquities* or Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Rather they each independently transmitted from the writings of an earlier Syrian Christian a Testimonium that qualifies its reference to Jesus’ Messianic status in a dubitative way. Who was this earlier Syrian Christian?

From Agapius we learn that he abridged a chronicle by Theophilus of Edessa, who died in 785 AD (*Kitab* 2.2. [240]). Now Michael says that he followed the chronicle of Dionysius of Tel Mahre for material dating 582–842 AD (Michael, 12.21 [554]), and in the preface to Dionysius' chronicle, which Michael transcribes, Dionysius admits that he also used the writings of Theophilus of Edessa (Michael, 10.10[378]). So Dionysius, like Agapius, must have used a chronicle by Theophilus. On the other hand, it seems likely that the part of Michael's chronicle that contains the Testimonium, which is an account of the first century, followed the translation or adaptation of Eusebius' *Chronicon* by James of Edessa, who died around 708 AD (Michael, 7.2 [127–28]). If this is true, Theophilus of Edessa, whose chronicle was used by Agapius, must himself have used James of Edessa's adaptation of Eusebius' *Chronicon* for the first part of his chronicle.<sup>73</sup>

Now Pines had suggested that the dubitive Testimonia appearing in Agapius' and Michael's chronicles derive directly from the writings of Theophilus of Edessa, rather than indirectly from the writings of James of Edessa as I have suggested.<sup>74</sup> This is certainly possible, but one reason to doubt this is that Theophilus' writings were apparently only conveyed into Michael's chronicle through the medium of Dionysius of Tel Mahre, and Dionysius' writings only covered the period 582–842 AD. In contrast, the Testimonia of both Agapius and Michael appear in an account of the first century. To judge by the general citation of sources in the early part of Michael's chronicle, material from the pre-Constantinian period is more likely to derive from James of Edessa than from any other writer; perhaps it derived from his adaptation of Eusebius' *Chronicon* into Syriac. Another reason to doubt that the dubitive Testimonia of Michael and Agapius derive from Theophilus of Edessa by way of Dionysius is that another Syriac chronicle which, like Michael's chronicle, directly used Dionysius' chronicle, entirely lacks a Testimonium in the first century context where it appears in Michael's and Agapius' chronicles.<sup>75</sup>

The fact that James of Edessa knew Greek well enough to translate Eusebius' *Chronicon*<sup>76</sup> raises the question whether the Syriac Testimonium in Michael's chronicle, transmitted presumably through the medium of James' works, could have been taken directly from a copy of the Greek *Antiquities*. For although we know that Josephus' *Jewish War* had been translated into Syriac by the eighth century,<sup>77</sup> there is no

evidence that *Antiquities* was translated into Syriac. Does the use of Josephus' writings in Michael's and Agapius' chronicles in fact suggest indirect rather than direct use?

In the beginning of Michael's chronicle, parts of *Ant.*1.60–73 and *Ant.*1.113–118 are quoted, although some sentences have been dropped, and the passages have been rearranged to follow Biblical chronology more closely than Josephus who tends to digress (Michael 1.4–6 [3–6]; 2.2 [7]). Both Michael and Agapius attribute to Josephus the claim that the boards of Noah's ark can be found in Apamea. This is apparently an allusion to *Ant.*1.93–95, but it could well have been taken from Eusebius' *Preparatio Evangelica* 9.11 rather than directly from *Antiquities*. Michael also relates that according to Josephus, Manetho and Zamaris wrote that the Hebrews were originally Phoenician shepherds (Michael 3.2 [21]). This is apparently a general reference to *Against Apion* 1.227–302, where the name 'Zamaris' is written Χαίρήμων. All other citations and allusions to *Antiquities*, especially those surrounding the citation of the Testimonium, appear to derive from Eusebius' *Chronicon* and Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. In conclusion, although Michael and Agapius' ultimate source for Old Testament and first century history may have read part of the first book of *Antiquities*, more likely he knew Josephus only through Eusebius, and perhaps some patristic commentary on Genesis that made citations from *Antiquities* 1 and *Against Apion*.

The question of whether that source used a Syriac or a Greek version of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* from which he presumably copied the dubitive version of the Testimonium that is quoted in Michael's chronicle, must be answered by someone who, unlike myself, is competent in Syriac. Pines, noting some similarities between the Testimonium in Michael's chronicle and the Testimonium in the extant manuscripts of the Syriac *Historia*, suggested that Michael or his source took his Testimonium from the Syriac *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>78</sup> However, even if the source of the Testimonium cited by Michael used a Syriac rather than Greek version of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ultimately his Testimonium must go back to a Greek original, since it is scarcely credible that he or some other Syrian Christian would have independently modified the Testimonium in precisely the same way as did Jerome in *De viris illustribus*.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that many ancient Christian authors cited the Testimonium Flavianum, but they did not always cite the text for the reasons assumed by later scholars. The Testimonium was not originally cited to prove that Jesus was the Messiah; moreover, the earliest citation of the Testimonium was directed at pagans rather than Jews. There is no evidence that any ancient author entertained doubts about the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum. The fact that Jerome cites the Testimonium in a version differing from the *textus receptus*, reading “he was believed to be the Christ” rather than “he was the Christ,” is not evidence of his doubts about the text’s authenticity, as has been asserted by some later scholars (Ch. 4 *supra*). Rather it is evidence that he read this version in his copy of Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*. For Syriac sources independently confirm the existence of such a variant Testimonium dating before the time of Theophilus of Edessa in the eighth century. In addition to the citation of the Testimonium by Jerome, the citations of the Testimonium by Origen, Theodoret, Agapius of Hierapolis, Michael the Syrian and Pseudo-Hegesippus indicate that there must have been fourth century copies of Josephus’ *Antiquities*, independently transmitted by Pseudo-Hegesippus into *De excidio Hierosolymitano* and by Eusebius into his *Historia Ecclesiastica* and possibly into his *Demonstratio* as well, that contained a variant reading something like “he was supposed to be the Christ” after, and possibly as implicit conclusion to, the Testimonium’s statement that Jesus had many Jewish and Greek followers. Its statement about their belief in Christ must have been in the past tense since the past tense is independently transmitted by Jerome (*credebatur*), Pseudo-Hegesippus (*crediderunt*), and Michael the Syrian.<sup>79</sup> The extant evidence suggests that in the late antique period this version of the Testimonium survived in copies of Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which were independently used by Jerome for *De Viris Illustribus* and by a Syriac chronicler whose historical compilations stand behind Michael the Syrian’s and Agapius’ treatment of first century history.

I would argue further that this version of the Testimonium, which survived in some copies of Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* until at least the time of Theophilus of Edessa, and which was evidently extant in the copy of Josephus’ *Antiquities* used by Pseudo-Hegesippus, ultimately goes back to Josephus himself. In arguing that Josephus wrote a

Testimonium containing a statement like “he was believed to be the Christ” I am at odds with a long line of scholars who have argued that the Testimonium’s statement “he was the Christ” must be entirely an interpolation since it does not fit its immediate context.<sup>80</sup> In contrast, I would argue that it is precisely because this particular statement in the *textus receptus* seems to be out of place that it is unlikely to have simply been added rather than altered by a copyist, who is, after all, trying to be more than a little clever.

Moreover, only a positive statement demurring from belief in Jesus as Messiah will readily explain why Origen, Pseudo-Hegesippus and Theodoret characterize Josephus as an unbeliever. In addition, the use of a past tense for belief, found in the Testimonia of Jerome, Pseudo-Hegesippus and Michael the Syrian, would explain why the *textus receptus* uses the past tense in the statement ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν. For fourth century Christians like Eusebius and his copyists would more likely have altered a past tense ‘supposed’ to a past tense ‘was’ than have independently created ἦν. As has been recently argued, fourth century Christians like Eusebius and his copyists would more likely have said, if they were composing a Testimonium *ex nihilo*, that Jesus is the Messiah rather than that he was the Messiah.<sup>81</sup> The New Testament, after all, does not use the past tense.<sup>82</sup>

As for the two other statements of the Testimonium that are often considered interpolations, namely “if one must call him a man” and “the prophets having foretold these things,” the indirect evidence for their deriving from Josephus is strong since Pseudo-Hegesippus transmits them. In any case, we do not know what Josephus could have meant by the ambiguous and possibly even ironical remark “if one should call him a man.” In addition, τῶν θείων προφητῶν...εἰρηκότων, as a genitive absolute construction, has many connotations; it does not necessarily mean that Josephus himself believed that the prophets had foretold Jesus’ resurrection. Indeed, the inclusion of the word of αὐτοῖς can be seen as giving the whole sentence a subjective meaning cast.

In addition to the strong evidence for an original Testimonium that read “he was believed to be the Messiah,” there is some weak evidence that the Testimonium of Josephus’ *Antiquities* known to Eusebius and to Pseudo-Hegesippus originally read ἦδοντ’ ἄλλ’ ἤθη rather than ἦδοντ’ ἀληθῆ. However, since the word “truth” is independently transmitted into the Testimonia of Jerome, Rufinus and the Syriac

translations of Eusebius' works, and since Isidore of Pelusium seems to allude to it, any alleged alteration of τ' ὅλλ' ἦθῃ must date as early as the fourth century Greek copyists of Eusebius' and Josephus' works.

In conclusion, while there is strong evidence that the sentence "he was believed to be the Messiah" was altered to "he was the Messiah" in copies of Eusebius' and Josephus' works beginning in the late fourth or early fifth century, it is quite beyond the extant evidence to insist on *a priori* grounds that the sentences "if one must call him a man" and "the prophets having foretold these things" or that the entire Testimonium itself must have been written by some ancient author other than Josephus himself.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus and modern scholarship 1937–1980*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 1984, 704–707.
- <sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.9.
- <sup>3</sup> Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.47 and *Antiquities* 20.200.
- <sup>4</sup> Apud Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.18.
- <sup>5</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.47; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.20; Jerome, *De Vir. Ill.* 2, 13.
- <sup>6</sup> The Second Apocalypse of James is a Nag Hammadi tractate. Scholars suggest it was composed in the third century, probably in Syria. Significantly, its relative, the First Apocalypse of James explicitly denies that James was the biological brother of Jesus, while the Second Apocalypse itself indicates that James' father was not Joseph (*New Testament Apocrypha*, Ed. W. Schneemelcher, John Knox, Louisville, 1990, 313–42). This is an unusual twist on the reluctance, shared by non-Gnostic Christians, to admit that Jesus' brothers were biological relatives, since Eastern Christians generally concede that James was the son of Joseph, if not necessarily of Mary.
- <sup>7</sup> Jerome says that Josephus openly acknowledged that "Christ was slain by the Pharisees" (*De Viris Illustribus*, 13). It appears that here he simply equated τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν παρ' ἡμῖν of the Testimonium Flavianum with Pharisees, despite the fact that Pharisees are not directly involved in Jesus' death in the gospels.
- <sup>8</sup> The idea that the whole passage is an interpolation is rashly argued by Tessa Rajak, on the grounds that it criticizes Ananus, while in *Jewish War* he is praised (*Josephus, the historian and his society*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1984, 131, n. 73). But Ananus is also portrayed as an unsavory character in *Vita*, which was published as an appendix to *Antiquities*. In *Vita* 195–205, 216 Ananus accepts a bribe from those trying to deprive Josephus of his Galilean command, and authorizes a party with orders to kill Josephus if he resists. Whether Ananus actually did this or not, it clearly shows that Josephus was willing to alter his depiction of Ananus after *Jewish War*.
- <sup>9</sup> Matthew has a decided preference for using the phrase ὁ λεγόμενος to mean "by the name of," as a comparison of the following passages with their parallels in Mark makes clear: Matt 4:17, 9:9, 10:2, 26:14, 26:36 compared to Mark 1:16, 2:14, 3:16, 14:10, 14:32.

- <sup>10</sup> Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 10.17.
- <sup>11</sup> Apud Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.20.
- <sup>12</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.47.
- <sup>13</sup> John P. Meier "The brothers and sisters of Jesus in ecumenical perspective," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54 (1992) 6.
- <sup>14</sup> Mark 6:17 calls Herodias' husband Philip, whereas *Ant.* 18.109, 137 simply calls him Herod and *Ant.* 18.138 says that Philip the tetrarch was married to Herodias' daughter Salome. It is possible that the Herod of *Ant.* 18.109 was also called Philip. Also possible is the idea that the name Philip in Mark 6:17 and Matt 14:3 was supplied from Luke 3:1. In contrast to some commentators, I think it more probable that Matt 14:3 was harmonized with Mark 6:17, than that the Codex Bezae of Matt 14:3, which omits the name Philip, was corrected on the basis of Josephus (Michael Hardwick, *Josephus as a source in patristic literature through Eusebius*, Brown Judaic Studies 128, Atlanta, 1989, 78 n. 20–21). If the latter was the case, why did the original copyist of the Codex Bezae not also correct Mark 6:17 on the basis of Josephus? The fact that bilingual Greek-Latin Codex Bezae agrees with the Old Latin here as elsewhere suggests that the Codex Bezae was simply following an older prototype. On the Codex Bezae and the question of Latin influence on the text see D. C. Parker, *Codex Bezae: An early Christian manuscript and its text*, Cambridge University, 1992, esp. 10–12, 22, 104, 193, 256.
- <sup>15</sup> It is even remotely possible that Josephus had read the gospel of Mark or Luke-Acts and is here dissenting from their characterization of John's baptism, thinking perhaps that the evangelists had confused it with Christian baptism.
- <sup>16</sup> For a modern version of this argument see Louis H. Feldman, "The Testimonium Flavianum: The state of the question," in *Christological Perspectives*, Ed. Robert Berkey and Sarah Edwards, Pilgrim, New York, 1982, 181–185. For evidence that this was one of the early modern arguments against the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum see Chapter 4 *infra*.
- <sup>17</sup> Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 33.4. A minority of scholars holds that Tertullian is dependent on Minucius, but it seems more probable that Minucius' structured, measured apology was inspired by Tertullian's fierce polemic than vice versa. The question of the two works' dating and mutual relationship is briefly discussed by G. Rendall in the preface to the Loeb Classical Library edition, *Tertullian: Apology, De Spectalis; Minucius Felix: Octavius*, Harvard University, 1984 reprint, 307.
- <sup>18</sup> Irenaeus, *Demonstratio praedicationis apostolicae* 74. Irenaeus seems to have derived this singular dating for Jesus' death simply from John 8:57, which, he



argues, implies that Jesus was between forty and fifty years old (*Adv. Haer.* 2.22.6). It is remotely possible that Irenaeus was familiar with the source behind Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4, which also seems to assume that Jesus was still alive during the reign of Claudius.

- 19 Michael Hardwick argues that Clement calculated from *Ant.* 8.61 the birth of Moses to the birth of David 558 years, and then confused 558 with 585 (*Josephus as a source in patristic literature through Eusebius*, 31). This hypothesis seems overly complex. Why would Clement fiddle with birthdates when *Ant.* 8.61 gives a straightforward time span between the exodus and the First Temple? It also suffers from the improbability that Josephus is referring to the birth rather than reign of David in *War* 6.440.
- 20 *Clement of Alexandria: Stromateis*, Trans. J. Ferguson, Fathers of the Church 85, Catholic University, 1992, 15; 132.
- 21 Sulpicius Severus, *Historia Sacra* 1.40. Heinz Schreckenberg gives other evidence for Sulpicius Severus' use of the first half of *Antiquities*, namely *Hist. Sacr.* 1.22 and *Ant.* 5.16–17 (*Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter*, Brill, Leiden, 1972, 91).
- 22 Alden Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and the Greek chronographic tradition*, Bucknell University, 1979, 141.
- 23 Apud Syncellus, *Chronicon*, 526, 581.
- 24 Heinrich Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie*, Leipzig, 1898, 264–65.
- 25 Syncellus, *Chron.* 118; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.6.2.
- 26 Eusebius, *Chronicon* I, Hebraeorum.
- 27 Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Cod. 34.
- 28 Morton Smith, "The description of the Essenes in Josephus and the Philosophoumena," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 29 (1958) 273–313; A. Baumgarten, "Josephus and Hippolytus on the Pharisees," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 55 (1984), 1–25.
- 29 Pace Solomon Zeitlin, who argues in too sweeping a fashion that Josephus was the only Greek writer to write about Jewish sects in "The account of the Essenes in Josephus and the Philosophoumena," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 49 (1958–59) 294.

- <sup>30</sup> Although Porphyry cites *Antiquities*, it is not clear he actually read any of it (*De abstinentia*, 4.11). In addition, the only ancient papyrus manuscript of Josephus' works identified so far is from *Jewish War* rather than from *Antiquities*. It has been dated to the third century, which makes it the only manuscript of Josephus' works which could possibly have been copied by pagans rather than Christians (Heinz Schrekenberg, *Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*, 54–55).
- <sup>31</sup> Hugh Jackson Lawlor, *Eusebiana*, Oxford University, 1912, 1–4. Lawlor addresses the question whether Hegesippus also wrote a church history, and answers in the negative.
- <sup>32</sup> Those who consider the entire Testimonium a forgery have not addressed the question why the Christian interests allegedly responsible for interpolating it allowed these particular works of the already controversial Origen to survive.
- <sup>33</sup> On the dating of Origen's works see Pierre Nautin, *Origène: Sa vie et son oeuvre*, Paris, 1977, 262–92.
- <sup>34</sup> Apud Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* 3.9.
- <sup>35</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.47.
- <sup>36</sup> Feldman, "Testimonium Flavianum," 183.
- <sup>37</sup> Origen, *Comment. on Matt.* 10.17 on Matt 13:55.
- <sup>38</sup> Compare *Contra Celsum* 1.16 and 1.47 where the name "Flavius" is included in the first citation of Josephus' works.
- <sup>39</sup> For an overview of traditional explanations, and his own most recent explanation for Origen's statement see Zvi Baras, "The Testimonium Flavianum and the martyrdom of James," in *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, Wayne State University, 1987, 338–48.
- <sup>40</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.20; Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 2, 13.
- <sup>41</sup> Apud Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.18.
- <sup>42</sup> Apud Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.1.5.
- <sup>43</sup> Zvi Baras, "The Testimonium Flavianum: The state of recent scholarship" in *Society and religion in the Second Temple period*. Ed. Michael Avi-Yonah and Zvi Baras, World History of the Jewish People 8. Jerusalem, 1977, 303–313.

- 44 Origen, Frag. 457 II apud *Origenes Werke. Matthäuserklärung, Fragmente und Indices*. Ed. Erich Klostermann. Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller. Leipzig, 1941, Frag. 457 II. 190.
- 45 The catenae are not the most reliable source for patristic writers, for although this catena (Origen, Fragment 457 II) attributes the identification of the two Zachariases to Josephus, the Latin translation of the same passage makes no mention of Josephus at all (*Comment. Series on Matthew 25* on Matt 23:35).
- 46 Protevangelium Jas. 23; Origen, *Comment. Series in Matt. 25* on Matt 23:35.
- 47 John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the historical Jesus*, Doubleday, New York, 1991, 80–83.
- 48 Charles Martin, “Le Testimonium Flavianum: Vers une solution définitive,” *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 20 (1941) 458–65.
- 49 Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.9.
- 50 Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.9.2–4.
- 51 Hardwick, *Josephus as a source*, 86.
- 52 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1:54, 2:39, 47 68.
- 53 Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 3.5. 123–124.
- 54 Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 64–65.
- 55 Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 79.
- 56 It is certain that Sozomen knew of Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* for he composed a church history to follow it, but there is no evidence that he knew Josephus’ works first hand. Furthermore, it is almost certain that the Testimonium he read in Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* read “he was the Christ” rather than “he was believed to be the Christ” for he writes of Josephus “...impressed, no doubt, by the wonderful works wrought by our Lord, and the truthfulness of his doctrines, this writer evidently shrinks from calling him a man, but openly calls Him Christ...It appears to me that, in bearing witness to these things, he loudly proclaims as the truth implied by the works, that Christ is God” (Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.1).
- 57 In the sentence that follows “cumque invidia nostrorum principum cruci eum Pilatus addixisset” Jerome has probably been influenced to use the word “invidia,” which is

missing in other Testimonia, by the gospels, which attribute the priests' delivery of Jesus before Pilate to their φθόνον (Matt 27:18 // Mark 15:10).

- 58 Heinz Schreckenberg, *Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*, 92.
- 59 Ussani argues that the five-book *De excidio Hierosolymitano* was mistaken for the five-book work of Hegesippus (*Hegesippi qui dicitur historiae libri v. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 66:2, Vienna, 1960, 25). The earliest extant use of the name "Hegesippus" for the author of *De excidio* is, according to Bell, in Hincmar of Reims' *De regis persona et regio ministerio* 32.
- 60 As we learn from the preface to *De excidio* included in Conrad Lautenbach's sixteenth century German translation of Josephus *Flavii Josephi des Hochberuhmten Geschichtsschreibers Historien und Bucher...* Strassburg, 1574.
- 61 Albert A. Bell, Jr. "An historiographical analysis of the *De excidio Hierosolymitano* of Pseudo-Hegesippus," Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1977, 92. Bell shows that Pseudo-Hegesippus used Tacitus, Suetonius, Sallust, Livy and either the "Martyrium beati Petri Apostoli a Lino episcopo conscriptum" or a closely related source. His dependence on Latin sources prompts the question whether he could have used the Latin *Jewish War* rather than the original Greek.
- 62 Pseudo-Hegesippus, *De excidio hierosolymitano* 2.12.
- 63 A. M. Dubarle, "Le temoignage de Josèphe sur Jésus d'après des publications récentes," *Revue biblique* 84 (1977) 52.
- 64 Cassiodorus' group must have also been exposed to the laudatory paraphrase of Eusebius' Testimonium found in the preface of Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* when they translated this work for their *Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita*. This translation reads, "Ioseppus...dignitissimus erit testis de veritate Christi. Vocare namque eum virum non audet tamquam factorem insignium operum magistrumque sermonum veracium, Christum vero aperte nominat et poenae crucis adiudicatum...et mihi videtur, quoniam haec referens quasi clamare videtur operibus deum esse Christum rerum quippe miraculis obstupescens" (Cassiodorus, *Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita*, Bk. 1.2.4-5).
- 65 Theodoret's quotation of *Ant.* 20.247 and *Ant.* 18.33-34 to make the point that the priesthood had passed from the hands of Jews, definitely shows use of *Demonstratio Evangelica* 8.2.398-99, which quotes the same Josephan passages. Theodoret's text even follows Eusebius' *Demonstratio* in quoting *Ant.* 20.247 as saying that Herod appointed men not of noble descent but only "ἐξ Ἑβραίων" (*Dem. Ev.* 8.2.398; *Comment on. Dan.* 9 on Dan 9:25). In contrast, the extant manuscripts of *Ant.* 20.247 read "ἐξ ἱερέων."

- <sup>66</sup> Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Praef.
- <sup>67</sup> A. M. Dubarle, "Le temoignage de Josèphe sur Jésus d'après la tradition indirecte," *Revue Biblique* (1973) 490.
- <sup>68</sup> This letter is addressed *ad Eudaemoni Diaconi*. It is numbered *Ep.* 4.225 in Migne's edition of Isidore's letters, but has been renumbered *Ep.* 1259 in the critical recension of his letters edited by Pierre Evieux. For an explanation why Isidore's letters were rearranged and renumbered, as well as the dating of manuscripts see the preface to this latter edition of his letters, P. Evieux, trans. *Isidore de Peluse: Lettres*, Sources Chrétiennes 422, Paris, 1997.
- <sup>69</sup> Note that Isidore does not clearly specify Jewish disbelief as disbelief that Jesus is the Messiah (*Ep.* 4.255 ).
- <sup>70</sup> Another Eastern Greek-language text that may possibly allude to an earlier version of the Testimonium is an apologetic work, written in the form of a dialogue among Jews, Christians and pagans in the Sassanid court, and dated between the mid-fifth and seventh centuries. In it, one of the Christian representatives refers the Jewish representatives to "Josephus your historian, who spoke of Christ as a good and just man, manifesting grace through signs and wonders, doing good to many" (E. Bratke, *Das so genannte Religionsgespräch am Hof der Sassaniden*, Leipzig, 1899, 36). However, it is not clear that the author of this text was actually familiar with a version of the Testimonium; he could have known from hearsay that Josephus had written something favorable about Jesus.
- <sup>71</sup> Shlomo Pines, *An Arabic version of the Testimonium Flavianum and its implications*, Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1971.
- <sup>72</sup> I reached this conclusion from my own comparison of the two chronicles. This conclusion was also independently reached by the Islamist Lawrence I. Conrad. However, while Conrad notes that both Michael and Agapius are indirectly dependent on Theophilus of Edessa, he did not notice that Theophilus himself most likely was dependent on an earlier source, who, I argue, is probably James of Edessa (L. Conrad, "The Conquest of Arwad" in *Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, Princeton University, 1992, 322–38).
- <sup>73</sup> The lost Chronicle of Dionysius of Tel Mahre should not be confused with the anonymous Chronicle of Zuqnin, sometimes known as the Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel Mahre (Witold Witowski, *The Syriac chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre*, Studia Semitica Uppsaliensis 9, Uppsala, 1987, 33).

- <sup>74</sup> Pines, *Arabic version of the Testimonium Flavianum*, 54, n. 188. It is suggestive that scholars from Edessa appear to have had access to a dubitive Testimonium alluded to by Theodoret, from nearby Cyrrhus, while the *textus receptus* Testimonium appears in manuscripts and writers from the orbit of Constantinople.
- <sup>75</sup> This anonymous chronicle dates to 1234 (J. B. Chabot, ed. *Anonymi autoris Chronicon ad A.C. 1234 pertinens*, 21, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 109, Louvain, 1937, 98–99). On the direct use of Dionysius, and therefore the indirect use of Theophilus, by the chronicle of 1234 see Conrad, “The conquest of Arwad,” 322–38. The fact that the chronicle of 1234 has very sparse entries for the period between Biblical history, ending in the first century, and the conversion of Constantine might suggest that its compiler did not have access to James of Edessa’s adaptation of Eusebius’ *Chronicon*.
- <sup>76</sup> Michael the Syrian gives more evidence of James’ Greek abilities in Book 11.15 [445–46].
- <sup>77</sup> Heinz Schreckenberg, *Rezeptionsgeschichtliche und textkritische Untersuchungen zu Flavius Josephus*, Brill, Leiden, 1977, 6–9.
- <sup>78</sup> Pines, *Arabic version of the Testimonium Flavianum*, 26–30. However, the fact that the Testimonium from the Syriac *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the Testimonia from Michael’s and Agapius’ chronicles both read “after three days” rather than “on the third day” does not necessarily indicate that the source of the latter two used the former, as Pines had suggested. The error that Jesus was resurrected three days after his death rather than on the third day is commonly made by Christians. Most manuscripts of Mark 8:31, including the Harclean Syriac, read “after three days”, although the fact that Luke 9:22 and Matt 16:21 agree with each other against Mark 8:21 in reading “on the third day” suggests that Mark may also have originally read this as well. In the Harclean Syriac, Mark 9:31 and 10:34 read “on the third day” in the text but “after three days” in the margins. The parallel passages in the Harclean Syriac Matthew and Luke read “on the third day.” Pseudo-Hegesippus also reads “post triduum mortis” (*De excidio Hierosolymitano*, 2.12). For Pseudo-Hegesippus and the Syriac translator of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, “after three days” may have been the most natural way of translating the Testimonium’s unusual expression τρίτην ἡμέραν.
- <sup>79</sup> According to Professor Michael Guinan of the Graduate Theological Union of Berkeley, California, the passive participle in Syriac is technically without tense, but since participle tense is determined by the tense of the larger passage in which it is used, which in Michael’s Testimonium is past tense, it is natural to see this

participle as past. Furthermore, Theodor Nöldeke argues that a passive participle in Syriac is used as the perfect past in European grammar (*Compendious Syriac Grammar*, London, 1904, 218).

<sup>80</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 60.

<sup>81</sup> Feldman, "Testimonium Flavianum," 192.

<sup>82</sup> For example, in *Demonstratio Evangelica* 1. 1.8, Eusebius uses a present participle when stating that Christians are taught that Jesus is the Christ. It is also noteworthy that Hegesippus uses the present tense to assert that Jesus is the Christ, even in the middle of narratives otherwise written in past tense (apud Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* 2. 23. 9; 2.23.18).

## Chapter 2

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### The Testimonium Flavianum in the Middle Ages

As we have seen from the previous chapter, there is evidence from a number of different texts, dating as early as Origen and as late as Theophilus of Edessa, of the survival during the late antique period of at least one Testimonium Flavianum that varied slightly, although crucially, from the *textus receptus* Testimonium. Yet today only two sources have survived that transmit this variant version of the text directly into the Middle Ages: from the East a twelfth century Syriac chronicle, and from the West Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*. This fact suggests that there most likely was much less textual variation in the Testimonium Flavianum during the Middle Ages than in antiquity. For the most part, however, there are more continuities than differences between the Middle Ages and antiquity in the treatment of the Testimonium Flavianum. As was the case in antiquity, the Testimonium was often quoted in this period, probably more often than any other passage from the works of Josephus. As was the case in antiquity, there is no clear evidence that the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum was seriously questioned in the Middle Ages, at least by Christian scholars. With the exception of Otto of Freising and Roger Bacon, writers in this period do not seem to have held more critical views of Josephus' works than writers in antiquity.

#### **The Middle Ages: East and West**

As noted earlier (Ch. 1 *supra*), Josephus was one of the very few ancient Greek writers, and the only Greek-language historian, who was widely read in the medieval West. There are over a hundred and seventy medieval manuscripts extant that include the Latin *Antiquities* and about fifty that contain only the Latin *Jewish War*.<sup>1</sup> Josephus' great medieval popularity stands in marked contrast to the contemporary fate of the historian who during the Renaissance would become Josephus' nearest competitor for readers of history, namely Tacitus. His *Annals* and *Histories* derive from a single incomplete eleventh century manuscript.



The fact that Josephus was widely read in the medieval West was due partly to the simple fact that, unlike so many other Greek writers of antiquity, his works had been translated into Latin before the complete eclipse of Greek in the West. *Antiquities* and *Against Apion* had been translated in the late sixth century by Cassiodorus' group, antiquity's last generation of major Greek to Latin translators, while *Jewish War* was translated probably as early as the fourth century.

Josephus' medieval popularity was also due to the fact that he painted such a graphic picture of Jerusalem's destruction and attributed this destruction to Jewish sinfulness. His views thus accorded well with the view of many Christian writers, who since the time of the New Testament had seen the destruction of Jerusalem as divine vengeance for Jewish persecution of the church.<sup>2</sup> The world's foremost contemporary expert on Josephus' reception in antiquity and the Middle Ages, Heinz Schreckenberg, has shown that passages from Book 6 of *Jewish War*, chronicling the grim results of Jerusalem's capture, and particularly the story of Maria, the Jewish mother who ate her own child, were, aside from the *Testimonium Flavianum*, the most cited parts of Josephus' works in antiquity and the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> In the West this anti-Jewish thematic expropriation of *Jewish War* was probably expressed most virulently in Pseudo-Hegesippus' *De excidio Hierosolymitano*. In the East, it may have reached an apogee in the Syrian church, which even included a translation of *Jewish War* 6 within the Syriac (Peshitta) Old Testament as a fifth book of Maccabees.

But the *Testimonium Flavianum* passage itself was no small factor in the widespread medieval use of Josephus' works. Heinz Schreckenberg has shown that the *Testimonium Flavianum* was probably the most cited passage from Josephus' works in antiquity and the Middle Ages in both Latin and Greek.<sup>4</sup> Like passages from Book 6 of *Jewish War*, the *Testimonium* was often used for anti-Jewish apologetic purposes during the High Middle Ages. In the twelfth century, the *Testimonium* was quoted by John of Salisbury, for example, as one more piece of evidence, willfully ignored by Jews, that Christ was God,<sup>5</sup> and similar sentiments are expressed by John's slightly older contemporary, Otto of Freising, who quotes the *Testimonium* in order to show that "the Jews are not ignorant of the coming of Christ, but are blinded by their hostility and are unwilling to believe, so that their damnation is greater."<sup>6</sup> And in his *Contra Perfidia Judaeorum*, which followed the well-worn format of

Christian apologia to the Jews by citing the Hebrew prophets in support of Christian doctrine, Peter of Blois also cited the Testimonium because it allowed him to conclude that "Christian faith is so much stronger because not only is it harmoniously and irrefutably confirmed by the oracles of the prophets, but even by the ancient histories of the Jews and Gentiles who are enemies of Christ."<sup>7</sup> Such apologetic use of the Testimonium can be traced back to Pseudo-Hegesippus, who had cited Josephus' Testimonium to show that "it does not prejudice truth because he [Josephus] did not believe, but rather it adds to the testimony...In this the eternal power of Jesus Christ shone forth so that even the leaders of the synagogues who arrested him to be delivered up to death acknowledged him to be God."<sup>8</sup>

During the Middle Ages Josephus' major works were as popular in the Greek East as in the Latin West.<sup>9</sup> Over one hundred Byzantine manuscripts containing parts of *Antiquities* or *Jewish War* survive.<sup>10</sup> In contrast many other ancient Greek works, both Christian and pagan, survive in only a single independent manuscript. And the popularity of a Slavic-language adaptation of the Greek *Jewish War* in medieval Russia shows that Greeks were not the only scholars from the Orthodox Christian world during this period who cherished Josephus highly as an historian.<sup>11</sup>

Medieval Greek scholars were as inclined to cite the Testimonium Flavianum with approval as their Latin contemporaries: I came across no evidence that any of them entertained doubts about the text's authenticity. There is no obvious reason why the Testimonium was never questioned in the Byzantine world. Those texts of Origen that might have raised doubts about its authenticity, *Contra Celsum* 1.47 and *Commentary on Matthew* 10.17, were in fact available to the literate of the later Eastern Roman empire even though they were not available to their contemporaries in the medieval West. However, it should be noted that *Contra Celsum* and *Commentary on Matthew*, like so many other important ancient Greek works, were each transmitted to the West in only one independent manuscript.<sup>12</sup> Thus it is possible that these texts of Origen were simply too scarce to have come to the attention of the few Byzantine scholars who might have wondered about their seeming incompatibility with the textus receptus Testimonium Flavianum.

I suspect that the reason why Byzantine scholars failed to question the authenticity of the Testimonium lies with the same factors that

explain why they did not initiate an intellectual revolution like the European Renaissance in their own society, despite their access to so many ancient texts, and despite their important role in ultimately making that same European Renaissance possible. Perhaps the insecurity bred by the Eastern Roman empire's very long and ultimately unsuccessful struggle to survive Islamic conquest made elites reluctant to raise intellectual controversies about works touching on the empire's most fundamental identity. Although the important problem of Byzantine scholarship remains regrettably understudied,<sup>13</sup> my own knowledge of Byzantine history gives me the impression that already after the first round of Islamic conquests in the seventh century, Eastern Roman political, strategic and religious problems were so acute that the empire was in no position to create the social and intellectual conditions wherein critical comparisons of ancient sources' disparate treatments of a given topic would be commonplace among a literate elite.

For the medieval West, the explanation for the Testimonium's immunity from question is more simple: the relevant texts of Origen that might have cast doubts on its wording were simply unknown. Never before translated into Latin, *Contra Celsum* was first brought to the West from Constantinople between 1450 and 1455 under the aegis of Pope Nicholas V, who had it placed in the Vatican Library. It was first published in 1481 at Rome in a Latin translation made by Christopher Persona. The Greek text itself would not be published until 1605.<sup>14</sup>

One portion of Origen's *Commentary on Matthew* was known in the medieval West, for it had been translated into Latin in late antiquity, perhaps by the fourth century church father Hilary of Poitiers.<sup>15</sup> However, the portion that alludes to the fact that Josephus did not receive Jesus as the Christ (*Comment. on Matt.* 10.17 on Matt 13:55), does not form part of the existing manuscripts of this antique Latin translation. The old Latin translation covers Matt 16:13–27:63. The Greek text, in contrast, covers Matt 13:36–22:33. The latter was first made widely available to the West in a Latin translation made by Erasmus in 1527.<sup>16</sup> Possibly the portion of the commentary covering Matt 13:36–16:13 had never been available in Latin translation. Even before they were officially condemned for heresy, many of Origen's works perished due to their voluminous size: no one could possibly have copied or translated them all even had they so desired.

Because the relevant portions of Origen's works, as well as of Theodoret's *Commentary on Daniel* and the chronicles of Agapius of Hierapolis and Michael the Syrian (Ch. 1 *supra*), were unknown to the medieval West, the only source available in the medieval West that could readily have raised doubts about the wording of the *textus receptus* Testimonium was Jerome's exceedingly popular *De Viris Illustribus*.<sup>17</sup> For as we have already observed, there were only three independent versions of the Testimonium Flavianum circulating in the medieval West: that of Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*, that of Pseudo-Hegesippus' *De excidio Hierosolymitano*, and that of the Latin *Antiquities*, which, as I have already shown in the previous chapter, is the same as that found in Rufinus' translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

Although medieval writers occasionally preferred Jerome's Testimonium over that of the Latin *Antiquities*, it is far from clear that this arose from a belief that Jerome's version was more authentic. For example, in the ninth century the chronicler Frechulph of Lisieux used Jerome's Testimonium rather than that of the Latin Josephus.<sup>18</sup> However, this is unlikely to have been due to any sort of critical acumen on the part of Frechulph, for he also used Jerome's account of James' death, which, because it is based on Hegesippus, is much less credible than that of Josephus.<sup>19</sup>

More suggestive is the citation of the Testimonium in Otto of Freising's famous twelfth century chronicle, a work that has been called the Western world's "earliest philosophical treatment of history."<sup>20</sup> Like most other medieval writers, Otto quotes Rufinus' version of the Testimonium as it appears in both Latin *Antiquities* and the Latin *Historia Ecclesiastica*. However, instead of repeating Rufinus' translation of the *textus receptus*' most problematic sentence, "hic erat Christus," he inserts Jerome's more skeptical version of the same sentence, "credebatur esse Christus."<sup>21</sup> It is known that Otto used the Ekkehard Chronicle to write his own chronicle,<sup>22</sup> and the Ekkehard Chronicle quotes Rufinus' version of the Testimonium *in toto*,<sup>23</sup> so it is clear that it was indeed Otto rather than some earlier writer who decided to check the Testimonia in both Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus* and the Latin *Antiquities* and to mix them.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion from his use of this mixed text that Otto must have been troubled by the discrepancies between Rufinus' and Jerome's versions of the Testimonium; and decided that Jerome's

“credebatur esse Christus” was more credible than Rufinus’ “hic erat Christus.” However, since Otto seems to have left no record of his motivation for inserting Jerome’s version of that particular sentence into Rufinus’ version of the Testimonium we cannot be sure that he was indeed prompted by critical views of the text of the Latin *Antiquities*.<sup>24</sup> His mixed version of the Testimonium is later repeated by Godfrey of Viterbo.<sup>25</sup> However, it is probable that Godfrey copied Otto mindlessly, and was not aware that Rufinus’ translation of the text did not, in fact, read “credebatur esse Christus.”

### **The *Josippon* of Joseph ben Gurion**

Christians like Otto of Freising were not the only scholars of the medieval West who found Josephus’ works of great value to their intellectual and apologetic concerns. In tenth century southern Italy, an anonymous Jewish author encountered the first sixteen books of the Latin *Antiquities* and Pseudo-Hegesippus’ *De excidio Hierosolymitano* and realized their value to Jews for a better understanding of Judaism in the Second Temple period. He therefore incorporated them, along with parts of the Apocrypha of the Vulgate, into a synthetic history written in Hebrew. His own work was later adapted by at least two other medieval Hebrew authors to produce the versions of the so-called *Josippon* that were known to early modern European scholars. Because these later versions of the *Josippon*, one of which was pseudepigraphical, were known to early modern European scholars and figured in the early modern debate over the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum and related contemporary controversies about authorship, it is necessary to go into some detail about the complex genesis of the work known as the *Josippon*.<sup>26</sup>

Only after critical study of the available manuscripts in the late twentieth century has it been possible to show that the oldest version of the *Josippon*, which apparently exists in only one intact manuscript, was not pseudepigraphical. According to the research of David Flusser, it was written in 953 AD by a Southern Italian Jew who quotes from the Latin *Antiquities* and *De excidio Hierosolymitano*, acknowledging them as sources written by Josephus. Like Pseudo-Hegesippus, the author of this oldest version of the *Josippon*, which I shall call *Josippon* 1, does not attempt to impersonate Josephus. Nor is he a mere translator for, like Pseudo-Hegesippus, he draws on non-Josephan sources, including the

Vulgate, and brings his own viewpoint to the sources at his disposal. Because he had no direct access to Josephus' *Vita*, which was apparently never translated into Latin, nor to the Latin *War*, which certainly was available in the West although possibly not in his immediate vicinity, he made one highly significant but erroneous deduction from his sources. This erroneous deduction undoubtedly played a role in the transformation of his work into a pseudepigraphon.<sup>27</sup> Wrongly assuming that the Josephus Goriones mentioned in *De excidio Hierosolymitano* 3.3.4 was a reference to Flavius Josephus himself, he then designated the latter "ben Gurion." If he had been acquainted with *War* 1.3, *War* 2.568, or *Vita* 5–7 he would have known that Flavius Josephus himself was "ben Matthias" rather than "ben Gurion." The name "Joseph ben Gurion" was continued by the later adaptations of his work known to early modern European scholars. Since these early modern scholars were acquainted with *War* both in Latin and in Greek and since the Greek *Vita* was brought to the West and published in the sixteenth century, their suspicions that the author of the *Josippon* could not possibly be the same person as Josephus were naturally justified by the fact that he erroneously called himself "ben Gurion" rather than "ben Matthias."

As I mentioned earlier, the original version of the *Josippon*, which I am calling *Josippon* 1, was not known until recently. Later versions of the work, particularly the pseudepigraphical *Josippon* 3, were the only versions that were known. What are the origins of *Josippon* 3? In 1480 the Jewish Italian physician Abraham Conat published in Mantua a version of the *Josippon* based on a manuscript, which I shall call *Josippon* 2. This manuscript not only restylized and abbreviated the work, but eliminated all references to Josephus as the source upon which the author drew. However, according to Flusser, this Mantuan version apparently was not strictly pseudepigraphical since its author did not actually pose as Josephus. The Hebrew author who restyled the manuscript of *Josippon* 1 to create *Josippon* 2, whether or not he intended to deceive his readers into believing that the work was from the first century, set the stage for a later author or authors, who, according to Flusser, used *Josippon* 2 to create *Josippon* 3. The latter is a pseudepigraphon, in which the author not only poses as Flavius Josephus, but also implies that his work is the lost Aramaic version of *Jewish War* alluded to in *War* 1.3. Because of the use of *Josippon* 3 by

Abraham ibn Daud, it seems that *Josippon* 3 must have been constructed before 1160 A.D.

A version of *Josippon* 3 was translated into Arabic, which was in turn even translated into an Ethiopic version highly regarded by the Ethiopian church. The Arabic version was also highly regarded by both Egyptian Muslims, the most notable representative of whom was the fourteenth century historian Ibn Khaldun,<sup>28</sup> and by Egyptian Christians. It is one of the tragic ironies of the abrupt demise of Western antiquity in Egypt after the Islamic conquests that its Christian population lost knowledge of the original Josephus along with so many other Greek-language authors,<sup>29</sup> and instead ended up esteeming his medieval impostor, the *Josippon*.

*Josippon* 3 was also the version of the work most commonly known to Western Christians, particularly after it was printed in 1510 in Constantinople. The Constantinople edition was based on several manuscripts collected by the fourteenth century scholar Judah ibn Mosconi of Ochrida.<sup>30</sup> Various versions of the *Josippon* were translated into Latin and several European vernacular languages during the sixteenth century. However, in contrast to both medieval Jews and to the Muslims and Christians of the Middle East, the Christians of medieval and early modern Europe, whether Roman Catholic, Protestant or Greek Orthodox, were not as commonly misled into mistaking the *Josippon* for a first century work. Among the latter, the genuine works of Flavius Josephus were too widely known to be easily confused with those of someone calling himself "Joseph ben Gurion."

As we shall see in greater detail later, the *Josippon* played a major role in the early modern Testimonium Flavianum controversy because no version of the *Josippon* contained a precise parallel to the Testimonium. According to Flusser, the earliest version of the text, *Josippon* 1, made no mention of Jesus at all. Robert Eisler has shown, however, that some later versions of the *Josippon*, including the version of *Josippon* 2 that was published in 1480 by Conat, contained a brief but hostile reference to Jesus. Eisler has also shown that in other manuscripts of these later versions of the *Josippon* such references to Jesus appear to have been partially or completely erased.<sup>31</sup> It would seem that the copyists of the various versions of the *Josippon* oscillated among three different strategies: ignoring the problem of where Jesus fit into Jewish history altogether, including a jab at Jesus that probably reflected an old tradition

of hostility towards Jesus among Jews outside the church,<sup>32</sup> and actively suppressing the hostile tradition with the purpose of maintaining a conspiracy of silence about Jesus and his relationship to Jewish history.

Already by the end of the twelfth century, these different strategies had apparently come to the notice of some European Christians. In his *De instructione principum*, written between 1191 and 1217,<sup>33</sup> Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis) claims that Robert Cricklade (Robertus Canutus), prior of St. Frideswide at Oxford, came across copies of the *Josippon* containing erasures of such a reference to Jesus. Gerald first quotes the Testimonium from the Latin *Antiquities*, and then relates the following story:

The great malice and obstinate faithlessness of the Jews is made quite clear by the fact that they keep the book of their own great historian in Hebrew among themselves and deem it to be authentic, with the sole exception of the testimony about Christ which they do not accept. So when this testimony by their own author is pointed out to them, they say, lying, that in their own Hebrew books it has never been found or written. But the prior of St. Frideswide, Master Robert, an old and authoritative man whom we have met...since he was erudite, well-read in the Scriptures, and not ignorant of the Hebrew language, sent to various English villages in which Jews were resident who had many Hebrew manuscripts of Josephus. Upon request they furnished him with them as he was a familiar figure since he knew the Hebrew language better than they, and he collected them together. In two of these manuscripts he found this testimony to Christ intact and written in the logical place, but it appeared as though it had been recently erased. In all other manuscripts however, it had been missing for a long time: it appeared as though it had never been there.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the very strong probability that Gerald has exaggerated certain details of this anecdote, such as the extent of Cricklade's ability in Hebrew,<sup>35</sup> with the intention of venting his anti-Jewish feelings, the varied state of the references to Jesus in the extant manuscripts and in editions of the *Josippon* does render the basic kernel of the story, that Cricklade encountered some manuscripts of the *Josippon* with a partially erased reference to Jesus, not wholly improbable. Gerald of Wales' anecdote is in other respects informative: it does reveal that more than one version of the *Josippon* had already made its way north to England a century and a half after its composition. It also shows that at that time the *Josippon* was being mistaken by both Christian and Jewish Europeans for a translation of Josephus' works. The widespread ignorance of Hebrew among even educated medieval Christians and, likewise, the



ignorance of the Latin *Antiquities* among most medieval Jews, were no doubt responsible for this misunderstanding.<sup>36</sup>

### **Roger Bacon**

Of all the medieval writers known to have used the works of Josephus, Roger Bacon stands out for having held relatively critical views about them. In the twentieth century, Roger Bacon has been remembered particularly for his prescient views on the importance of empiricism and mathematics to scientific endeavor.<sup>37</sup> It is more often overlooked that he also anticipated by several centuries the humanist movements of the Renaissance and Reformation in his insistence that Latin Christians learn ancient Greek and Hebrew to better understand the Bible, that they use the oldest biblical manuscripts in order to attain the purest text, and that they read not only more Greek and Latin pagan works but also such little known works as Greek church fathers and the biblical Apocrypha that were not included in the Vulgate (*Opus Maius* 3.2; 3.4). It is therefore hardly surprising that he should have argued about the Latin translation of Josephus' works in a remarkably modern manner that:

since the whole confirmation of sacred history is given by Josephus in his *Antiquities*, and all the sacred writers take their fundamentals of their expositions from those books, it is necessary for the Latins to have that work in an uncorrupted form. But it has been proved that the Latin codices are wholly corrupt in all places on which the import of history rests, so that the text is self-contradictory everywhere. This is not the fault of so great an author, but arises from a bad translation and from the corruption by the Latins, nor can it be remedied but by a new translation or by an adequate correction in all fundamental points.<sup>38</sup>

However, there is no clear indication that Bacon suspected that the allegation of corruption would be raised some three centuries later about one of his favorite passages of *Antiquities*. Rather he cites the Testimonium with obvious approval: "Josephus says...that in his own time Jesus Christ, a most holy man, appeared, if it is right to call him a man, concerning whom all things were fulfilled which our prophets said regarding him, as he himself gloriously testified."<sup>39</sup> And although Bacon cites the text in a truncated form that leaves out the critical statement "he was the Messiah," it is even less clear in his citation of the text than in

the citation of Otto of Freising that this was because he entertained doubts about the authenticity of this particular phrase.

Moreover, despite his critical acumen regarding the current level of scholarship within his own society and the accuracy of the Latin *Antiquities*, Bacon himself was guilty of confusion in regard to Josephus' works, and he erroneously attributed inauthentic passages to Josephus. For immediately after citing the Testimonium Flavianum he writes of Josephus, "he himself testifies that when the Lord was crucified (quando Dominus crucifixus fuit), the voice of the heavenly powers was heard saying, "Let us abandon this abode".<sup>40</sup> This clearly refers to Josephus' report of a voice heard from the temple in *Jewish War* 6.299, an omen that is set at Pentecost in the early 60s AD not in the early 30s AD when Jesus was crucified. This mistake apparently derived from Jerome's translation of Eusebius' *Chronicon*, which Bacon used extensively in *Opus Maius*. In his *Chronicon*, Eusebius had placed Christ's crucifixion in the year of Abraham 2048, which he equated with the eighteenth year of Tiberius, accompanied by the following note as it reads in Jerome's translation: "Iosephus etiam vernaculus Iudaeorum scriptor circa haec tempora die pentecostes sacerdotes primum commotionem locorum et quosdam sonitus sensisse testatur, deinde ex audito templi repentinam subito erupisse vocem dicentium, Transmigremus ex his sedibus."<sup>41</sup>

There is also evidence that Bacon was encouraged in this chronological confusion because he had not actually read Josephus' *War* but only Pseudo-Hegesippus' *De Excidio Hierosolymitano*. For although Bacon often mentions *Antiquities* by name he does not mention *Jewish War*. Moreover, just before citing the Testimonium Bacon says that the kingdom of the Jews passed under Roman control with the observation that "this information is contained in the books of Josephus, a Jew who narrated the destruction of the Jews by Titus and Vespasian. And Josephus says *ibidem* that in his own time Jesus Christ appeared, etc." One modern editor has translated "*ibidem*" as "in the same work." If this translation is correct, Bacon could be suggesting that both the Testimonium and an account of the destruction of Jerusalem appear in the same work. While it is certainly true that both a version of the Testimonium and an account of the destruction of Jerusalem appear in Pseudo-Hegesippus' *De Excidio Hierosolymitano*, in Josephus' writings, these two topics appear in the two separate works, namely in *Antiquities* and *War* respectively.

Another possible indication that Bacon was thinking of a passage from *De Excidio Hierosolymitano* rather than from Josephus' works is that the former can be interpreted as juxtaposing Christ's crucifixion with the phenomenon of the voice from the temple, "quod etiam ante, cum cruciferent Christum Iesum, liquido significatum lectio docet...in ipsa autem Pentecostes sollempnitate ingredienti sacerdotes templi interiora nocturno tempore, ut sacrificia adsueta celebrarent, primo motum quendam sensisse se prodiderunt et sonum editum, postea etiam audisse repentina voce clamatum: transimus hinc" (*De Excidio* 5.44; cp. *War* 6.299). Although "cum crucifigerent Christum Iesum" most likely has a causal rather than a temporal meaning in this passage, it is possible that Bacon interpreted it in a temporal sense. Such misunderstanding is not surprising given his statement that "Josephus dicit ibidem quod in tempore suo apparuit Jesus Christus,"<sup>42</sup> which indicates that Bacon was not aware that Josephus' life and events contemporary with it, like the phenomenon of the voice from the temple, were posterior to the death of Jesus.

Bacon was not the only medieval writer who seems to have combined the use of *Antiquities* with *De excidio Hierosolymitano* rather than with *Jewish War*: the medieval Jewish author of the *Josippon* evidently did this as well. The fact that more manuscripts survive containing the Latin *Antiquities* than the Latin *War*, and the evidence of the *Josippon* as well as of Bacon's use of Josephus all suggest that *De excidio* was often combined with *Antiquities* because the former was often treated by medieval scholars as an acceptable substitute for *War*. In any case, without access to Book 6 of *War*, it is hardly surprising that Bacon would assume that Jerome's translation of Eusebius' *Chronicon* and Pseudo-Hegesippus' *De excidio Hierosolymitano* were correct in implying that the relationship of Christ's crucifixion and the phenomenon of the voice from the temple was not only a case of cause and effect but also a case of immediate chronological succession. Nevertheless, unlike such medieval personalities as the author of the *Josippon*, Bacon was certainly aware that Josephus and "Hegesippus," as he calls Pseudo-Hegesippus, are two different writers, for he distinguishes between their geographical descriptions of Palestine: "Josephus in his book of *Antiquities*...whom Hegesippus has followed in his third book, and explains those matters which are found somewhat obscure in Josephus" (*Op. Maius* 4.16).

Despite his realization that, like other Greek works known to the medieval West only in translation, the works of Josephus may have become corrupted, Bacon did not notice that Josephus' works do not support the miraculous juxtaposition of Christ's crucifixion with a voice from the temple, and he remained confident that Josephus had indeed written the *Testimonium Flavianum*. It would have been too much to expect more critical views from even one of the most critically-minded medieval scholars. After all, Bacon was interested in such biblical Apocrypha as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, now believed to have been reworked by Christians, in part because they "touch on the articles of faith more explicitly than the canon of scripture" (*Op. Maius* 1.2.16), and he argued that the study of philosophy and mathematics was in complete accordance with Christianity because Josephus had said that the sons of Noah learned the whole of science, math and philosophy over the course of their six hundred year life span (*Op. Maius* 1.2.14; 4.4.16).

### Conclusion

As was the case in antiquity, there is no clear evidence that the authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum* was questioned in the Middle Ages. Apparently, many medieval Jewish scholars believed that the *Testimonium Flavianum* was a forgery. Yet this conviction was not based on a critical assessment of the works of Josephus; rather it was based on their *a priori* theological assumptions that a Jew would not have written favorably about Jesus, and the fact that the *Josippon*, a medieval Hebrew adaptation of Josephus' works, lacked a parallel to the *Testimonium*, an omission that was itself the result of such assumptions on the part of its Jewish author and copyists. There is some evidence that the famous twelfth century historian Otto of Freising entertained doubts about the authenticity of the exact wording of the *textus receptus Testimonium*, but such doubts, if doubts they were, were too subtly expressed to cause any contemporary controversy over the text.

On the whole, attitudes towards the works of Josephus were not very critical in this period. Perhaps the most important reason for this was the sporadic communication between scholars of the different contemporary linguistic and religious communities who used Josephus' works. Josephus' works were unusual for the late antique and medieval period in that they were able to appeal to scholars across so many religious and

linguistic borders. They were both translated literally and adapted loosely into Latin versions in the late antique West; in the medieval period, these Latin translations and adaptations were further adapted by a Jewish Hebrew writer, and later Hebrew adaptations of his work were translated into Arabic and Ethiopic for the use of both Muslims and Christians in the Middle East. Independent of this set of adaptations and translations, in the East a Syriac translation of the Greek *War* was made in late antiquity and an Old Russian adaptation of the same work was made in the medieval period. The Old Russian adaptation of *War* passed further into late medieval and early modern Serbian, Polish and Romanian texts. Yet despite the plethora of translations and adaptations based on Josephus' works in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, medieval scholars made very little of the sort of comparison among the various versions of these works, or of works that quoted them, which might have encouraged critical views about their accuracy or authenticity.

# NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> An overview of the manuscript tradition of the Latin *Antiquities* can be found in Franz Blatt, "The Latin Josephus," *Acta Jutlandica* 44 (1958) 9–116.
- <sup>2</sup> Josephus' views on the cause of Jerusalem's destruction were expropriated by Christians in this manner as early as Origen (*Cels.* 1.47). See also Heinz Schrekenberg, "The works of Josephus and the early Christian church," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, Wayne State University, 1987, 338–48.
- <sup>3</sup> Heinz Schrekenberg, *Rezeptionsgeschichtliche und textkritische Untersuchung zu Flavius Josephus*, Leiden, 1977, 184–85; *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter*, Leiden, 1972, 186–200, esp. 190, 199.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Et quidem haec omnia rectissime passi sunt, qui in filium dei manus sacrilegas extendere praesumpserunt, cum testimoniis scripturarum et virtute mirabilium operum ipsum Christum deum esse constaret. Unde Josephus [Testimonium quoted] (John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 2.9).
- <sup>6</sup> Iudaeos de adventu Christi non ignare, sed ad dampnationis augmentum invidia excaecatos credere nolle (Otto of Freising, *Chronicon* 3.10 apud MGH 20, 177).
- <sup>7</sup> Tanto igitur fortior est Christiana fides, quia non solum prophetarum oraculis, sed et Iudaeorum et ethnicorum, inimicorum Christi, veteribus historiis concorditer et irrefragabiliter firmata est (Peter of Blois, *Contra perfidia Iudaeorum* 24).
- <sup>8</sup> Non tamen veritati praejudicat, quia non credidit sed plus addidit testimonio...In quo Christi Jesu claruit aeterna potentia, quod eum etiam principes synagogae quem ad mortem comprehenderant deum fatebantur (Pseudo-Hegesippus, *De excidio Hierosolymitano* 2.12).
- <sup>9</sup> However, only a single incomplete manuscript of the Greek *Against Apion* has survived. The manuscript evidence thus suggests that *Against Apion* was more popular in the medieval West, where it was translated by Cassiodorus, than in the medieval East. Conversely, Josephus' *Vita* was unknown to the medieval West, and was first brought to the West from the East in the sixteenth century. The manuscript traditions of these two works is briefly discussed in H. St. John Thackeray, *Josephus: The Life; Against Apion*, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University, 1993 reprint, xviii.
- <sup>10</sup> Schrekenberg, *Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*, 13–47.

- 11 The provenance of this Old Russian adaptation of *Jewish War* is still unclear, other than the fact that it was based on some Greek text, either the original of *War* itself or an intermediary Byzantine adaptation of *War*. Controversy over the origins of this work played a role in the twentieth century debate over the authenticity of the Testimonium (Ch. 5 *infra*).
- 12 Among other important Greek Christian works that were transmitted to the modern world in a single independent manuscript one can mention additional works of Origen such as his *Commentary on John* and *De Oratio*, Hippolytus' *Contra Noetum* and *Refutatio*, and all of the extant works of Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria.
- 13 Some treatment of Byzantine scholarship and its limitations during the Macedonian and Paleologan revivals can be found in Warren Treadgold, *Renaissances before the Renaissance*, Stanford, 1984, 75–98; 144–172.
- 14 By D. Hoeschel at Augsburg according to H. Crouzel, *Controverse sur Origène à la Renaissance*, Paris, 1977, 43.
- 15 Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 100.
- 16 Crouzel, *Controverse*, 44.
- 17 This work was known in the East in a Greek translation made perhaps in the late fifth century by a certain “Sophronius,” who, instead of retranslating Jerome's Testimonium, used the textus receptus Testimonium taken either from Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* or Josephus' *Antiquities*. This Greek translation of *De Viris Illustribus* could not therefore raise doubts about the authenticity of the Testimonium in the East.
- 18 Frechulph of Lisieux, *Chron.* 2.2.5 cp. Jerome, *De Viris* 13.
- 19 Frechulph of Lisieux, *Chron.* 2.1.18 cp. Jerome, *De Viris* 2.
- 20 Charles Christopher Mierow, ed. *The Two Cities, a chronicle of universal history to the year 1146 AD by Otto, Bishop of Freising*, Columbia University, 1928, 3–4.
- 21 *Chronicon* 3.10 apud *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* 20, 176.
- 22 The Ekkehard Chronicle is believed to have been largely written by Frutolf of Michelsberg (d. 1103), on whom see Charles Christopher Mierow, *The Two Cities*, 25.
- 23 *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* 6, 97.

- 24 That Otto had more critical views of Josephus as a source than his contemporaries is also suggested by the fact that he avoids repeating the Ekkehard Chronicle's repetition of Eusebius' erroneous assertion in *Chronicon* that Josephus claimed a voice was heard in the Temple at the time of Christ's death (cp. MGH 6, 97. ln. 19 and MGH 20, 176).
- 25 Godfrey of Viterbo, *Pantheon* 21.4 (MGH 22, 152). Godfrey's dependence on Otto, or on some intermediary writer who used Otto, is shown by the similarity of the wording in the text that surrounds the quotation of the Testimonium (cp. MGH 22, 152 and MGH 20, 176).
- 26 For information about the history of the text I rely entirely on two articles by David Flusser, "Die lateinsche Josephus und hebräische Josippon," in *Josephus-Studien*, Göttingen, 1974, 122–32 and "Josippon: A medieval Hebrew version of Josephus," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, Wayne State University, 1987, 386–397.
- 27 Flusser claims that the author of *Josippon* I is aware of the fact that Josephus wrote a work called *Against Apion*, but that he does not actually quote or otherwise use it.
- 28 Walter J. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldun in Egypt*, University of California, Berkeley, 1967, 139–155.
- 29 For example, late antique Egyptians Isidore of Pelusium and Didymus of Alexandria both were familiar with Josephus' works.
- 30 Steven Bowman, "Josephus in Byzantium," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, Wayne State University, 1987, 376–77.
- 31 Eisler, *ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ*, 466–491, esp. 476.
- 32 In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, written about 160 AD, Justin Martyr alludes to such hostile traditions. The New Testament also alludes to such traditions. Although the persecution of Jews after the establishment of Christianity as Rome's official religion undoubtedly exacerbated a tradition of hostility to Jesus among some Jews outside the church, this early evidence shows that it cannot entirely account for its ultimate origin.
- 33 Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 1146–1223, Oxford University, 1982, 69–70.
- 34 Porro patet abhinc evidenter et manifeste quanta Judaeorum malitia et in propriam perniciem qui obstinata et indurata perfidia, quod etiam historici sui et historici magni, cujus librum Hebraice penes se scriptum habent et auctenticum reputant, solum de Christo testimonium non admittunt. Quinimmo, cum obijcitur eis hoc auctoris sui testimonium, dicunt et mentiuntur in libris suis Hebraicis istud nunquam



vel inventum fuisse vel appositum. Sed prior S. Frideswidae apud Oxoniam, M. Robertus, quem vidimus et qui vir erat antiquus et auctenticus, cujus etiam ultima tempora nostra occuparunt prima, cum esset vir litteratus et in scripturis eruditus et Hebraicae quoque linguae non ignarus, misit ad urbes Angliae diversas et oppida in quibus Judaei mansionem habebant, a quibus Iosephus plurimos Hebraice scriptos et precario concessos, quoniam magis eum familiarem propter linguam Hebraicam quam noverat habebant, simul collegit. In quorum duobus testimonium hoc de Christo consequenter et integre scriptum invenit, immo vero quasi nuper abrasum; in aliis autem omnibus ab antiquo substractum et quasi nunquam appositum (Gerald of Wales, *De instructione principum*, Bk 1.17).

- 35 On which see Beryl Smalley, *The study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, University of Notre Dame, 1964, 110–11.
- 36 On the knowledge of the Hebrew Bible among medieval Christian scholars see Beryl Smalley, *The study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 43–44; 77–82; 103–105; 149–72; 189–93; 350–66; 338–55. Hebrew was more commonly known in the Latin medieval world than Greek partly because Jews, unlike Greeks, lived throughout Western Christendom
- 37 Calling Bacon “the forerunner of modern science,” one scholar summarizes Bacon’s theory of science as “there is but one ultimate test of knowledge, experience, and but one way of organizing such knowledge into a science, namely, by showing its conformity to the laws of mathematics” (William R. Newbold, *The cipher of Roger Bacon*, University of Pennsylvania, 1–4).
- 38 Cum tota certificatio historiae sacrae sit a Iosepho in Antiquitatum libris, et omnes sancti expositionem suarum radices accipiant a libris illis, necesse est Latinis ut habeant illum librum incorruptum; sed probatum est quod codices Latini omnino sunt corrupti in omnibus locis, in quibus vis historiae consistit; ita ut textus ille sibi contradicat ubique, quod non est vitium tanti auctoris; igitur ex translatione mala hoc accidit et corruptione eius per Latinos. Nec est remedium nisi de novo transferantur vel ad singulos radices corrigantur (Bacon, *Opus Maius* 1.3.2).
- 39 Dicit ibidem quod in tempore suo apparuit Iesus Christus sanctissimus homo, si fas eum dicere hominem, de quo omnia impleta sunt quae prophetae nostri locuti sunt de eo, sicut ipse testatur (Bacon, *Opus Maius*, 7. 20).
- 40 Item ipse dicit quod, quando Dominus crucifixus fuit, audita est vox coelestium virtutem in Jerusalem: “relinquamus has sedes” (Bacon, *Opus Maius* 7.20).
- 41 Eusebius, *Chronicon* 2, Romanorum Consulum. That this misleading chronology was perpetrated by Eusebius rather than by Jerome is shown by the fact that the Armenian translation of *Chronicon* 2, like Jerome’s translation, puts the Pentecost

temple incident under the entry for Christ's crucifixion. However, Eusebius eventually corrected this mistake, for in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.8.1–6 the Pentecost incident is correctly located in a discussion of events just prior to the war with the Romans.

<sup>42</sup> Bacon, *Opus Maius* 7.20.



## Chapter 3

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### The Beginning of the Controversy

As we have seen from the preceding chapters, from the time of Eusebius through the medieval period no Christian, either in the West or in the East, is known to have questioned the authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum*. This was to change in the sixteenth century. In his very brief overview of the history of the *Testimonium Flavianum* controversy, Robert Eisler attributed the appearance of doubts about the *Testimonium*'s authenticity at this time to “das Erwachen der Kritik im Zeitalter des Humanismus.” By “Kritik” Eisler evidently meant “historical criticism.”<sup>1</sup> In connecting humanism with this sort of criticism Eisler is in line with an old historiographical tradition that links the intellectual movement known as the European Renaissance with the beginnings of modernity.<sup>2</sup> But as we shall see, although the first questioning of the *Testimonium* in the sixteenth century may have been prompted in part by a more critical attitude towards historical sources than was typical of an earlier age, this questioning did not really reflect more modern views of the text's author, Josephus, and its subject, Jesus of Nazareth, than were typical of an earlier age. Rather the sixteenth-century attack on the authenticity of the text was to a large extent the product of Christians' traditionally hostile assumptions about Jews.

#### **Renaissance Scholarship**

In one of the strongest statements ever made about the intellectual impact of the Renaissance, a period which he dates very broadly from about 1350 to 1700, Renaissance historian Peter Burke argued that Renaissance scholars had an understanding of the past that was much more authentic, and thus more modern, than that of medieval scholars. For Burke, the difference between Renaissance and medieval understanding of the past was conclusively demonstrated by the fact that it was far more common for the former than the latter to question the authenticity of historical sources. As he put it, “during the Renaissance, scholars became better able to tell good sources from bad ones. This increased awareness of evidence is shown most spectacularly in the cases of the exposure of certain documents as forgeries.”<sup>3</sup>

Burke outlined the early trajectory of such exposures of forgery. He credited Petrarch with being the first Renaissance humanist to use philological techniques towards this end, and he showed how Petrarch compared the language in Livy and Julius Caesar's authentic letters to that in a medieval charter attributed to Caesar to prove its spuriousness. According to Burke, the first real heir to Petrarch's critical philology was Lorenzo Valla, who launched a "systematic criticism"<sup>4</sup> of the authenticity of the Donation of Constantine, a text that has been called "the most famous forgery in European history."<sup>5</sup> Like Petrarch in his analysis of the charter forged in the name of Julius Caesar, Valla compared the language of the Donation unfavorably to that of classical Latin writers and declared the former too "barbarous" to have been written by Constantine. Valla also attacked the authenticity of a correspondence attributed to Saint Paul and Seneca, and the authenticity of the very influential works of Pseudo-Dionysius, which were written in the late antique period but attributed to the first century Dionysius the Areopagite (Acts 17:34). But perhaps most bold of all was his critical comparison of the Vulgate with Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.

According to Burke "there was no one like Valla in the later fifteenth century; but Erasmus, who...was an admirer of his, carried on from where his predecessor left off."<sup>6</sup> Erasmus followed Valla in attacking the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus and the purported correspondence between Saint Paul and Seneca. His most influential use of critical philology, a collation of the New Testament from Greek manuscripts and its translation into a Latin that was closer to the original than the Vulgate Latin, was likewise inspired by Valla's own writings comparing the Vulgate to the Greek New Testament.<sup>7</sup>

After Erasmus, the use of critical philology by sixteenth and seventeenth century scholars to expose suspected forgeries became fairly commonplace. It would seem plausible therefore to assume that the first scholars who challenged the authenticity of *Testimonium Flavianum* were motivated by the same sort of intellectual currents as those that animated these other sixteenth and seventeenth humanists in their exposure of forged texts.<sup>8</sup> This chapter will explore to what extent this was the case.

### **Josephus' Works in the Early Renaissance**

Except for the fact that there was no rediscovery of Josephus as there was a rediscovery of historians like Thucydides and Tacitus, the fate of Josephus' works in the early Renaissance paralleled that of other ancient works. The printing press made them available to a larger literate class than was possible in antiquity and the Middle Ages. The first printed editions of Josephus' works were of the old Latin translations made by Cassiodorus and an anonymous fourth century translator. According to Heinz Schreckenberg, the earliest printed edition of this Latin Josephus is dated 1470.

Humanist scholarly concern with original texts prompted an interest in the procurement of Greek manuscripts of Josephus' works. According to Renaissance scholar and Byzantinist Nigel Wilson, Gian Francesco Gonzaga wrote a letter in 1444 to Duke Guarino expressing an interest in obtaining Greek manuscripts of *Antiquities* and *War*.<sup>9</sup> If true, this fact would indicate that Josephus was among the very earliest Greek texts that Renaissance scholars actively sought to acquire from the imperiled Byzantine empire.

Two and a half centuries after Roger Bacon had urged fellow Latin Christians to obtain manuscripts of Josephus' works in their original language, and almost a millennium after Cassiodorus commissioned the first Latin translation of *Antiquities*, the Greek Josephus returned to the West. The complete extant works of Josephus in Greek, including his *Vita*, hitherto unknown outside the Byzantine empire, were first published by Arlenius in Basel in 1544. For the text of *Antiquities* and *War* Arlenius relied mainly upon Escorialensis gr. 307 (304), a manuscript copied as late as 1542 in Venice, where many recent Greek refugees had brought both their manuscripts and their copying skills.<sup>10</sup> It had been lent to Arlenius by Diego Hurtado Mendoza, Charles V's ambassador to Venice.<sup>11</sup>

In the sixteenth century a large number of translations of Josephus were made into European vernacular languages. According to Schreckenberg, the earliest vernacular translations, made from the Latin rather than from the Greek, were Catalan and Flemish versions of *Jewish War* appearing in 1482 in Barcelona and Gouda respectively. The impact of the translation of Josephus' works into multiple vernacular languages on the intellectual development of the early modern West has probably

been underestimated. One study has indicated that Josephus was the second most frequently published historian in vernacular languages during the period 1450–1700. Only translations of Tacitus' historical works into vernacular languages exceeded those of Josephus. In addition, neither Thucydides nor Herodotus nor any other Greek language historian was published as often during this period, in either Greek or in the vernacular.<sup>12</sup>

### **Renaissance Hebraists: Jewish and Christian**

Robert Eisler has suggested that the first doubts among Christian scholars about the authenticity of the Testimonium were prompted by the skepticism of contemporary European Jews. He cites the blunt observation of the famous Jewish Hebrew scholar Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508) on the Testimonium in his *Commentary on Daniel* published in 1512, which he has translated as reading “if Josephus had written this, we do not accept it from him, for he has written a great deal, but not all of it is true.” Abravanel's skepticism regarding the Testimonium was evidently encouraged by the absence of a parallel Testimonium in the *Josippon*, for like so many of his Jewish contemporaries, he seems to have assumed that the *Josippon* was a first-century text, a view that must have discredited his suspicions of the Testimonium among those who knew quite well that the *Josippon* was no such thing.

Nevertheless, it is doubtful that learned Jewish criticism of the Testimonium was anything new in the sixteenth century, for the account of Gerald of Wales (Ch. 2, *supra*) proves that European Jewish polemic against the Testimonium dated back at least to the High Middle Ages. What was new in the early sixteenth century, as scholars such as Jerome Friedman have shown, was a sudden explosion of serious Christian scholarly interest in Jewish Hebraica.<sup>13</sup> In the first half of the sixteenth century, it was no longer unusual to find Christian scholars who could read Hebrew, and both Abravanel's Biblical commentaries and the *Josippon* were particularly favored by these scholars.<sup>14</sup> As a consequence, the views of Abravanel and other Jewish scholars on the Testimonium could not be easily ignored by the Christians who participated in the early controversy over the text's authenticity.

The first stirrings of scholarly debate over the authenticity of the Testimonium seem to have appeared among philologists with intellectual contacts to Basel. This is probably not purely fortuitous. Sixteenth-century Basel was, as noted above, the site of the *editio princeps* of Josephus' works in Greek, and the first published Latin translations of the *Josippon*. These first translations of the *Josippon* were made by Sebastian Münster (1488–1553) and Sebastian Lepusculus (Haeslin, 1501–1576),<sup>15</sup> two scholars who partook in the flowering of scholarly Christian Hebraica in the first half of the sixteenth century. Their writings, as we shall see, may have been indirectly connected to the earliest expressions of doubt about the authenticity of the Testimonium among Christian scholars.

The first person usually credited with having argued in a definitive manner that the Testimonium was spurious was the humanist and legal scholar Hubert Giphanius (Van Giffen, 1534–1604). However, Giphanius does not seem to have left any record of his reasoning for rejecting the authenticity of the Testimonium in his published works, most of which are legal treatises and thus hardly a suitable forum for such views.<sup>16</sup> The only known reference to Giphanius' rejection of the Testimonium appears in a letter dated 24 February 1559 alleging to be from Sebastian Lepusculus, a professor of Greek and Hebrew at Basel's Collegium Sapientiae to Severinus Erzbergia, who was then dean of the Basel Academy. This letter, or rather an extract of this letter, was published in 1610 in *Philologicarum Epistolarum Centuria Una* by the Reformed legal scholar and philologist Melchior Goldast von Haiminsfeld (1578–1635).<sup>17</sup> The letter from which this extract was taken appeared as the preface of the Hebrew-Latin edition of the *Josippon* that Lepusculus himself had published at Basel in 1559.<sup>18</sup>

For our inquiry, the most significant fact about Lepusculus' letter is that the passage about Giphanius' rejection of the Testimonium, which appears in the extract of the letter published by Goldast, does *not* appear in Lepusculus' original letter itself, at least as it appears in the preface of his 1559 edition of the *Josippon*. The most obvious explanation for this intriguing fact is that Lepusculus never claimed that Giphanius challenged the authenticity of the Testimonium, and that Goldast inserted the passage about Giphanius into his own printed version of Lepusculus' letter. However, it is advisable to consider other possible



explanations for the discrepancy between Lepusculus' 1559 epistolary preface and Goldast's later published version of the same text. For example, another possible explanation for the absence of the passage about Giphanius from Lepusculus' preface might be that Lepusculus thought that Giphanius' skeptical view of the Testimonium was too controversial to be published, and that he censored the passage for publication in the preface to his edition of the *Josippon*. If this is true, we must assume that Goldast had access to the original version of Lepusculus' letter. However, several facts about Goldast and Giphanius are relevant to assessing the likelihood of this possibility.

The first fact is that Goldast had had personal contact with Giphanius before the publication of his *Philologicarum Epistolarum Centuria Una*, having studied law briefly with him at the University of Ingolstadt in 1594. He also had studied more extensively with a student of his, Conrad Rittershaus, at the University of Altdorf from 1595–97. In contrast, it is not clear that Giphanius had ever had any personal contact with Lepusculus. The second fact is that in February 1559, when Lepusculus' letter was written, Giphanius, who was born in 1534, could not have been more than twenty-five years old. It is questionable that Giphanius would have been so precocious as to have communicated his doubts about the Testimonium at such an early date to an older scholar like Lepusculus, who was at least fifty-eight years old in February 1559, especially since Giphanius did not complete his doctoral degree until 1567, and since his earliest published work, an edition of Lucretius, only dates from 1565 or 1566.<sup>19</sup>

The third and most damning fact against the idea that Goldast had access to an original draft of Lepusculus' letter with the reference to Giphanius is that Goldast was, as one recent scholar has put it, in the "habit of composing forged works, and attributing these to a variety of sources."<sup>20</sup> For example, Goldast was known to have published a speech in 1600, which he claimed had been made by a well-known contemporary, the humanist editor Justus Lipsius, but which was actually composed by Goldast himself.<sup>21</sup> Knowledge of this fact encourages the suspicion that Goldast himself probably composed the passage about Giphanius, either because he had actually heard Giphanius express the view that the Testimonium was spurious and wanted to give him credit for being an early critic of the text, or because he wanted to

foist his own skeptical views of the Testimonium onto the more famous Giphanius.

There are several more reasons for questioning whether Goldast had actually had access to Lepusculus' original letter to Severinus Erzbergia, or whether there ever was an original draft of the letter that stood behind the published preface of Lepusculus' 1559 edition of the *Josippon*. The first reason is that the Testimonium controversy was certainly more widely known in Goldast's day at the beginning of the seventeenth century than in 1559, when Lepusculus published his epistolary preface, if indeed the controversy was known in the time of Lepusculus at all. Another reason for skepticism is that Lepusculus' Latin reads more smoothly without the passage about Giphanius, as readers can judge for themselves from the following extract and translation in which I have placed brackets around the disputed passage.

Regarding the *Josippon*, already translated into Latin thanks to Sebastian Münster, you should know that this book is composed of various writers, but chiefly of Josephus. from whom he differs not even by a nail's breadth...Sometimes he is more lengthy than Josephus, while other times, as befits one making an epitome of a good writer, he is briefer; sometimes he includes things Josephus lacks; other times he omits the things Josephus has...Because this *Josippon* of ours is an epitomizer of Josephus, as is said, he has omitted that very ample testimony to our Savior paid by the latter; whether this omission was due to the perfidy of some Jews after the advent of Christ, a perfidy which can be detected in other passages as well, I am unable to say and I leave this for others to decide. But I will write below those things about our Lord found in Josephus first in Greek and then Latin. (Quotation of the Testimonium in Greek and Latin). Thus Josephus from Book 18, chapter 6 of *De Bello Judaico* (sic).<sup>22</sup> [H.Giphanius, most distinguished in all fields including the study of antiquity, considered this passage to be spurious and interpolated by some church Father, as if he had wished it to have been made by both Jews and Christians. But if we were to criticize ancient writers in this way, is there anything that we cannot call into doubt? And it is too great a temerity to set against all those ancient books] him whom the Jews most esteem. For he who said these things in Greek was a Jew, a strict emulator of his paternal traditions; he would not have understood so well those things about Christ nor those things which were pronounced about the Messiah through the prophets, nor would he have retained those things that he said about him in good faith if he had not perceived correctly. For this reason, there is no doubt that he who wrote these things about him in Greek also wrote many other things explicating the law and prophets in Hebrew, since he himself

expressed himself well in each language and was initiated into sacred literature from the cradle. For which reason I believe that it is reasonable that others besides him at that time existed who understood correctly about our Lord, explaining that the prophets wrote about him.

Porro quod ad Iosippum attinet, iam Latine loquentem beneficio Sebastiani Munsteri, scias velim eum libellum ex variis scriptoribus, sed potissimum ex Iosepho, esse concinnatum, a quo ne latum quidem ungem discrepat. Non nunquam susior est quam Iosephus, & rursus alicubi, ut eos decet, qui bonorum autorum epitomas conscribunt, contractior. Quandoque habet, quae ille habet... Porro quum hic Iosippus noster abbreviator Iosephi sit, ut dictum est, quod illud amplissimum testimonium, quod hic Servatori nostro tribuit, ille omiserit: an ex perfidia Iudaeorum post Christi adventum factum sit, quae & in aliis locis deprehenditur, scire nequeo. Id itaque in medio relinquo, & subiiciam, quae in Iosepho primum Graeco, deinde & Latino de Domino Iesu habentur. (Testimonium quotation). Hactenus Iosephus lib. 18. capit. 6 de Bello Iudaico, [Hubertus Giphanius I C. omnium disciplinarum & antiquitatis studio ornatissimus, existimavit hunc locum esse spurium & a Christiano quopiam Patre, qui Iudaeis simul & Christianis factum vellit, interpositum. Sed hoc pacto si censere veteres scriptores volumus, ecquid tandem erit, quod non in dubium vocare possimus? Et nimis est temerarium contra omnes libros veteres stare] quem Iudaei maximum putant. Hic igitur, qui etsi Graece haec scripserit, Iudaeus tamen fuit, paternarumque traditionum acerrimus aemulator, nisi ea, quae per Prophetas illi de Messia praenunciata fuerant, recte intellexisset, neque ea, quae de ipso dixerunt, adeo bona fide retulisset. Quare neque dubium est, qui haec de eo Graece scripserit, quin alia quoque longe plura. Legem & Prophetas exponens Hebraice scripserit, quum ipse utranque linguam optime calluerit & sacris literis ab ipsis incunabulis initiatus fuerit. Unde credi quoque par est, alios etiam plurimos praeter eum iisdem temporibus extitisse, qui & de Domino Iesu Christo recte senserint, & Prophetarum vaticinia explanantes vera de eo scripserint.

If the text without the passage about Giphanius is assumed to be Lepusculus' original composition, then in the sentence "hactenus Iosephus, quem Iudaei vel maximum putant" the pronoun "quem" clearly refers to Iosephus. If, on the other hand, Goldast's version of the text is correct, then it is considerably less clear to whom, whether Iosephus or Giphanius, or to what other antecedent the accusative masculine pronoun "quem" refers.<sup>23</sup>

There is one more piece of evidence that the passage about Giphanius in Goldast's version of the letter was composed by Goldast rather than Lepusculus. A simple comparison of texts reveals that part of

Lepusculus' preface was plagiarized from the treatise entitled *Opus totius christianae Reipublicae maxime utile, de arcanis catholicae veritatis...contra obstinatum Iudaeorum perfidiam*, written by Petrus Galatinus (Galatino, ca. 1480–1539). This treatise, which was first published in 1518, defended Christian scholars who, like Lepusculus, studied Hebrew texts.<sup>24</sup> Most significantly, the passage from Goldast follows Galatinus' work precisely if the dubious remark about Giphanius, assumed to have been added by Goldast, is omitted. This is clear from the following comparison, where the remark in question is placed in square brackets:

(Testimonium is quoted). Haec Iosephus ille, quem Iudaei vel maximum putant. Hi igitur viri tam excellentes, Philo & Iosephus, qui & si graece scripserint, Iudaei tamen ambo fuerunt: paternumque traditionum acerrimi emulatores, nisi ea quae per prophetas de Messia praenunciata fuerant, recte intellesissent, neque de Christo tam bene opinati fuissent, neque quae de ipso dixerunt, tam veridice retulissent. Quare neque dubium est, qui si haec de eo graece scripserint, alia quoque longe plura, legem & prophetas exponentes, hebraice scripserint. Cum ambo & ultramque linguam optime calluerint, & sacris literis ab ipsis cunabulis initiati fuerint. Unde & credi quoque par est, alios praeter eos, eisdem temporibus permultos extitisse, qui & de Domino Iesu Christo recte senserint, & prophetarum vaticinia explanantes, vera de eo scripserint. (Galatinus, *Opus toti ...*Bk. 1.5)

(Testimonium is quoted). Hactenus Iosephus lib. 18. cap. 6 de bello Iudaico [Huberto Giphanius...existimavit hunc locum esse spurium...Sed hoc pacto si censere veteres scriptores volumus...quod non in dubium vocare possumus? Et nimis est temerarium contra omnes libros veteres stare] quem Iudaei maximum putant. Hic igitur, qui etsi Graece haec scripserit, Iudaeus tamen fuit, paternumque traditionum acerrimus aemulator, nisi ea, quae per Prophetas illi de Messia praenunciata fuerant, recte intellexisset, neque ea, quae de ipso dixerunt, adeo bona fide retulisset. Quare neque dubium est, qui haec de eo Graece scripserit, quin alia quoque longe plura. Legem & Prophetas exponens Hebraice scripserit, quum ipse utranque linguam optime calluerit & sacris literis ab ipsis incunabulis initiatus fuerit. Unde credi quoque par est, alios etiam plurimos, praeter eum, iisdem temporibus extitisse, qui & de Domino Iesu Christo recte senserint, & Prophetarum vaticinia explanantes vera de eo scripserint.

Lepusculus' preface tells us several things about the state of Josephus scholarship and the Testimonium controversy in the mid-sixteenth

century. First, if the passage about Giphanius is indeed spurious, then there is no clear indication from this preface that there were indeed doubts about the authenticity of the Testimonium when it was published in 1559, outside the largely Jewish circle who assumed that the *Josippon* was written by Josephus. On the other hand, the fact that Lepusculus feels he must account for the absence of a parallel Testimonium in the *Josippon* to Erzbergia might suggest that the latter, and presumably other Christians as well, were taking Jewish argument that the passage was spurious more seriously than in the High Middle Ages when Gerald of Wales encountered the same sort of Jewish arguments. Second, it should be noted that Lepusculus' letter does not refer to any textual evidence when dealing with the question of the Testimonium's absence in the *Josippon*, other than his suggestion that the *Josippon*, being much briefer than Josephus' works, could have omitted the Testimonium for the sake of brevity. Apparently no one treating the question of the Testimonium's absence in the *Josippon* in the mid-sixteenth century was appealing to such textual evidence as the Testimonium's citation in the works of Origen or other early secondary sources. This lack of textual evidence against the Testimonium may partly explain Lepusculus' unwillingness to consider seriously the possibility that the text was spurious.

Instead of basing his argumentation on textual evidence, Lepusculus' reasoning for the absence of a Testimonium in the *Josippon* is largely *a priori*. Lepusculus suggests that Jews after the time of Josephus were responsible for omitting the Testimonium because of their "perfidy" or, more literally, lack of faith. There is nothing remarkable about this sort of argument. Gerald of Wales had also referred to "Judaeorum malitia...et indurata perfidia" when he was confronted with the absence of a parallel Testimonium in some copies of the *Josippon*. What is remarkable is that Lepusculus repeats, perhaps mindlessly, Galatinus' argument that not only Josephus but many other educated Jews of the first century besides Josephus must have had the same sort of favorable views of Jesus as those expressed in the Testimonium. This sort of argument is exceptional for the early modern period. As we shall see, the Christians and Jews who participated in the early modern controversy over the Testimonium Flavianum almost universally assumed that all first-century Jews outside the church were hostile to Jesus.

Lepusculus' and Galatinus' reasoning on this point is in some respects naive as well as exceptional. They both seem to imply that simply because Josephus was well-educated both in Greek and in the Jewish scriptures, that he would naturally write favorably about Jesus; that some Jews educated in Greek and their own scriptures also could have had negative opinions about Jesus, as indeed the New Testament suggests, seems to have eluded Lepusculus and Galatinus. This assumption may well reflect early Christian humanists' confidence in the power both of Greek and Hebrew education to support Christianity rather than undermine it.

From his preface we also learn that Lepusculus' views of the *Josippon* were more critical than his attitude towards Josephus' works: he certainly is aware that the *Josippon* was written by a later writer who used Josephus, and that it therefore not does contain historical information about Jesus. On this point Lepusculus was a more careful scholar than his fellow Hebraist, Sebastian Münster, whose Latin translation of the *Josippon* Lepusculus used for his own bilingual edition of the same work.<sup>25</sup> A devout Protestant interested in converting Jews to Christianity, Münster was the most prolific Christian Hebraist of the first half of the sixteenth century, and, as such, he had necessarily read many Jewish Hebrew commentaries.<sup>26</sup> It was probably due to their influence that Münster assumed that the *Josippon* was actually written by Josephus himself in Hebrew for a Jewish readership.<sup>27</sup> This intellectual blunder was lambasted by more careful scholars like Joseph Scaliger.<sup>28</sup>

Because he believed that the *Josippon* was written by Josephus for the benefit of Jews while the actual works of Josephus were written for the benefit of Gentiles, Münster saw the absence of a parallel to the Testimonium in most versions of the *Josippon* as significant. In one of the footnotes to his 1541 translation of the *Josippon* he wrote, "it is uncertain whether Jews erased from the Hebrew that magnificent praise that Josephus pays to our Savior Jesus Christ in book 18 chapter 6 of *Antiquities*, or whether the latter author himself omitted it in his published works, lest he seem to mock his fellow (Jews)."<sup>29</sup> This footnote of Münster, like the epistolary preface of Lepusculus, suggests that the first doubts about the Testimonium's authenticity were raised because scholars like him gave more credence to the omission of Testimonium in the *Josippon* than had Christian scholars of the past.

Perhaps the absence of a parallel in the *Josippon* was taken more seriously in Münster's day because there were other scholars besides Münster who mistook the *Josippon* for a work that might have historical information about first century Jewish attitudes towards Jesus. Or perhaps it was viewed more seriously than in the past because the *Josippon*'s reflection of Jewish "perfidy" in omitting the Testimonium raised a question among scholars as to why the Jewish Josephus was so immune to the characteristic "perfidy" of his people.

### ***The Magdeburger Centurien***

Before examining the views of later sixteenth century writers on the Testimonium Flavianum controversy, I shall now discuss the *Magdeburger Centurien*, because this work so profoundly influenced two of the late sixteenth century church historians who addressed the question of the Testimonium's authenticity, Lucas Osiander and Cardinal Baronius. Published in Basel between 1559 and 1574 under the direction of Istrian native Matthias Flacius Illyricus, this serial history was the earliest attempt at a comprehensive version of church history, organized century by century, entirely from a Protestant point of view.<sup>30</sup> Thus the *Centurien* could be classified as the first Protestant "counter history," a genre that has been defined as "the systematic exploitation of the adversary's most trusted sources against their overt intent."<sup>31</sup>

The great classical historian Arnaldo Momigliano has argued that the *Magdeburger Centurien* was the first universal church history written since the sixth century, and he attributed the rather sudden revival of this important genre to the Protestant Reformers' polemical interest in proving that they had the authority of the early Church on their side.<sup>32</sup> But the *Magdeburger Centurien* was not only the intellectual product of Reformation polemics, but of Renaissance humanism as well. For among the crucial works rescued by humanists from the expiring Byzantine empire and the monasteries of southern Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were numerous Greek Christian works which, because they had never been translated into Latin or any Western vernacular language, had been inaccessible to Western Christendom in that supposed age of Christian identity, the Middle Ages. The role that these "new" Christian works played in changing late medieval understanding of Christianity has unfortunately

still not been adequately studied by historians of the Renaissance and the Reformation.<sup>33</sup> Renaissance historians have written mainly about the revolutionary impact of the humanist study of pagan Greek and Roman writings as historical texts in their own right rather than as philosophical tools and ornaments used to buttress and adorn medieval Christian theology.<sup>34</sup> And while Reformation historians have shown how the recovery of the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible undermined the heavy investment that scholastic theology had put into the specific wording of the Vulgate translation of the Bible,<sup>35</sup> there has been more neglect of the similar role of those non-Biblical Christian texts that were made available to the West only with the Renaissance.

The most famous example of how these new Christian texts were used by the authors of the *Magdeburger Centurien* as ammunition against Roman Catholic authority was the rejection of the authenticity of the so-called False Decretals, which are Latin letters attributed to popes ranging from the first to sixth centuries. Modern scholars are agreed that these letters were in fact composed in the Carolingian era.<sup>36</sup> Like the earlier humanists Petrarch and Valla, for whom rhetorical style was the key to rejecting the authenticity of various documents, the Centuriators argued that the language of the decretals attributed to the early pope Anacletus was too "barbarous" compared to the language of Pliny, Suetonius, and Tacitus to have been written by that first century Roman bishop.<sup>37</sup> But they went beyond this sort of philological technique when they also drew on the evidence of some of the early Greek Christian texts known to the West only since the Renaissance. For example, they contrasted the elaborate baptismal rites described in a decretal attributed to Anacletus with the simple baptismal rites described in one of the second-century apologies of Justin Martyr, arguing that the author of the False Decretals had anachronistically projected back more elaborate medieval rites onto the first Christian centuries.<sup>38</sup> Considering how novel it was for Western Christians to have whole texts by such authors as Justin Martyr, both the *Magdeburger Centurien* and the Counter-Reformation counter histories that the work inspired have been under appreciated as impressive albeit highly partisan first attempts to mine and synthesize such new Greek Christian sources for new comprehensive church histories.



### Cardinal Baronius

The first published work that clearly alludes to allegations against the authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum* seems to be the famous *Annales Ecclesiastici* by Caesar Baronius (Cesare Baronio, 1538–1607). First published at the Vatican and Vallicella between 1588 and 1607, this historical series has been called “the first comprehensive history of the Church in modern times.” Compiled by a powerful cardinal considered in his own day to be “perhaps the most influential churchman after the pope,”<sup>39</sup> the *Annales Ecclesiastici* were the first comprehensive refutation of the *Magdeburger Centurien*. In the extremely polarized religious atmosphere of the sixteenth century, the Protestant *Centurien* had naturally caused great consternation among Roman Catholics. As might be expected, Baronius’ counter blast to the Centuriators’ revisionist view of church history was enormously popular among Roman Catholics. More surprising was the great popularity of his fiercely pro-Catholic *Annales* among Slavic Orthodox Christians as well, who gained access to it through a Polish translation made in 1603–07. Remarkably, during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the *Annales* were among the most widely read works in Russia.<sup>40</sup>

It has already been pointed out that one of the novel aspects of the *Magdeburger Centurien* was its use of new Greek Christian texts first made known to the West with the Renaissance. So effective was the Centuriators’ strategy of using these new Christian texts that Baronius was compelled to cull the same class of works for his counterattack. In contrast, Baronius’ use of Josephus in the first volume of *Annales* was not particularly new, since Josephus had already been a favorite author for church histories in the medieval and ancient period. What was new was the climate of the sixteenth century in which ancient texts, including even Biblical texts, were being compared more critically and intensively than in the Middle Ages. Clearly there must have been some new doubts about some of the discordant details between the New Testament and Josephus, for we find Baronius berating Josephus for such things as his “deliria” in regard to the date of the Quirinius census.<sup>41</sup> The cardinal, no doubt like many other sixteenth century Christians, was not prepared to admit that Saint Luke had not been terribly precise about the circumstances and timing of Christ’s birth. Nevertheless, scholars have exaggerated when they characterize Baronius’ attitudes towards

Josephus as hostile.<sup>42</sup> On the whole, Baronius is highly appreciative of Josephus, as shown by the fact that the latter is the most commonly cited non-Biblical author in the first volume of *Annales*.

In his own day, Baronius' criticism of Josephus' chronology earned him the opprobrium of the humanist scholars Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609) and Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614), who, as Protestants, already had their own reasons for a remorseless treatment of the flaws of the *Annales*. Both Scaliger and Casaubon privileged the chronology of Josephus over Christian writers, and offered intellectual solutions to the problem of the Quirinius census more sophisticated than the argument that Josephus was simply guilty of "deliria." Casaubon reproached Baronius with undervaluing the work of Josephus, since as he put it, "if the providence of God had not preserved them up until our times, what great darkness would we be in about Jewish history,"<sup>43</sup> a remark that is characteristic of that mixture of religious piety and scholarly concern that was still possible in the world of Renaissance humanism.

In the well-worn tradition of church historians before him, Baronius did not pass over Josephus' short notice about Jesus in silence. In the first volume of the *Annales*, under Annus Christi 34, Baronius noted, "after the holy evangelists there is also Josephus the Jew, who fifty years later detailed the affairs of the Jews in the Greek language, and even added something about the affairs of Christ, touching upon them in these few words." After quoting the Testimonium from the Latin *Antiquitates* Baronius adds:

these words by Josephus, whose testimony, written long ago, is found to be erased in a very old codex belonging to Jews in Rome in which his history was translated from Greek into Hebrew (oh, the impudence of the faithless!) And no defense can be brought to excuse the crime since the manuscript itself clearly proclaims the deed, and one may find this testimony of Josephus about Christ in the works of Eusebius and many others.<sup>44</sup>

The old manuscript of a Hebrew translation of Josephus lacking the Testimonium to which Baronius refers almost certainly was actually a copy of the *Josippon* rather than a Hebrew translation of Josephus. The fact that he calls it a translation of Josephus' works clearly reveals that Baronius was not well acquainted with the actual content of the *Josippon*. Naturally, critics such as Casaubon did not hesitate to point

out that Baronius must have either dissembled about having seen such a Hebrew manuscript, or committed the intellectual error of mistaking a copy of the *Josippon* for a translation of Josephus.

Baronius' reference to the Testimonium's absence in the *Josippon* and his argument that the Testimonium can be found in the work of Eusebius and others indicates that he was aware of some sort of contemporary challenge to the authenticity of the Testimonium based on the fact that a parallel to the text is missing in most copies of the *Josippon*. Unlike the unclear cases of Lepusculus' and Münster's writings, it is much more clear from Baronius' *Annales* that doubts about the Testimonium's authenticity were connected to its absence in the *Josippon*. Thus the earliest clear evidence indicates that the first questions about the authenticity of the Testimonium were prompted, ironically, by the definitely inauthentic *Josippon*. Against Robert Eisler's argument that the earliest attack on the Testimonium was prompted by "das Erwachen der Kritik im Zeitalter des Humanismus" it can be pointed out that it is not exactly a case of historical criticism to impugn the authenticity of that Testimonium by using a work whose own worth for authentic information on Jesus Christ is unquestionably nil.<sup>45</sup>

Baronius' comment in the first volume of the *Annales* was not the last word that he was to have on the Testimonium. In the second volume of the *Annales*, we find under Annus Christi 96 a notice about the death of Josephus, a quotation about the completion of *Antiquities* in the thirteenth year of Domitian's reign, and the following remark.

This work was completed at Rome, as he testifies in his Vita, when he saw the churches of Christ happily being spread, flourishing more and more day by day in the world, and especially in Rome, among nobles, and it is said, even the relatives of the emperor; although the latter himself was not a Christian. Nevertheless, lest in this just complaint of scholarly historians he could be forced to leave this obvious phenomenon veiled in silence, he included that praise of Christ in his writings which I mentioned earlier. When he saw the affairs of the Jews completely collapsing and the death of Vespasian, whom he flattered by pronouncing him emperor from the holy oracles that were actually pronounced about Christ, it already seemed that he could have missed the time of the advent of the Messiah; acting the part of a more prudent than pious man, he brought forth that testimony about Jesus, who was held to be Christ both by many Jews and Gentiles, concerning which it is certainly sufficient to note only that in the time of Saint Jerome, its reading was different from that which appears at present, for the Latin version reads 'hic erat Christus' while Saint

Jerome rendered from the Greek 'et credebatur esse Christus.' This latter reading I approve of more, as according with the zeal and faith of its author, who, since he showed himself to be Jewish and not Christian in everything, although in other things as in this opinion of Christ he writes, forced by divine power, to pronounce the truth.<sup>46</sup>

A comparison of the two passages about the Testimonium in volume one and volume two of *Annales* indicates that between the time that the former was published in 1588 and the latter was published in 1590, Baronius must have been exposed to some sort of challenge to the authenticity of the Testimonium, either for the first time or in a form more rigorous than that which he seemed to be addressing in his first volume. In the first volume, criticism of the Testimonium seems to have been prompted by the question of its absence in the *Josippon*, and Baronius is content to claim that Jews must have erased it. In the second volume, Baronius has obviously been prompted to examine the extant Latin variants of the Testimonium. In his willingness to argue that Jerome's version of the Testimonium, which reads that Jesus was believed to be the Christ rather than that he was the Christ, must have reflected Josephus' original wording, Baronius proves himself to be a shrewd practitioner of the philological skills that early humanists like Petrarch and Valla had used to examine other ancient texts.<sup>47</sup> Many scholars after him would continue to make the same argument.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, by suggesting that Josephus wrote the Testimonium because he saw that history was on the side of the Christian church and that he did not want to omit what was in retrospect starting to look like a crucial event of recent Jewish history, namely the advent of the Christians' Messiah, Baronius proves to be an adept apologist as well as philologist. For Baronius, Josephus himself need not have accepted Jesus as the Messiah, he need only have seen the importance of explaining why so many did accept him as such.<sup>49</sup> Thus Robert Eisler's view that it was mainly philologists who questioned the authenticity of the Testimonium and apologetic theologians who defended it appears to be too simple.<sup>50</sup> Defenders of the authenticity of the Testimonium like Baronius did not neglect to consider philological data, and, as we shall see in the case of Lucas Osiander, critics of the authenticity of the Testimonium were not necessarily free from apologetical concerns either.

### Cardinal Robert Bellarmine

The writings of Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) further prove that the first questioning of the authenticity of the Testimonium in the sixteenth century was related to the absence of a parallel passage in most copies of the *Josippon*. Bellarmine is best remembered for his role in conducting the trial of Galileo. His career was closely entwined with that of Baronius. Although four years younger than Baronius, Bellarmine was one of the few Roman Catholic intellectuals who attempted a counter blast to the Protestant *Magdeburger Centurien* before Baronius undertook the publication of his *Annales Ecclesiastici*. The first volume of Bellarmine's *De controversiis fidei Christianae* was published in 1586, two years before the publication of the first volume of the *Annales*; indeed, the former was one of the most important sources of inspiration for the latter. In contrast to both the *Magdeburger Centurien* and the *Annales*, which are works of history arranged chronologically century by century, *De fidei* was a topical treatment of the contemporary doctrinal and practical points of contention between Roman Catholics and Protestants.<sup>51</sup>

By the 1590s, Bellarmine not only exerted a scholarly influence on Baronius but was his close friend as well.<sup>52</sup> This presumably explains why he approached the question of the Testimonium's authenticity in his *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, a work that was chiefly devoted to treating the authenticity of Christian writings,<sup>53</sup> in a manner reminiscent of the views found in the first volume of Baronius' *Annales*. Bellarmine divided the work into two parts, the first part treating the writings of the Old Testament and the second part treating the writings of the New Testament.<sup>54</sup> It was among these Old Testament writings that Bellarmine classed the works of Josephus and Philo. Bellarmine's concern with the authenticity of religious writings was a product of both the Renaissance and the Reformation. For, as we have already observed, both movements were vitally concerned with the discovery and publication of new or long-neglected Latin, Greek and Hebrew sources, and this rediscovery and reexamination of new sources had made questions of authenticity particularly acute for scholars of such ancient sources.

The similarity of the views of Bellarmine and Baronius regarding the Testimonium clearly confirms what had already been suggested by the writings of Lepusculus and Münster: that the authenticity of the

Testimonium was indeed first challenged primarily because of the absence of a parallel Testimonium in the *Josippon*. Whether it was originally Bellarmine's views on the problem that influenced Baronius in the first volume of the *Annales*, or whether it was Baronius who influenced Bellarmine can probably not be determined. *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* was only first published in 1613, over two decades after the question of the Testimonium had been treated in Baronius' first volume of the *Annales*, although Bellarmine claimed in the preface of *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* that he had been working on his book for forty years. In the autograph manuscript of his original plan for *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, Bellarmine does not include Josephus at all, although he does include Philo among the writers of the New Testament in contrast to the final version of the work where he places Philo among the writers of the Old Testament.<sup>55</sup> Thus it is not clear whether Bellarmine had indeed addressed the issue of the Testimonium much earlier in his intellectual career than the publication of *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* in 1613.

Here is what Bellarmine writes about the Testimonium in the chapter of *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* that is devoted to Josephus:

In the 18th book and 4th chapter of Antiquitatum, he marvelously renders to Christ a testimony, affirming that he was more than a man and truly the Christ, great in deed, and most truthful in word, and that he was killed by Pilate, but that he rose on the third day. Eusebius mentions this testimony in the first book of his Hist. Eccl. in the 11th chapter, and Saint Jerome mentions it in the chapter about Josephus in his Lib. Script. Eccles. As for the fact that the Hebrews say that that testimony to Christ is not found in their books, and thus that it seems to be interpolated by Christians, it is easy to respond. For the Hebrews do not have Josephus, the son of Matthias, who wrote Libros Antiquitatum in Greek, of whom we are speaking, but rather they have Josephus the son of Gorion, who wrote something similar in Hebrew: for which reason it is not surprising that the Jews do not have this testimony in their Josephus, while we have in ours what is not an interpolated but rather a true and genuine testimony of Josephus. It is certain that Saint Jerome and Eusebius were extremely learned men, and had read almost all the books of ancient writers, and that they never would have brought forth this testimony concerning Christ unless they truly knew that it had been thus written by that author...I omit the books of the rabbis, which are numerous, since they are full of the fables of the Jews, and pernicious errors; nor do I judge to be true what Jo. Garetius and some others write, that some rabbis whose works are now extant

wrote before the advent of Christ: for I see that they constantly refer to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by Titus, the son of Vespasian.<sup>56</sup>

The final comment of Bellarmine about rabbinical writings is certainly striking, but its context is difficult to understand. It is unclear whether it was intended to be connected specifically to the question of the authenticity of the Testimonium, or whether it was intended to respond to more general questions about the discrepancies between the works of Josephus and their relation to rabbinical writings; possibly Bellarmine is alluding to some current question about why Josephus wrote positively about Jesus but the rabbis did not. Most likely, however, the remark about rabbinical writings has nothing to do with Josephus, but rather was wrongly included under the topic heading "Josephus" rather than under a separate heading on rabbinical writers by the editor of Bellarmine's work.<sup>57</sup>

### Lucas Osiander

The first published scholarly work known to have argued that the Testimonium was definitely spurious was the earliest edition of Lucas Osiander's church history. This edition, entitled *Epitomes historiae ecclesiasticae centuria* I. II. III, was published in Tübingen in 1592. As its title implies, it was a church history covering the first three centuries of the Christian era. Its author, Lucas Osiander (Heiligmann, 1534–1604) was the son of Andreas Osiander, a prominent leader of the early Lutheran Reformation in Nuremberg and a prolific Protestant apologist.<sup>58</sup> The *Epitomes* were an attempt to provide readers with a brief church history that summarized the main points of the highly apologetical Protestant *Magdeburger Centurien* in a more succinct and thus more convenient form. As Osiander explains in his preface, "since this extremely useful work comprehends many volumes, many of those eager to study things theological are deterred from buying it by its great expense, and since many great men of power who are impeded by their many important affairs have requested that a less lengthy work be produced, I began to think that everything in that copious *Magdeburger Historia Ecclesiastica* could be reduced into epitome form in such a way that nothing of real knowledge need be omitted."<sup>59</sup>

Osiander lauded the authors of the *Magdeburger Centurien* in his preface as "viri doctissimi" and "auctores illius praeclari Operis," but he

did not follow their scholarly views slavishly. Although he praised them in his preface for distinguishing “supposititia scripta a genuinis erudite,” in the body of his work Osiander did not hesitate to point out that they themselves had been much too credulous about certain sources. From his preface, we learn that Osiander was troubled by the fact that church histories were so often based on “multa incerta, vel ex fama antiquitatis, vel ex scriptis non authenticis.” He blasts the credulity of the fourteenth century Byzantine church historian Nicephorus Callistus, who was extensively used by the authors of the *Magdeburger Centurien*, and notes that some of the writings employed in church histories are outright forgeries, fabricated by clever men, among which are “the letters falsely ascribed to the popes, and other dust (farinae) of this nature.” As an exemplary Protestant intellectual, Osiander followed the Centuriators in their rejection of the authenticity of the so-called False Decretals, letters misattributed to early popes that were much used in Roman Catholic canon law; his attitude towards some of the other extant sources of Christian history as well, including the works of Josephus, was no less scathing.

Indeed, it cannot be said that Osiander took Josephus’ works very seriously as sources relevant to the New Testament since he rarely used them for his history of the first-century church. The minor difference between Acts 21:38 and *Jewish War* 2.261–263 regarding the number of the Egyptian false prophet’s followers even prompted Osiander to remark, “This (discrepancy) should be noted, lest those eager to study things theological put too much credence in Josephus. If his history is compared with holy Scripture, it becomes clear that he sometimes changes the chronological order of events, and sometimes recounts things incorrectly; sometimes even events from his own time he recounts differently in his *Antiquities* from the way that he had recounted them in his *War*.”<sup>60</sup> Osiander’s coolness towards Josephus stands in great contrast to the attitude of earlier church historians, including Cardinal Baronius, many of whom had overread into Josephus too much of the New Testament. This practice had started in antiquity and had led to such errors as Eusebius’ chronological displacement in his *Chronicon* of Josephus’ account of the voice in the temple to the time of Christ’s crucifixion. This coolness towards many of the sources of early Christian history in general and towards Josephus in particular is well



illustrated by Osiander's curt dismissal of the *Testimonium Flavianum*: "*Testimonium vero Iosephi de Christo ego omnino supposititum esse credo, & ab aliquo sciolo ipsius libris insertum*" (Cent. 1. Lib 2. Cap.17).

Now the authors of the *Magdeburger Centurien* had approvingly placed the *Testimonium Flavianum* second in a list of extra-Biblical "*testimonia Christi*," that is extra-Biblical sources alleged to contain historical information about Christ.<sup>61</sup> In contrast, Osiander himself rejected all of these extra-Biblical sources as worthless for historical information about Jesus. The first in the Centuriators' list of sources was the spurious correspondence between Jesus and the first century King Abgar of Edessa, a Syriac Christian forgery first made famous when Eusebius included it in his church history (*Hist. Eccl.*1.13.6–11). The third on their list of sources was an alleged letter sent from Pilate to the Emperor Tiberius asserting Christ's innocence, a second century Christian forgery that is first known to have been mentioned and exploited by Tertullian in *Apologeticus* 5.2. The fourth on the list of sources was another spurious letter alleging to have been sent from senator Lentulus to the Emperor Tiberius. This forgery had apparently been added as a scholion to some manuscripts of Eutropius' *Breviarium historiae Romanae* sometime before the twelfth century.<sup>62</sup> The authors of the *Magdeburger Centurien* had even attributed it to Eutropius, a fact that well illustrates why Osiander was so critical of their credulity towards the sources of early Christian history. The last on the list of "*testimonia Christi*" was a physical description of Christ and Mary recounted by Nicephorus Callistus.<sup>63</sup>

Osiander's comparison of the *Testimonium*, which is attributed to a Palestinian Jew whose writings clearly date to the first century, with passages from a late Byzantine church history and letters masquerading either as official documents from the reign of Tiberius or as the product of Jesus' own pen, all of them unattested before Tertullian, well illustrates the overly skeptical and rather arbitrary nature of Osiander's views on the *Testimonium*. Osiander even refers to the *Testimonium*, as he does the spurious letter of Pilate, as "*farinae*"—the very word he uses in his preface to describe the hated False Decretals of Roman Catholic canon law. This is no small insult coming from a member of Europe's second Lutheran generation.

Why was Osiander so critical of the Testimonium? The whole of his argument against authenticity reads as follows, “if Josephus had felt what he asserted in that testimony, he would be a Christian; however, nothing at all that so much as even reeks of Christianity can be found in any of his writings.”<sup>64</sup> Thus Osiander’s grounds for rejecting the Testimonium were based entirely on *a priori* theological assumptions about what a Christian or non-Christian would or would not have said about Jesus. Osiander made no appeal to philological evidence; he did not mention the versions of the Testimonium cited by Origen, Jerome or any other early secondary author.

Although there is no explicit indication in his remark on the Testimonium, it is probable that Osiander’s views were prompted by his assumption that no Jew could have said anything so favorable about Jesus. This is suggested by the similarity of his argument against the Testimonium to his parallel argument against the authenticity of the supposed letter of Pilate to Tiberius, “if Pilate had believed such things of Christ, he would have been a Christian, and would not have persevered in his impious behavior.”<sup>65</sup> Since the mere fact of Pilate’s complicity in Jesus’ death rendered Pilate’s alleged letter exonerating Jesus dubious in Osiander’s estimation, it would not be surprising if the fact of the Jewish establishment’s complicity in Jesus’ death made a relatively positive account of Jesus by a Pharisaic sympathizer and son of a Jewish priest similarly dubious to Osiander.

In fact, such attitudes towards Jews certainly prompted Osiander’s skeptical attitude towards the reliability of another text often cited in church histories, namely Hegesippus’ account of the death of James the brother of Jesus. Of Hegesippus, Osiander bluntly remarked, “cujus scripta ego magna ex parte supposititia esse credo.”<sup>66</sup> Osiander listed ten specific objections to Hegesippus’ account of James’ death, several of which clearly show that his assessment of its credibility was strongly colored by his less than benign assumptions about first century Jews:

Objection 3: whether the Jews who were so flagrant in their hatred of Christ would have permitted an apostle of Christ to enter the holiest part of the temple in which no one except the high priest entered...

Objection 5: whether the Pharisees and scribes and the impious Jewish people, who were all sworn enemies of Christ, would have professed to obey James, let alone profess that they should obey James...

Objection 9: whether the Jews would have allowed the burial of an apostle of Christ, whom they killed as a blaspheming heretic, right next to the Temple, which act would have profaned it in their eyes.

Objection 10: this the Jews, who killed James, would never have allowed, that a tombstone for an apostle of Christ, honored by reason of its immediate proximity to the Temple, should be erected.<sup>67</sup>

Although Osiander listed ten specific objections to the credibility of Hegesippus' account of James' death, he listed no objections whatsoever for his similarly dim view of Josephus' account of the same event. Osiander called the accounts of James' death by both Hegesippus and Josephus "*fabulosa*" and suggested that Hegesippus' information about James must be derived from Josephus,<sup>68</sup> an hypothesis that I have already shown to be extremely dubious (Ch. 1 *supra*).

Osiander's excessively dim view of Hegesippus' tradition about James was hindered by his unwillingness to take seriously Josephus' account of the death of James and the general support it provides to the basic kernel of Hegesippus' tradition, namely that Jesus indeed had a brother named James who was executed by Jerusalem authorities. So skeptical of Hegesippus was Osiander that he even postulated that Hegesippus' James the Just, bishop of Jerusalem, must have been a different person from Jesus' brother, whom Osiander identified with James Alphaeus (Mark 3:18 // Matt 10:3 // Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13), one of the twelve apostles.<sup>69</sup> The hypothesis that James the Just, bishop of Jerusalem, and Jesus' brother James were different individuals is a piece of radical speculation that has garnered no subsequent scholarly following because there is simply no evidence whatsoever to support it. Osiander based the hypothesis of two different Jameses on his particular theological interpretation of scripture: he argued that Jesus' commission to the disciples to go out into the world to evangelize (Matt 28:19) was incompatible with Hegesippus' tradition that James remained ensconced in Jerusalem for many years as head of the Judean church until his death.<sup>70</sup>

Although it was a radical departure from tradition for Osiander to suggest that James the brother of Jesus was a different person from James the Just, bishop of Jerusalem, his identification of Jesus' brother with James Alphaeus was not radical but rather derived from the genealogy of Jesus worked out long ago by Jerome, who had conflated

James Alphaeus and James the brother of Jesus, and designated this conflated James to be the maternal cousin of Jesus, lest Mary's perpetual virginity be impugned by the New Testament's information that Jesus had brothers.<sup>71</sup> If he had considered Josephus as an historical source more seriously, Osiander would have been forced to reject his assumption that Jesus' brother was James Alpheus, for Josephus' brief notice about James clearly reveals his complete ignorance of Jerome's elaborate notion that he was a maternal cousin of Jesus or was named Alphaeus. Despite Osiander's hostility to the Roman Catholic church, he was unable to throw off the weight of many centuries of Latin medieval tradition, which, following Jerome, had been unable or unwilling to conceive of Jesus having biological brothers.

Given his objections to the authenticity of both Hegesippus' and Josephus' account of James, it is hardly surprising that Osiander followed Luther in also impugning the authenticity of that New Testament writing that had from an early date been attributed to James the brother of Jesus, the so-called Epistle of James.<sup>72</sup> Nor is it surprising, given his hostile view of first-century Jews as illustrated by his attitude towards both Hegesippus' and Josephus' accounts of James' death, that Osiander objected to this epistle in part because of the fact that its author seemed to be too Jewish to have composed a piece of Christian scripture: "he calls the congregation of the faithful to whom he writes, a synagogue. But the apostles of Christ call the meetings of Christians even in private houses not synagogues but churches."<sup>73</sup>

In fact, Osiander's argument here is completely unjustified because the Epistle of James actually uses both the word συναγωγή (James 2:2) and the word ἐκκλησία (James 5:14). His error about the use of the words synagogue and church in the Epistle of James illustrates just as clearly as his remarks about Hegesippus that Osiander simply could not envision the conditions of the first century when there still was not a very clear distinction between Christians and Jews, and when some Jews were perfectly capable of revering James, calling their churches synagogues and possibly even writing something like the *Testimonium Flavianum*. Thus, against Robert Eisler, who seems to have thought it remarkable that Osiander could reject the authenticity of the *Testimonium* despite engaging in political machinations against local Jews, it should be pointed out that Osiander's own words suggest that

his rejection of the Testimonium may well have followed quite logically from his anti-Jewish views.<sup>74</sup>

### **Richard Montagu**

The next writer who should perhaps be credited with a novel contribution to the debate about the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum is Richard Montagu (1578–1641). Montagu is best remembered for his participation in the highly politicized theological controversies that so animated England on the eve of the Civil War. Montagu served as chaplain to James I in the 1610s. In 1624 he was called before the House of Commons by Calvinistic-leaning parties for alleged Arminianism in a theological tract that he had actually written against Roman Catholicism. Montagu appealed for protection from the king, who allowed him to write a defense called *Appello Caesarem*. This defense, published and dedicated to Charles I in 1625—James I having died in the interim—actually aggravated rather than assuaged Montagu’s enemies for it not only contained theological pécadillos, but seemed to promote the king’s prerogative above the law. *Appello Caesarem* was voted seditious by the first parliament of Charles I, against the apparent objections of the king. In a second session of parliament the following year, the same work was pronounced “calculated to discourage the well-affected in religion from the true church.”<sup>75</sup> The intervention of Archbishop Laud in his favor probably explains why proceedings against Montagu were dropped thereafter. In 1628 Charles I promoted him to the bishopric of Chichester without obstacle.

Montagu was probably exposed to the Testimonium Flavianum controversy through Baronius’ *Annales Ecclesiastici*. This historical series he must have known quite well. For several years, 1615–1622, he had worked on a refutation of it, entitled *Analecta Ecclesiasticarum Exercitationum*, which had been commissioned by James I. In the scholarly notes that he composed for a Greek-Latin bilingual edition of Eusebius of Caesarea’s *De demonstratione evangelica*, which was published in Paris in 1628, Montagu laconically remarks on the verse where Eusebius quotes the Testimonium Flavianum (*Dem. Ev.* 3.5.124), “ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν no doubt is a gloss, noted down from the margin of some Christian’s reading, although it is to be found written down in the manuscripts of Josephus.”<sup>76</sup>

In his last work, *Acts and Monuments of the Church before Christ Incarnate*, posthumously published in 1642, Montagu articulated the argument that the Testimonium's sentence "this was the Christ" was a gloss more fully and openly. He attacked the Jesuit writer Nicholas Serarius for his opinion that Josephus,

in hatred unto Christ and unto Christians...forgeth many things, concealeth many things, overpasseth many things...But whereas the Jesuit saith, he makes no mention of Christ or Christians, it is not so: for he remembers Christ and Christians with honor thus: [Testimonium quoted] Thus much Josephus in every word, whose testimony I have transcribed every  $\omega\tau\alpha$  to give the check unto that malignant Jesuit; only I have not translated those words  $\delta\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma\ \omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \eta\nu$  because they are none of Josephus but the marginall note of some Reader, which an ignorant Transcriber took into the Text. Isidore of Pelusian, who Lib. 4 Epist. 225 citeth this place at large, to prove, what Serarius denies, that Josephus remembered our Saviour in his story, hath them not.<sup>77</sup>

Montagu's recourse to this argument about the transmission of the Testimonium was not entirely new, for Lucas Osiander had already claimed that the entire Testimonium itself was a gloss, writing "Testimonium...ab aliquo sciolo ipsius libris insertum."<sup>78</sup> But Montagu is to be distinguished from Osiander in his more moderate position that only the statement "this was the Christ" is a gloss. It is interesting to observe that many modern scholars still follow Montagu in averring that this phrase, and perhaps one or two others in the Testimonium, is a gloss mistakenly incorporated into the *textus receptus* over the centuries.<sup>79</sup> The problem with this hypothesis, however, is that there is no positive evidence for it; moreover, since the fifth century manuscripts of the Syriac *Historia Ecclesiastica* and *Theophania* contain the full *textus receptus* Testimonium there can hardly have been much time for glosses to have crept into the text by mistake. Significantly, Montagu himself offered only inaccurate evidence, namely that Isidore of Pelusium quoted the Testimonium without the phrase  $\delta\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma\ \omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \eta\nu$ , for this hypothesis. In fact, the editions of Isidore's letters available in the time of Montagu do include the statement  $\delta\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma\ \omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \eta\nu$  in their citations of the Testimonium.

### Other early seventeenth century authors

We now turn to an anonymous yet not insignificant attack on the Testimonium dating to the early seventeenth century. Sometime before 1644 an unpublished manuscript known as *Colloquium Theologicum Mittelburgensis* was evidently circulating in the scholarly circles of northern Europe. The *Colloquium* purported to be a dialogue held in the Dutch city of Mittelburg between a certain Rabbi Lusitano and a certain Christian named Abraham. On the basis of these names the participants have been identified with a high degree of probability although not absolute certainty as the physician Abraham Zacuto Lusitano (1575–1642) and the Jesuit Nicolas Abram (1589–1655). If these identifications are correct then the *Colloquium* cannot have been written before 1625, for this is when Zacuto Lusitano, a Portuguese Marrano, moved to Holland in order to practice Judaism openly. The actual manuscript of the *Colloquium* does not seem to have survived and its contents are now known only through the published reaction against it in the 1644 anti-Jewish polemical work *Judaismus ex Rabbinorum scriptis detectus et Verbi Divini Oracula* by the Lutheran divine Johannes Müller (1598–1672).

According to Müller, “Rabbi Lusitano” was motivated to reject the authenticity of the Testimonium above all because it alludes to Jesus’ performance of miracles: “Es sind die Jüden voller Gifft, Neid und Zorn auff den Jesum von Nazareth aus solchem Zorne wollen sie kein Zeignüss annehmen seiner Wunder, ob es gleich ihre eigene Scribenten setzen.”<sup>80</sup> “Rabbi Lusitano’s” argument against authenticity apparently rested solely on the claim that the text that follows the Testimonium seems better connected to the account of a riot that preceded the Testimonium than to the text of Testimonium itself, beginning as it does with the phrase “at this time another disturbance befell the Jews” (*Ant.* 18.65). “Josephus erzähle erstlich wie Pilatus zum Auffruhr Ursache gegeben, darauff solle folgen ein Text umb dieselbige Zeit ist den Jüden noch eine andere Unruh’ zugestanden: weil aber darzwischen erzählt werde die Historia von Iesu, hange der Text nicht aneinander.” It is interesting that in response to this argument of “Rabbi Lusitano” the devout Müller did not shrink from pointing out that the texts of the Hebrew prophets themselves are not always very smoothly arranged, with discreet bits of material strung together by repeated phrases: “wie

oftt wird solche Art zu reden bey dem Propheten wiederholet...noch bekehret ihr euch nicht zu mir, sollten denn darumb die Propheten verfälschet sein, weil sie ihre Rede etliche mal widerholet. Das würde folgen aus dem Schluss dieser Rabbinen, wenn Josephus darumb solle verfälschet worden seyn.”<sup>81</sup>

The next skeptical assessment of the Testimonium in a clearly dated published work after Osiander should perhaps be credited to another Protestant, Louis Cappel the Younger (1585–1658). Grandson and brother of prominent Reformed theologians, Cappel held the chair in Hebrew for much of his life at Saumur, the academic center of early modern French Calvinism. He is chiefly remembered for his controversial views on the authenticity of the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible, first published in a work entitled *Arcanum punctationis revelatum* in 1624. Although the sixteenth-century Jewish Hebrew grammarian Elias Levita had already argued, like Cappel, that the vowel pointing and punctuation of the Hebrew Bible only dated to the Christian era,<sup>82</sup> Cappel went further than Levita by asserting that this fact meant that the text of the Hebrew Bible was inaccurate in places and should be corrected from the Greek translations made before the Masoretic text. These views were understandably unpopular with some of Cappel’s co-religionists, and it is possible that he published *Arcanum* in Leiden because it was theologically more tolerant than France or Geneva.<sup>83</sup>

In 1634 Cappel published in Geneva *Compendium Historiae Judaicae*, a very brief and unremarkable summary of Jewish history from 135 BC–71 AD that was based largely upon the major works of Josephus; it is only in its footnotes that Cappel shows himself at all to be an original scholar of Josephus. From these footnotes we learn that, for Cappel, Josephus’ Jewishness sufficed to explain both his failure to confirm particular details of the New Testament and the spuriousness of the Testimonium. In his footnote under “Anno 1 ante Christo” Cappel observes, “the birth of Christ during the life of Herod is missing: Josephus is entirely silent about both it and the arrival of the Magi in Jerusalem, apparently because of his hatred of Christ and the Christian religion and his being bewitched by the spirit of Jewish superstition.”<sup>84</sup> Under “Anno Christo 29” Cappel duly cites the Testimonium, but in the footnote to it he remarks,



there are honorable things said about our Lord Jesus Christ in this passage, but these things seem suspicious, since they have no connection with the things that precede and those that follow, so that it appears correct that this περίοχη was inserted by some Christian and wrongly ascribed to Josephus. And truly, if Josephus had felt and written such reverent things of Christ, he would not have remained silent about his birth nor about the arrival of the Magi nor about the massacre of innocents in Bethlehem by Herod and he would have narrated the entire account of Christ in more broad and complete fashion. Instead not even a vestige of this account appears elsewhere in his whole history, not even anything about the disciples of Christ; and this appears to derive from no other cause than his hatred for Christ and the Christian religion, since he himself was a stubborn Jew.<sup>85</sup>

The tenor of Cappel's argument, that Josephus could not have possibly said anything so favorable about Christ or he would have in other respects shown more sympathy with Christianity, suggests very strongly that Cappel was influenced in his view of the Testimonium by Osiander. Since Cappel was educated in the Reformed tradition and had extensive contacts with other Protestant intellectuals, it would hardly be surprising if he had indeed read Book One of Osiander's *Epitomes Historiae Ecclesiasticae Centuria*. But Cappel's argument that the Testimonium seems to be unrelated to the texts that both precede it or follow it cannot have come from Osiander, who never made this argument. Whether Cappel picked up this argument either directly or indirectly from the *Colloquium Mittelburgensis* or whether he developed this idea independently cannot be determined. Since we do not have a precise date for the *Colloquium*, it is certainly also conceivable that "Rabbi Lusitano" picked up the argument from Cappel.

Even more hostile than Cappel's attitude towards the Testimonium is the response it provoked from his friend and fellow Reformed theologian Johannes Cloppenburg (1592–1652). In one of his letters to Cappel, a collection of which was published in 1634, Cloppenburg suggested a radical solution to Cappel's allegation that the Testimonium had no logical connection with either the narrative that preceded or followed it. Cloppenburg noted that the narrative following the Testimonium was about a Roman nobleman named Decius Mundus who had duped a Roman matron named Paulina into sexual intercourse by posing as the Egyptian god that she worshipped. He then suggested that the two passages might be connected in a complicated way, the passage

about Paulina being a satiric jab at the Christian teaching of Christ's birth from the virginal yet betrothed Mary, and the Testimonium a Christian counter response:

Consider carefully, I beg, whether it might not in fact be plausible that he made mention of Christ so that, characteristic of Jewish perfidy, it had a blasphemous connection with the story that follows, which is even more out of place (with what precedes) than the mention of Christ. As it now stands, by placing it right next to the story of Paulina, who became pregnant and committed adultery because of her delusion that Decius Mundus was a god, Josephus may have intended to ridicule the Christian faith in Christ's conception and birth from the Virgin by the Holy Spirit. It is on account of this blasphemy that I suspect that some Christian has tried to correct and censure Josephus with this passage; if that were the case, then this περιόχῃ would not in fact be unconnected (to what follows).<sup>86</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious problem with Cloppenburg's theory is that it begs the question why a Christian scribe both disturbed by Josephus' satire of the virgin birth and capable of altering his text of his *Antiquities* did not remove the allegedly offensive Paulina incident from the manuscripts altogether. Nor did Cloppenburg's complex theory succeed in convincing his friend. Cappel wrote back to Cloppenburg that despite the ingeniousness of his theory, "I do not know whether it is compatible with Josephus' intention in this passage, to say nothing of his language."<sup>87</sup> Cappel then argued that rather than being an obscure satire on Christ's birth, the Paulina anecdote seems to fit perfectly well Josephus' stated intention of reporting how contemporary scandals among high-born Roman converts to the Jewish and Egyptian religions caused leaders of these two foreign religions to be punished with expulsion from Rome (*Ant.* 18.65). Nevertheless it is worth noting that more than one modern commentator, apparently independent of Cloppenburg, has claimed to have detected in Josephus' anecdote about Paulina a satirical jab at the doctrine of the virgin birth.<sup>88</sup> Unlike Cloppenburg, however, these modern commentators assume that the Testimonium originally contained negative remarks about Jesus that were sanitized into the *textus receptus* Testimonium, whereas Cloppenburg assumed that the Testimonium was entirely inserted rather than altered by a Christian scribe.

### Conclusion

The authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum* was first seriously questioned by Christian scholars in the second half of the sixteenth century. These first doubts about the text were prompted by the lack of an analogous *Testimonium* in the medieval Hebrew adaptation of Josephus' works known as the *Josippon*. Knowledge that the *Josippon* lacked a parallel to the *Testimonium* and that this absence was used by Jews to impugn the authenticity of the *Testimonium* was not, however, new to the sixteenth century. As we have seen (Ch. 2 *supra*), in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century Gerald of Wales was aware both of the absence of a *Testimonium* in the *Josippon* and of Jewish apologetic use of this absence. Why therefore did this absence first prompt Christian doubts about the authenticity of the *Testimonium* in the sixteenth century rather than in the High Middle Ages?

One explanation is the seriousness with which Jewish Hebrew texts like the *Josippon* were taken as a source of history beginning in the early sixteenth century, a seriousness that, as Jerome Friedman has shown, was scarcely to be found in the Middle Ages. This serious interest by humanists in new sources, including the sources of marginalized groups like Jews, can certainly be seen as evidence of some sort of intellectual dynamism, but this is not exactly the same thing as the "Wiedergeburt der...historischen Kritik" that Robert Eisler had linked to Renaissance humanism and the first doubts about the *Testimonium's* authenticity. On the contrary, the fact that the *Josippon*, which is written too late to be of any value in getting at the original text of Josephus' works, was taken seriously by some sixteenth century scholars as evidence relevant to the authenticity of the *Testimonium* casts some doubt on the idea that their doubts about the text were initially caused by particularly critical attitudes towards historical sources.<sup>89</sup>

And indeed the argument that the *Josippon* lacked a parallel to the *Testimonium* could not have been the decisive factor in convincing some sixteenth century scholars that the *Testimonium* was spurious, for many humanists were readily able to point to copious philological evidence indicating that the *Josippon* was a medieval rather than an ancient text. Rather it seems to have been the willingness of so many early modern European commentators to believe the worst of Jews that solidified the suspicions of Protestant scholars such as Lucas Osiander and Louis

Cappel that Josephus could not possibly have written something as favorable towards Jesus as the Testimonium. Thus it was above all very traditional rather than modern assumptions about Jews, rather than relevant textual evidence *per se*, that prompted the earliest arguments against the Testimonium. In this period the only real example of a scholar's use of textual evidence rather than *a priori* assumptions to prove the spuriousness of the Testimonium is Cappel's observation that the passage does not fit in very smoothly with its surrounding text. One scholar, Cardinal Baronius, even used textual evidence to argue that the Testimonium was authentic. Against Robert Eisler, I would suggest that this reliance on *a priori* assumptions over textual evidence is not strong evidence for the presence of critical attitudes towards historical sources in this period.

If doubts about the Testimonium in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were prompted by very traditional assumptions about the hostility of all Jews towards Jesus, why was the authenticity of the text not questioned earlier than the sixteenth century? In their decisive move from the suspicion that a Jew like Josephus could not have written something favorable towards Jesus to the conclusion that he did not in fact write the Testimonium, Protestant scholars like Osiander and Cappel may well have been influenced by Protestants' reluctance, in a break with traditional Christian attitudes, to sanction the continuing operation of the miraculous outside scripture.<sup>90</sup>

For Roman Catholics, who in this period did not openly express doubts about the Testimonium, were certainly just as willing as Protestants to believe the worst of the Jews, as shown by Cardinal Baronius' insistence that Jews must have erased a parallel to the Testimonium from the Hebrew *Josippon* out of impudence. Yet despite this, Baronius also had no trouble believing that the apparently unbelieving Jewish Josephus wrote the Testimonium, because he believed that Josephus was "forced by divine power to pronounce the truth,"<sup>91</sup> just as Pseudo-Hegesippus before him had thought that the "eternal power of Christ" was revealed by the inclusion of the Testimonium in the history of the "unbelieving" Josephus (Ch. 1, *supra*).<sup>92</sup> Although they were still locked into a traditional Christian assumption that Jews were implacably hostile to Jesus, Protestant observers like Osiander and Cappel were apparently no longer willing to

believe Baronius' and Pseudo-Hegesippus' traditional Christian assumption that divine power could explain what seemed theologically implausible, i.e. that a first-century Jew could have composed the *textus receptus Testimonium*. Such skepticism about the scope of miracles may be seen as evidence of a certain kind of critical attitude, but this is not necessarily the same thing as a critical attitude towards historical sources.

On the other hand, Robert Eisler is not completely unjustified in connecting the questioning of the *Testimonium* to the larger intellectual currents of the Renaissance. As scholars such as Peter Burke have shown, the intellectual climate of the Renaissance encouraged many scholars to scrutinize authoritative ancient texts for the first time as possible forgeries.<sup>93</sup> However, in assuming that critics of the *Testimonium*'s authenticity were mainly philologists and defenders of its authenticity were mainly theologians,<sup>94</sup> Eisler did not entirely appreciate the extent to which so much of this scrutiny was motivated by confessional interests rather than by critical philological scholarship for its own sake. In fact, the Reformation and Counterreformation spawned a whole new historiography characterized by the reexamination and rejection of many texts cherished by the medieval church, a reexamination that was, in the words of Arnaldo Momigliano, motivated by "the search for the true image of Early Christianity to be opposed to the false one of the rivals."<sup>95</sup> To generalize very broadly, early modern Protestant scholars were more willing than their Roman Catholic contemporaries to impugn the authenticity of many of the non-Biblical writings that had been valued by the medieval church, and eventually the *Testimonium Flavianum* was included among these writings.

The importance of confessional interests in encouraging these sorts of critical attitudes towards texts should call into question the tendency of some scholars even today to draw a strong distinction between the intellectual nature of an allegedly impartial and rational Renaissance humanism on the one hand and partisan Reformation polemics on the other.<sup>96</sup> On the contrary, the literature of the earliest stage of the *Testimonium Flavianum* controversy has added support to the view that the tendency towards historical criticism among some Reformers was not markedly different from that of some Renaissance humanists.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, although some recent scholars have argued that critical history

writing was created by Renaissance humanists and legal jurists who, by questioning the authenticity of sources cherished in the medieval period, were able to write new national histories and legal histories,<sup>98</sup> this study of the earliest stage of the *Testimonium Flavianum* controversy has arguably revealed apologetical Protestant church historians such as Lucas Osiander and the authors of the *Magdeburger Centurien*, even more than Renaissance humanists of secular profession writing on secular topics, to be the scholars most willing to attack the authenticity of documents, and thereby rewrite history.<sup>99</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Eisler's allusion to historical criticism appears in his characterization of the Renaissance as a "Zeitalter der Wiedergeburt der philologischen Forschung und historischen Kritik." This phrase, as well as "das Erwachen der Kritik im Zeitalter des Humanismus," can be found in ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΣ, Heidelberg, 1929, 18–19.
- <sup>2</sup> The classic study is Jacob Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, first published in 1860. Burckhardt's main focus in this work is on high politics and artistic culture, not history writing, but he does credit humanism with the beginnings of critical history writing "it was the study of antiquity which made the study of the Middle Ages possible, by first training the mind to habits of impartial historical criticism..." and "the rational treatment of all subjects by the humanists had trained the historical spirit" (Jacob Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Oxford, 1944; 1981 reprint, 147).
- <sup>3</sup> Peter Burke, *The Renaissance sense of the past*, London, 1969, 50.
- <sup>4</sup> Burke, *Renaissance sense of the past*, 55.
- <sup>5</sup> Christopher Coleman, *The treatise of Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine*, Yale University, 1922, 1.
- <sup>6</sup> Burke, *Renaissance sense of the past*, 59.
- <sup>7</sup> On Valla's and Erasmus' philological criticism of the Vulgate, and the relationship between the two scholars see Jerry Bentley, *Humanists and holy writ*, Princeton University, 1983, 32–69; 137–193.
- <sup>8</sup> I use the term "humanist" to mean scholars of Latin, Greek or Hebrew who attempted to approach sources directly and holistically rather than through the media of translations, compilations, and glosses. As may be evident from this study, I believe that humanist treatment of ancient literature can be distinguished from medieval treatment of ancient literature in its generally greater sensitivity to that literature's context, particularly as manifested by language use. This specifically humanist approach to ancient literature included the new notion that Greek and Hebrew, which were only sporadically studied in the medieval West, should be a regular part of the Western scholarly curriculum. I do not find convincing the idea that humanists had any distinct ideology, even so vague an ideology as "a belief in the value of man," as suggested by the influential Renaissance scholar Paul Oskar Kristeller, if only because scholasticism was also characterized by a belief in the

value of man (*Renaissance thought, the Classic, Scholastic and Humanist strains*, New York, 1961, 22). A concern with rhetorical style, which is also associated with the humanist program by Kristeller, was relatively unimportant among the group of humanists who are the topic of this study.

- <sup>9</sup> Nigel Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy: Greek studies in the Italian Renaissance*, Johns Hopkins University 1992, 40.
- <sup>10</sup> On this topic see Dino Geanakoplos, *Greek scholars in Venice*, Cambridge University, 1962.
- <sup>11</sup> Arlenius had recourse to manuscripts borrowed from the Vatican library for the text of *War* and an epitome of *Antiquities* used to emend Escorialensis gr. 307 (304) (Heinz Schreckenber, *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter*, Leiden, 1972, 17, 52–53).
- <sup>12</sup> Peter Burke, “A survey of the popularity of ancient historians 1450–1700,” *History and Theory* 5 (1966) 135–52.
- <sup>13</sup> One result of this flowering of Hebrew studies was Protestant reformers’ call to return to the Hebrew of the Old Testament. On sixteenth century Hebraica see Jerome Friedman, *The most ancient testimony: Sixteenth century Christian Hebraica in the age of the Renaissance nostalgia*, Ohio University, 1983.
- <sup>14</sup> Frank E. Manuel, *The broken staff: Judaism through Christian eyes*, Harvard University, 1992, 127.
- <sup>15</sup> Münster made a Latin translation of the *Josippon*, and Lepusculus published this together with its Hebrew text. According to Robert Eisler, however, Münster and Lepusculus mistook a chronographical compilation of a twelfth century Andalucian Jew for the work of the *Josippon* (“Josephus on Jesus,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 21 (1930) 14, 18).
- <sup>16</sup> This observation is based on my own search and that of Robert Eisler, *ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ*. Vol. 1. 19, n. 3.
- <sup>17</sup> Melchior Haiminsfeld Goldast, *Philologicarum epistolarum Centuria una*, Ep. 61, Frankfurt, 1610, 247–55.
- <sup>18</sup> This letter, corresponding to Epistle 61 of Goldast’s *Philologicarum epistolarum Centuria una*, can be found in Sebastian Lepusculus, *Iosippus de bello Judaico, deinde decem Judaeorum captivitates & Decalogus cum eleganti commentario rabbi Aben Esra*...Basel, 1559, 7–17.



- 19 Michaud's *Biographie universelle* and Georg Andreas Will's *Nürnbergisches Gelehrten Lexicon* (apud Deutsches Biographisches Archiv) both date Giphanius' edition of Lucretius to 1566. The National Union Catalogue includes both an edition with 1565 as the date of publication, and an edition with 1566 as the date of publication. In either case, Robert Eisler has clearly erred in claiming that it was published in 1556 (ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ, 19 n.3), and his error was natural given his assumption that Giphanius had questioned the Testimonium as early as 1559.
- 20 Anne A. Baade, *Melchior Goldast von Haiminsfeld: Collector, commentator and editor*, New York, 1992, 34.
- 21 Goldast was hardly the only Renaissance scholar to commit his own forgery in the pursuit of exposing other forgeries. Anthony Grafton relates the circumstances of many other such cases, and seems to suggest that the Renaissance desire to recover the past was a double edged sword, both encouraging the exposure of works erroneously dated to a certain past, but also the forgery of works meant to illustrate a scholar's cherished beliefs about that same past (*Forgers and critics*, Princeton University, 1990, esp. 25–31).
- 22 The Testimonium is actually, of course, from *Antiquities* and *Jewish War* does not have an eighteenth book.
- 23 The phrase "hactenus Josephus...quem Iudaei vel maximum putant," which in Galatinus' work reads "haec ille, quem Iudaei maximum putant," almost certainly goes back to Pseudo-Hegesippus, who wrote "Si nobis non credunt Iudaei, vel suis credant; hoc dixit Josephus, quem ipsi maximum putant" (*De excidio Hierosolymitanae* 2.12.1). This is one more piece of evidence that the intruding remark about Giphanius between "hactenus Josephus" and "quem Iudaei vel maximum putant" in Goldast's version of Lepusculus' letter was interpolated by Goldast himself rather than originally written by Lepusculus.
- 24 There can be no question that Lepusculus had ample opportunity to read Galatinus' apology, since it was published in Lepusculus' native Basel nine years before his own epistolary preface was composed for his edition of the *Josippon*. This edition, published by Johannes Hervagius, was the second edition of Galatinus' work. Hervagius also republished a third edition of the work in Basel in 1561. Galatinus' work was first published in 1518 in Ortona.
- 25 Münster died in 1553, several years before the publication of Lepusculus' edition of the *Josippon* in 1559. His own versions of the *Josippon* were published in 1529 and in 1541. He refers to the latter in several letters (Karl Heinz Burmeister, *Briefe Sebastien Münsters*, Letters 23, 24 and 48, Ingelheim-am-Rein, 1964). In Letter 48,

dated July 1550, Münster alludes to the fact that he was planning yet another translation of the *Josippon*, which would evidently be based on the version of the text published in Constantinople in 1510.

- <sup>26</sup> On Münster as the foremost Christian Hebraist of the early sixteenth century see Jerome Friedman, *The most ancient testimony*, 44–48.
- <sup>27</sup> In the preface to his 1541 edition of the *Josippon*, Münster argued that Josephus wrote *Antiquities* and *War* for Gentiles knowledgeable in Greek, and the *Josippon* in Hebrew for fellow Jews, *Iosephus Hebraicus desideratus, et nunc ex Constantinopolitano exemplari iuxta Hebraismum opera Sebastiani Munsteri versus*...Basel, 1541.
- <sup>28</sup> Joseph Scaliger, *Trihaeresii Elenchos*, Chapters 4 and 5 (apud Christopher Arnold, *XXX Epistulae historicae et philologicae* apud S. Haverkamp, *Flavii Iosephi opera omnia quae reperuerint*, Vol. 2, Amsterdam, 1726).
- <sup>29</sup> Omittitur hic in Hebraico contextu magnificum illud praeconium, quod Iosephus tribuit servatori nostro Jesus Christo, capite sexto decimi octavi libri Antiquitatum Iudaicarum. Quod an Iudaei ex Hebraico volumine eraserint, aut ipse autor data opera id omiserit ne suis illudere videretur, incertum est (Sebastian Münster, *Iosephus Hebraicus desideratus*...Basel, 1541, Book 5, Ch. 44, 174).
- <sup>30</sup> The *Magdeburger Centurien* was notably the first major historical work organized by centuries. Although the word *Centurien* is technically plural, for reasons of style I refer to the work as a whole in the singular.
- <sup>31</sup> Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century*, Princeton University, 1986, 273.
- <sup>32</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, "The origins of ecclesiastical historiography," *Classical foundations of modern historiography*, University of California, Berkeley, 1990, 145–151.
- <sup>33</sup> This point is briefly touched upon by Eugene F. Rice, Jr., "The Renaissance idea of Christian antiquity," in *Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Albert Rabil, Vol. 1, University of Pennsylvania, 1988, 18.
- <sup>34</sup> For example, the impact of Greek classical texts newly brought to the West during the Renaissance on the writing of history is discussed by E. B. Fryde in *Humanism and Renaissance historiography*, London, 1983.
- <sup>35</sup> Jerry Bentley, *Humanists and holy writ*, Princeton University, 1983.

- <sup>36</sup> As the authors of the *Magdeburger Centurien* themselves pointed out, suspicions against the False Decretals had been expressed before by Nicholas of Cusa (Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Ecclesiastica historia*, Cent. 2, Cap. 8, 151), but they themselves were the first to demonstrate decisively reasons for rejecting their authenticity (Ernest H. Davenport, *The false decretals*, Oxford University, 1912, xxi–xxiv).
- <sup>37</sup> Etsi enim eo tempore Latina lingua non adeo omni suo cultu et mundicie perfecta erat, atque Iulii Caesaris et Augusto tempore, tamen nondum tum insulse, inepte et barbare quenquam locutum esse, testes sunt multi eius seculi doctissimi viri qui purissime et elegantissime loquuti ut Plinius, Suetonius, Solinus, Tacitus, Iustinus, et alii quamplurimi...(Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Ecclesiastica historia*, Cent. 2, Cap. 7, 143).
- <sup>38</sup> ...sed hos ritus neque vetus neque novum Testamentum neque Christus neque Apostoli docuerunt: et sic non esse observatos Romae hoc seculo, testari potest veracissimus testis Iustinus, qui in 2 Apologia ritum baptismi et coena Dominicae simplicissime describit (Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Ecclesiastica historia*, Cent. 2, Cap. 7, 147).
- <sup>39</sup> Cyriac K. Pullapilly, *Caesar Baronius: Counter-Reformation historian*, University of Notre Dame, 1975, 17, 86.
- <sup>40</sup> Pullapilly, *Baronius*, 62–65.
- <sup>41</sup> Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, Vol. 1, Chapters 3–4.
- <sup>42</sup> See Elie Bickerman, “Une question d’authenticité: Les privilèges juifs,” *Annuaire de l’Institut de Philologie et d’histoire orientales et slaves* 13 (1953) 11–34, and Horst R. Moehring “Acta pro Judaeis in the Antiquities,” in *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman cults, Part 3: Judaism before 70* (Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, Vol. 12) Leiden, 1975, 127 n. 13.
- <sup>43</sup> cur igitur tanta...cum iniquitate Iosephe insultabimus? cuius libros nis providentia Dei singularis ad nostra servasset tempora, in quantis rerum Judaicarum tenebris hodie versaremur..(Issac Casaubon, *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes* 2 (Annus 28.2), London, 1614, 170).
- <sup>44</sup> Haec Iosephus, cuius testimonium in pervetusto Iudaeorum codice, in quo eius historiae e graeco in hebraicum translatae, antiquitus scriptae sunt, cum hic Romae requireretur (o perfidorum impudentiam!) abrasum inventum est, adeo ut nulla ad excusandum scelus posset afferri defenso cum membrana ipsa id exclamare videretur. Habes eiusdem Iosephi de Christo testimonium ab Eusebio recitatum, atque ab aliis compluribus (Baronius, *Annales. Eccles. I*, Ann. 34).

- 45 Eisler, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ, 18.
- 46 Haec ipse (ut in Vita sua testatur) Romae agens: ubi cum videret Christi Ecclesiam florentissimam, quae in dies magis ubique gentium, ad potissimum Romae, et apud nobiles, ipsosque (ut dicitur) affines Caesaris feliciter propagabatur, licet Christianus non esset, tamen ne in officiosi historici querela tam justa urgeri posset, quod rem toto orbe perspicuam obvolutam silentio reliquisset, illud superius dictum de Christo elogium suis scriptis intexuit. Cum enim Iudaeorum res inspiceret penitus esse collapsas, Vespasianumque defecisse, cui vaticinatus tribuerat quod Christo revera oraculis prophetarum praenuntiatum erat imperium; iamque tempus Messiae adventus praeteriisse videri posset: prudentis potius quam pii hominis partes agens, illud de Jesu, quod Christus haberetur a plurimis tam Iudaeis quam Gentilibus, protulit testimonium; de quo quidem illud tantummodo monuisse sufficiat (nam de his superius actum est) aliter se habuisse eius lectionem S. Hieronymi temporibus, ab ea quae legitur in praesentiarum. Nam quod latina versio habet: "Christus hic erat" S. Hieronymus sic ex Graeco reddidit: "Et credebatur esse Christus" quae lectio nobis magis probatur, ut quae consentiens videatur auctoris studio et professioni; quippe qui se esse Iudaeum, et non Christianum, in omnibus prae se ferret: licet in caeteris quae in eam sententiam de Christo scribit, numine ipsum cogente, professus sit veritatem (Baronius, *Annales eccles.* 2, Ann. 96).
- 47 On the extent to which Baronius used sources critically see Pullapully, *Caesar Baronius*, 163–66.
- 48 For example, English Archbishop James Ussher argued "locum hunc transtulit B. Hieronymus, cujus illa lectio "credebatur esse Christus;" alteri illi videtur praeferenda, quae apud Eusebium et Rufinum, et in nostris codicibus habetur...Christus hic erat; quum ad nostram religionem nihilo Iosephum accessisse constet" in his *Annales Novi Testamenti, Aetas Mundi* 7, first published in 1650.
- 49 By the time that his *Antiquities* was composed, Christians were notorious enough for Iosephus to have included something about their Jewish founder in his history about Jews. After all, Tacitus and the sources he probably used for his account of Nero's attack on Christians also found it expedient to mention the founder of the Christian "superstitio" (*Annals*, 15.44). Nevertheless, Baronius has been misled by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.18.4), who, in the opinion of most modern scholars, mistook Jewish proselytes among Domitian's household for Christians.
- 50 Eisler, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ, Vol. 1, 20.
- 51 The comprehensive historical approach of Baronius is in fact the one feature that distinguishes his *Annales* from earlier Counter Reformation apologia, including Bellarmine's *De fidei*, as Pullapully argues in *Caesar Baronius*, 53.

- <sup>52</sup> On the friendship of Baronius and Bellarmine see James Broderick, *Robert Bellarmine, Saint and scholar*, London, 1961, 139–40, 152.
- <sup>53</sup> Robert Eisler's claim that Bellarmine's remarks on the Testimonium controversy is to be found in his *De controversiis Christianae fidei* is incorrect (ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ, Vol. 1, 20 n. 2).
- <sup>54</sup> It was necessary to treat the former as well as the latter because some Protestants had challenged the appropriateness of including the Apocrypha into the scriptural canon.
- <sup>55</sup> Index scriptorum ecclesiasticorum cum censuris apud X.-M. le Bachelet, *Auctarium Bellarminianum*, Paris, 1913, 338.
- <sup>56</sup> Libro autem 18 antiquitatum cap. 4 reddit Christo mirabile testimonium, affirmans eum fuisse plusquam hominem, & vere Christum, in operibus magnificum in verbis veracissimum & a Pilato quidem occisum, sed tertia die resurrexisse, cuius testimonii meminit Eusebius lib. 1 hist. Eccles. cap. 2 & S. Hieronymus in lib. de scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis in Josepho. Quod autem Hebraei dicunt testimonium illud de Christo in suis libris non haberi, & ideo videri superadditum a Christianis, facile refelli potest. Nam Hebraei non habent Josephum filium Matathiae qui Graece scripsit libros antiquitatum de quo nos loquimur, sed Josephum filium Gorionis, qui aliquid simile scripsit Hebraice, proinde non est mirum, si Iudaei in suo Josepho hoc testimonium non habeant, cum in nostro habeatur & non sit superadditum, sed verum & germanum Josephi testimonium. Certe S. Hieronymus, & Eusebius viri doctissimi fuerunt & omnes pene libros veterum scriptorum legerunt: & nunquam hoc testimonium de Christo Josepho tribuissent, nisi scivissent et vere ab illo auctore ita scriptum fuisse. Omisi libros Rabbinorum, qui plurimi sunt, quoniam pleni sunt fabulis Judaicis & erroribus perniciosis. Neque verum esse arbitror, quod Jo. Garetius & alii nonnulli scribunt, Rabbinos aliquot, quorum opera nunc extant, scripsisse ante adventum Christi video enim passim ab iis mentionem fieri eversionis Hierusalem & templi, per Titum Vespasiani filium (Robert Bellarmine, *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, Book 1, Lyons, 1613, 20–21).
- <sup>57</sup> This hypothesis is supported by the observation that Bellarmine's comment about the rabbis is his very last comment on the writers of the Old Testament in *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*.
- <sup>58</sup> Andreas Osiander was also the anonymous author of the preface to Copernicus' *On the revolutions of the heavenly spheres* (Edward Rosen, trans. *Nicolas Copernicus: On the revolutions of the heavenly spheres*, Johns Hopkins University, 1978, xx, 333–335, 340, 435).

- <sup>59</sup> Cum aut utilissimus iste multis Tomis comprehendatur: & plerunque Theologiae studiosi magnitudine sumtuum ab emtione deterreantur. Multi vero & quidem magni viri politici multitudine negotiorum gravissimorum impediuntur, quo minus tam prolixa scripta evolueri queant: cum tamen Theologicis lucubrationibus legendis vehementer dilectentur: coepi ego cogitare, an non ea, quae copiose in illa Magd. hist. Eccl. ...referuntur, possent in Epitome quandam ita redigi, ut nihil rerum scitu admodum necessariarum omitteretur (Osiander, *Historia ecclesiastica*, Praefatio).
- <sup>60</sup> Quod ideo annotare placuit, ne Theologiae studiosi nimium Iosepho credant. Si enim ipsius historia cum sacris literis conferatur, deprehenditur, quod interdum ordinem perverterit, interdum res gestas perperam recitarit: interdum etiam res suo seculo gestas, aliter in libris suis de Antiquitatibus, & aliter in libris suis, de bello Iudaico, recitet (Osiander, *Hist. eccles.* Cent. 1, lib. 3, cap. 10, 109).
- <sup>61</sup> Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Ecclesiastica historia*, Cent. 1, lib. 1, cap. 10, 354–55.
- <sup>62</sup> Eisler, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ, Vol. 2, 338–39, n. 6; 340 n. 1.
- <sup>63</sup> Callistus' physical description of Mary and Christ probably dates only from a time when the veneration of icons in the Eastern churches had become fully developed, i.e. no earlier than the late eighth century.
- <sup>64</sup> Si enim Iosephus ita de Christo sensisset, ut testimonium illud prae se fert, Iosephus fuisset Christianus, cum tamen in omnibus eius scriptis nihil prorsus, quod saltem Christianismum redoleat, reperiri queat (Osiander, *Hist. eccles.* Cent. 1, lib. 2, cap. 7, 17).
- <sup>65</sup> Si enim Pilatus talia de Christo credidisset, Christianum exstitisset, neque in sua impietate perseverasset, & desperasset (Osiander, *Hist. eccles.* Cent. 1, lib. 2, cap. 7, 17).
- <sup>66</sup> Osiander, *Hist. eccles.* Cent. 1 lib. 2, cap. 33.
- <sup>67</sup> 3) Iudaei, odio Christi flagrant, permisissent Apostolo Christi ingredi in sacratissima templi partem, in quam nemo, nisi summus Sacerdos ingrediebatur...(5) Quod Pharisei & scribae, & impius populus Iudaeus (omnes hostes Christi iurati) professi sint, se omnes obedire Iacobo & quidem se illi obedientiam debere...(9) ...Iudaei passuri erant, templum propinquo sepulchro Apostoli Christi (quem pro blasphemo haeretico occiderant) ipsorum quidem opinione prophanari (10)...hoc nimirum erant passuri Iudaei, qui Iacobum occiderant, ut honoris causa iuxta Templum Apostolo Christi columna...erigeretur (Osiander, *Hist. eccles.* Cent. 1, lib. 2, cap. 33, 51–52).

- <sup>68</sup> Quisquis autem fuerit ille Iacobus, Hierosolymitanae Ecclesiae Episcopus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Egesippus, & Iosephus fabulosa de ipso referunt, quae alii ex aliis transcripserunt (Osiander, *Hist. Eccles.* Cent. 1 lib. 2, cap. 33, 51–52).
- <sup>69</sup> Alius ergo fuit Iacobus Iustus, Episcopus Ierosolymitanus: & alius Iacobus Alphaei, frater Domini (Osiander, *Hist. eccles.* Cent. 1, lib. 2, cap. 33, 51–52).
- <sup>70</sup> Hoc tempore Iacobus Alphaei unus ex Apostolis, qui frater Domini (hoc est consobrinus Christi) fuit, & ab aliquibus Iacobus minor dictus est, Ierosolymitanae Ecclesiae Episcopatum suscepisse, & Episcopatu illi 29 annos praefuisse creditur. Ego vero puto, nullum ex 12 Apostolis uno certo loco, ut episcopum, consedisse. Christi enim mandatum sic habet: Ite in orbem universum, & praedicate Evangelion... (Osiander, *Hist. Eccles.* Cent. 1, lib. 2, cap. 25, 38–39).
- <sup>71</sup> In *Adv. Helvidium* 13–14 Jerome argues that James Alphaeus, whom he equates with James the Less (Mark 15:40), is one of the brothers of Jesus mentioned by Paul and the evangelists, although Jerome insists that technically he was not really a brother but a maternal cousin of Jesus, i.e. the son of Mary's sister, Mary of Cleophas (John 19:25).
- <sup>72</sup> Luther had called it an “epistle of straw,” rejecting the tradition of its apostolic authorship because it did not preach the “passion, resurrection or spirit of Christ.” Osiander makes the same argument: “epistola nihil prorsus de merito aut passione Christi loquitur” (Cent. 1, lib. 2, cap. 33, p. 53). The weight of the Latin medieval tradition rendered Luther as incapable as Osiander of addressing the fact that Jesus had a biological brother named James. Whereas Osiander had conflated James the brother of Jesus with James Alphaeus, Luther assumed, incorrectly, that the author of the Epistle of James was James bar Zebedee. In contrast, most modern scholars believe that it is in fact written in the name of, although probably not by, Jesus' brother (Martin Luther, *Preface to the New Testament; Preface to the Epistle of James*).
- <sup>73</sup> Quod ad Epistolam attinet, quae Iacobo Apostolo adscribitur, certum est, eam nequaquam esse Apostoli Iacobi, vel maioris vel minoris...praeterea congregationem fidelium, ad quos scribit, synagogam vocat. Apostoli vero Christi conventus Christianorum, etiam in privatis aedibus, non Synagogas, sed Ecclesias appellant (Osiander, *Hist. eccles.* Cent. 1, lib. 2, cap. 33, 53).
- <sup>74</sup> Eisler, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ, Vol. 1, 19, esp. n. 5.
- <sup>75</sup> J. Gorton, *A general biographical dictionary*, 1841 apud *British Biographical Archive*, 120.

- <sup>76</sup> 'Ο Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν proculdubio glossema est, et marginalis cuiusdam Christiani lectoris annotatio, licet habeatur in scripto cod. et in Josepho. Ib. καὶ αὐτὸν (*Eusebii Pamphili...De demonstratione evangelica libri decem*, Vol. 1, notes to Book 3, Paris, 1628, 124).
- <sup>77</sup> Richard Montagu, *Acts and Monuments of the Church before Christ incarnate*, London, 1642, Ch. 4, 230–31.
- <sup>78</sup> Osiander, *Hist. Eccl.* Cent.1.lib.2 cap. 17.
- <sup>79</sup> John P. Meier, *A marginal Jew*, New York, 1991, 87–88, n. 62.
- <sup>80</sup> According to Müller, the *Colloquium* was originally written in Latin, so this German translation must be his own (Eisler, *ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ*, Vol. 1, 20–24).
- <sup>81</sup> Johannes Müller apud Eisler, *ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ*, 22–23.
- <sup>82</sup> On Levita and his influence on Christian Hebraists see Friedman, *The most ancient testimony*, 40–42.
- <sup>83</sup> J. Michaud, *Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne...* Paris, 1811–1862.
- <sup>84</sup> In hoc Herodis vitae tempus videtur incidere Christi nativitas, de qua, & de Magorum adventu Jerosolymam, altum est apud Josephum silentium, ex odio (uti videtur) in Christum, & Christianam Religionem & animo Judaica superstitione fascinato (L. Cappellus apud G. Hornius *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Leiden, 1687, 46).
- <sup>85</sup> Hoc loco sit apud Josephum Jesu Christi Domini nostri mentio per honorica sed suspecta videntur quae isthic de Christo dicuntur, nulla enim est eorum cum antecedentibus & sequentibus connexio, ut omnino jure videatur ab aliquo Christiano eo loci insulta περιοχή illa, falsoque Josepho adscripta. Et sane, si Josephus revera de Christo ita sensisset & scripsisset, proculdubio nativitatis eius memoriam non tacuisset, suo loco magorum adventum non siluisset, neque caedem infantum Bethlehemiticorum ab Herode factam; imo susius & latius totam Christi historiam enarrasset cuius tamen alibi in tota illius historia ne obscurum quidem vestigium apparet, uti nec Christi discipulorum: quod non aliunde videtur profectum, quam ex odio in Christum & Christianam religionem, ipse cum Judaeus esse pertinax (L. Cappellus apud G. Hornius, *Hist. Eccles.*, 54).
- <sup>86</sup> Cogita, quaeso, accuratius annon vero simile sit, fuisse illo loco a Josepho factam Christi mentionem eiusmodi, quo ἀναλογῶς perfidiae Judaicae blasphemam habuerit connexionem cum sequenti historia, quae magis ἀπροσδιόνυσος est, ut iam quidem jacet, quam mentionem Christi, ut voluerit Josephus parallelissimo



Paullinae, sua opinione a Deo, revera a Decio Mundo impregnatae, aut stupratae, ridere fidem Christianam de conceptione Jesu Christi & nativitate ex Virgine per operationem Spiritus Sancti. Propter quam blasphemiam ita suspicor, Christiano aliquo castigatum & castratum eo loco Josephum, ut iam illa περιοχή sit ἀσύνδετος (Io. Cloppenb. a Lud. Cappellum, apud Arnold, *Epistulae*, 388–89).

- 87 Ad conjecturam tuam de Josephi historia periocha, quae de Christo loquitur; agnosco & eam esse acutum atque ingeniosam, sed nescio an satis sit Iosephi eo loco menti & scopo, adeoque & verbis accommodata (Lud. Cappellus a Io. Cloppenb. apud Arnold, *Epistulae*, 389–90).
- 88 C. Pharr, “The testimony of Josephus to Christianity,” *American Journal of Philology* 48 (1927) 144–47; Albert A. Bell Jr. “Josephus the satirist? A clue to the original form of the Testimonium Flavianum,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 67 (1976) 16–22.
- 89 This is also suggested by the fact that many of the Renaissance scholars with an interest in Hebrew sources held very uncritical beliefs about the Cabbalah, as Jerome Friedman shows in *The most ancient testimony*, 71–95.
- 90 On the early modern Protestant reluctance to affirm the validity of miracles outside the early church see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic*, New York, 1971, 124–25. In a related vein, Calvin argued in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 1.7.1 that “daily oracles are not sent from heaven, for it pleased the Lord to hallow his truth to remembrance in the Scriptures alone.”
- 91 ...[Josephus] se esse Judaeum, et non Christianum in omnibus prae se ferret, licet in caeteris quae in eam sententiam de Christo scribit, in numine ipsum cogente, professus sit veritatem (Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, Vol. 2 Annus Christi 96, emphasis mine).
- 92 Non tamen veritati praeiudicat, quia [Josephus] 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... (Pseudo-Hegesippus, *De excidio Hierosolymitano* 2.12. 1, emphasis mine).
- 93 In asserting this I am also asserting against those who would argue otherwise, that the term “Renaissance” is a legitimate label for a complex European intellectual movement between 1350–1700. The question whether the Renaissance is a legitimate term is treated at length in an *American Historical Review* Forum on the Renaissance (Paula Findlen, Kenneth Gouwens, et al., “The Persistence of the

Renaissance," *American Historical Review* 103,1 (1998) 51–122; esp. 51–59; 83–84; 113–118; 122–124).

<sup>94</sup> Eisler, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ, 20.

<sup>95</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, *The classical foundations of modern historiography*, University of California, Berkeley, 1990, 150.

<sup>96</sup> One recent scholar argues that "the religious issues of reform and counterreform had...preempted the attention of intellectuals...Essentially non-doctrinal, tolerant of diverse opinions and responsive to rational argument, humanism as a form of culture had no place in the new climate" (Ronald G. Witt, "The humanist movement," in *Handbook of European history 1400–1600*, Vol. 2, Leiden, 1995, 119). A more nuanced view of the intellectual relationship between the Renaissance and the Reformation than Witt's by no means unusual view of the Reformation killing the Renaissance can be found in Alistair McGrath, *Intellectual origins of the European Reformation*, Oxford, 1987, 32–68.

<sup>97</sup> This view is quite forcefully argued by Anthony Kemp. Among other assertions Kemp makes are "the Renaissance was not a secular movement, nor was the Reformation antihumanistic...Nowhere are the Reformation and the Renaissance so alike as in their critical methodology...Luther felt much more in concert with Lorenzo Valla than he did with Zwingli..." (Anthony Kemp, *The estrangement of the past*, Oxford University, 1991, 66–104; quotations from 100–104).

<sup>98</sup> On legal historians' attack on the validity of the Roman law, particularly as understood in the late antique and medieval periods, and its effect on the writing of French national historiography see Donald Kelley, *Foundations of historical scholarship*, New York, 1970. On the transformation of Italian and French national history by Renaissance humanists see respectively E. B. Fryde, *Revival of scientific and erudite historiography in the earlier Renaissance*, University of Wales, 1974 and George Huppert, *The idea of perfect history*, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1970.

<sup>99</sup> Although George Huppert argues that "the modern method of explaining the past was created in the sixteenth century...It was called into being by the needs of nationalism and Protestantism, both of which required a reinterpretation of the medieval past," in fact his study examines only "nationalism," not Protestantism (*The idea of perfect history*, 181; 31, 159–60).



## Chapter 4

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### The End of the Controversy

The first scholarly objections to the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum were raised in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. However, we have seen in the last chapter that these first objections were based more upon critics' *a priori* theological assumptions about Jews in particular than upon any real evidence casting doubt on the authenticity of text. Perhaps the lack of real evidence explains why in that period the view that the text was inauthentic remained largely a minority view among scholars. In contrast, during the period under study in this chapter, the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, the bulk of scholarly opinion moved towards the view that the text was inauthentic. Arguably, this is because textual evidence was for the first time effectively used against the authenticity of the Testimonium.

#### Christopher Arnold and Sebald Snell

In 1661 Christoph Arnold (1627–1685), Lutheran pastor and editor, published in Nuremberg a book-length collection of thirty contemporary scholarly letters, entitled *XXX Epistulae philologicae et historicae de Flavii Josephi testimonio*. The letters in this collection were devoted exclusively to the question of the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum. The publication of Arnold's *Epistulae philologicae et historicae* marked a turning point in the Testimonium Flavianum controversy. Before Arnold's work, the authenticity of the Testimonium had been assumed by most scholars. The few scholars from this early period who dissented from this consensus, discussed in the previous chapter, were exceptional rather than typical. The publication of Arnold's collection of philological letters was decisive in putting those scholars who believed in the authenticity of the Testimonium in the minority, and obliging them to defend rigorously their own view to other scholars.<sup>1</sup>

The publication of Arnold's *Epistulae philologicae et historicae* was originally occasioned by a passage concerning the Testimonium

Flavianum in the theological disputation exam of Nuremberg native Sebald Snell (1621–1651), which was written during the years 1647–48 at the University of Altdorf. In the preface to *Epistulae philologicae et historicae*, Arnold claims that Snell had appealed to him to defend his disputation. However, because the untimely death of the latter in 1651 prevented this, Arnold resolved to publish Snell's letters along with those of other philologists who had written in response to Snell's views.<sup>2</sup>

Snell's theological disputation exam was a critique of one of Isaac Abravanel's Biblical commentaries. It has already been mentioned in the previous chapter that this famous Jewish Hebraist had expressed a skeptical attitude towards the authenticity of the Testimonium, an attitude that seems to have derived from his assumption, shared by so many other early modern European Jews, that the *Josippon*, which lacked a precise parallel to the Testimonium, was a more authentic source than the actual works of Josephus.<sup>3</sup> In his disputation, Snell raised the question whether Flavius Josephus and Joseph ben Gurion were in fact the same person, and noted that Sebastian Münster, the sixteenth century Hebraist who completed the first Latin translation of the *Josippon*, had indeed so assumed. Then he observed that Münster, having assumed that the *Josippon* was an authentic Hebrew version of Josephus' own works, had raised the question whether Jews had later erased the Testimonium from the *Josippon*, or whether Josephus himself had intentionally omitted it from the *Josippon*, "lest he appear to be mocking his own people." Snell then remarked how "both conjectures are so far from having won favor with the erudite in our age that Johannes Cloppenburg, in his letter to Louis Cappel proposes that Josephus...wanted to mock Christians (rather than Jews) for their belief in the virgin birth."<sup>4</sup>

Snell expressed agreement with Cappel's view that the Testimonium must be interpolated because it does not fit in smoothly with its surrounding text: "there can be no objection to the idea that before Jerome and Eusebius, that passage about Christ was added to the works of Josephus, for the text is very coherent if it is removed...it has nothing in common with what precedes or follows..."<sup>5</sup> Snell then noted that the Testimonium was not quoted by Photius, and concluded, "therefore we cannot charge the Jews with (removing) the lofty testimony about our Savior from (the work of) ben Gurion, since we strongly suspect that the one by our Flavius is forged."<sup>6</sup>

On 20 November 1646, Christoph Adam Rupert (1612–1647), professor of history at the University of Altdorf, wrote a letter to Snell, criticizing his skeptical view of the Testimonium. This letter was placed first in the collection *Epistulae philologicae et historicae* published by Arnold. On 1 December 1646, Snell wrote back to Rupert, reiterating more strongly two of the points made in his disputation, namely that Photius does not cite the Testimonium, and that Cappel appears to be correct in asserting that the Testimonium is not logically connected to the texts that surround it.

In response to Rupert's point that the Testimonium was cited by several early church fathers Snell had a new and intellectually significant response: "I cannot fail to suspect that these church fathers were deceived, and have drawn others off with them in error."<sup>7</sup> Snell then used the fact that patristic writers had read more into Josephus than was warranted by the strict letter of his text to suggest that the citations of church fathers are not good evidence to prove that the Testimonium was extant in their own time. Snell noted that both Eusebius and Photius (Cod. 238) imply that Josephus had used the term "brother of the Lord" when writing of the death of James the brother of Jesus, while Josephus had actually used the term "James brother of Jesus called the Christ" in *Antiquities* 20.200; he also noted that both Eusebius and Photius erroneously imply that Josephus had mentioned the massacre of innocents related by the gospel of Matthew. In addition, Snell noted that the Byzantine Suda lexicon, compiled around 1000 AD, claims that Josephus had asserted that Jerusalem was destroyed because of the death of James and that John was a true prophet. In contrast, he noted, "that neither one of these things today's Josephus asserts at all...Is it surprising that Jerome and Eusebius erred in receiving from Josephus certain particular facts, when they seem to have erred in regard to Josephus' works as a whole?"<sup>8</sup>

Snell's views on the citations of Josephus by church fathers is significant for it marks the first instance in the literature of the Testimonium Flavianum controversy in which such patristic citations, long considered authoritative because of the fathers' religious stature, were very critically scrutinized for accuracy. However, although Snell correctly perceived that Eusebius sometimes confused Josephus' account of James' death with that of Hegesippus, and that Jerome followed and

even magnified Eusebius' errors, he failed to perceive that the Suda lexicon was completely dependent upon Sophronius, the Greek translation of Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*, and that its information could therefore have no bearing on the text of Josephus' works. Moreover it is a critical failing on the part of Snell that he drew an unwarranted conclusion, namely that the Testimonium must be forged, from the simple fact that patristic authors so often used Josephus in an uncritical fashion.

In a letter to Arnold dated 24 March 1651, written just before his own death, Snell reiterated that he could not conceive of Flavius Josephus writing the textus receptus Testimonium because his use of the expression "τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ" in the passage about James the brother of Jesus showed that Josephus had placed Jesus among the "class of impostors who were often boasting of being Messiah, causing perturbation to the Romans and great harm to the Jewish people." Nevertheless, Snell conceded that Josephus had probably made some brief mention of Jesus, although not in the form of the Testimonium, which Snell labeled a "confession."<sup>9</sup>

### **Menasseh ben Israel**

One of the more interesting letters included among Arnold's *Epistulae philologicae et historicae* is a letter from the Dutch ex-Marrano merchant and scholar Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657), which had been written to Arnold on 7 December 1650. It is the only letter in the collection written by a Jew. Undoubtedly related to this are the facts that it is the only letter in Arnold's collection that is written in a vernacular language rather than in Latin, and that it is the only letter centering its argument about the authenticity of the Testimonium on the fact that a parallel passage is missing from the *Josippon*, as the following makes clear:

Touchant ce que doutez de Fl. Josephe, il est certain qu'il a toujours est constant en la religion Judaïque, de la secte Pharisiennne; comme il témoigne lui meme au commencement de sa vie, qu'il a escrit a la fin de son histoire, et du 6 chapitre du 16 liv. de Ant. et au 5 du 7 liv. de la Guerre Judaïque. Tellement, qu'il n'a jamais changé, ni vacillé, jusques a sa mort...Et ce qu'auncuns alleguent a l'encontre du 18.6 Ant. ne fait rien a cecy, a cause que nous l'estimons apocryphe, et non canonique: ce que je vous pourrais témoigner avec diverses et indissolubles arguments que je vous pourrais mieux dire de bouche que par lettres; pource que j'évite autant, qu'il m'est possible les

occasions de faire presumer, que je voulusse offenser quelqu'un. Touchant Fl. Josephé escrit en Hebreu, plusieurs en doutent, et entre authres le tres docte et celebre G. Vossius. Toutesfois cela n'entre jamais en question entre nous a cause que nous croyons unanimement que Fl. Josephé en est l'auteur.

From ben Israel's letter we learn that attitudes towards Josephus and the *Josippon* in the seventeenth century European Jewish intellectual community had changed relatively little since the medieval period: according to ben Israel, the *Josippon* is "unanimously" held among his learned Jewish colleagues to be a genuine work of Flavius Josephus, despite the fact that contemporary learned Christians such as Vossius had demonstrated otherwise. Moreover, according to ben Israel, learned Jews are still convinced that Josephus cannot possibly have written the *Testimonium*, although he himself avoids detailing any argument for holding the passage to be spurious, because he does not want to cause "offense."

On the other hand, ben Israel himself had advanced beyond the sort of medieval Jewish views that are alluded to in Gerald of Wales' *De instructione principum* (Ch. 2, *supra*). Unlike the Jews of Gerald's day, ben Israel knows that the works of Josephus are distinct from the *Josippon*; indeed, he even accepts the former as authentic since he cites passages from *Antiquities* and *Jewish War* as proof of Josephus' faithfulness to Pharisaism. Ben Israel also shows independence from his co-religionists insofar as he has a relatively positive view of Josephus, portraying him as one who "never wavered" from his commitment to Pharasaic Judaism. In contrast, the predominant view of Josephus among most other early modern Jews, as one scholar has shown, was hostile.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the importance of the works of Josephus for understanding Jewish history must have indeed been impressed upon ben Israel, for according to the eighteenth century biographer Jean Pauqot, he was only prevented from writing a history of Judaism which would be known as a "continuation of Flavius Josephus" by premature death.<sup>11</sup>

Menasseh ben Israel's views on Josephus were not treated very sympathetically by either Arnold or by Snell, who received a copy of ben Israel's letter from Arnold. In his reply of 2 February, 1651 Arnold wrote to ben Israel:

I, for my part, can scarcely persuade myself that Josephus was not "inconstant"



in his piety, nor that he never “wavered” even in regard to his own sect; in the first place, even if he wrote many things in favor of the Romans, often pleasing the military commanders, in other respects what he writes goes counter to both them and Josippus. You can hardly be ignorant of that negative judgment passed on his faithfulness by other Jews.<sup>12</sup>

Arnold then proceeded to cite several critical remarks about Josephus from the writings of Isaac Abravanel, who had found Josephus much too cavalier in his treatment of scripture, and who argued that Josephus wrote in order to flatter the Romans. Arnold also criticized ben Israel for confusion in regard to the identity of ‘Josippus ben Gurion’: “Who does not perceive that Flavius Josephus and Josippus, the latter a certain Hebrew and the former the genuine Greek writer, were entirely different people?”<sup>13</sup> Snell was considerably less tactful than Arnold in his reaction to ben Israel’s views of Josephus and the *Josippon*. As he wrote to Arnold on 24 March 1651: “the testimony of Menasseh ben Israel I found quite ridiculous. Many thanks for communicating it to me.”<sup>14</sup>

### David Blondel

Probably the most well known scholar to have a letter published in Arnold’s collection was yet another Reformed philologist, David Blondel (1591–1655). Most of Blondel’s writings were animated by one of two concerns, Protestant apologetics, or philological criticism focused particularly on questions of authenticity. These two concerns were united in his first major work, *Pseudo-Isidorus et Turrianus vapulantes*, published in 1628 in Geneva. This work was a reiteration of the *Magdeburger Centurien*’s exposure of the False Decretals (Ch. 3, *supra*), and an attack on the attempt by the Spanish Jesuit Turrianus (Francisco Torres, 1509–1586) to defend their authenticity. Blondel also published in Geneva an attack on Baronius’ and Bellarmine’s writings entitled *Traité historique de la primauté en l’Eglise auquel les Annales Ecclesiastiques du Cardinal Baronius, les Controverses du Cardinal Bellarmine...sont confrontées...* in 1641. It is possible that his interest in the Testimonium controversy was prompted by familiarity with Baronius’ *Annales*. Yet despite his staunch Protestantism, Blondel seems to have placed philological criticism above denominational loyalties when there was a conflict between the two. Or so one might gather from the fact that he risked the good will of some of his more partisan co-religionists by dismissing the veracity of the legend of Pope Joan, a story

that had been much cherished by many Protestants because of the discredit it cast on the papacy, in an essay entitled *Familier éclaircissement de la question si une femme a été assise au siège papal de Rome*.<sup>15</sup>

Shortly after the publication of this work in 1648, Blondel publicly expressed his doubts about the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum in another work, *Des sibylles célébrées tant par l'antiquité payenne que par les saints pères*, which was published in Paris in 1649. This treatise was unusually popular for a philological treatise, as proven by its rapid translation into an English version by 1661. Its popularity may at least partly be explained by the fact that, unlike most works of the same era and genre, it was written in a vernacular language rather than in Latin. Indeed, it is the first major work dealing with the Testimonium Flavianum controversy examined in this study that was deliberately written in a vernacular language rather than in Latin.<sup>16</sup> Although Blondel wrote to Christoph Arnold in Latin, many of his other treatises were written in French; his choice of the vernacular may reflect his desire for wide exposure of his highly apologetical approach to the religious and scholarly controversies of the day.

Blondel's *Des sibylles célébrées* was one of the first extensive critiques of the authenticity of the anti-pagan pronouncements dating from antiquity known as the Sibylline Oracles; contemporary scholars agree that these alleged oracles had been fabricated by ancient Jews and Christians, who attributed them to the prophetic Sibyls in order to convince Greek and Roman pagans of the truth of monotheism by putting arguments in favor of it in the mouths of their most respected prophetic authorities. In order to strengthen his case against the Oracles, Blondel apparently felt it was necessary to expose other Christian forgeries, especially Biblical apocrypha. Blondel's comment about the Testimonium Flavianum appears in a chapter of this work that is focused on such works, entitled "Reflections on severall supposititious pieces, whereby many of the ancient Christians have been imposed upon and abused." After attacking various Biblical apocrypha, Blondel continues,

D'autres, jaloux de ce que les Juifs & Payens avoient de celebre, ont entrepris de le travestir à la Chrestienne et en approprier à l'Eglise toute la gloire. Ainsi pour oster aux Juifs Hellenistes, la bouche dorée de Philon, on a feint qu'il avoit eu de l'habitude avec saint Marc, & pour appliquer aux Moines

Chrestiens...ce qu'il avoit expressement escrit des Esseens...A mesme dessein de tirer avantage de Joseph, quelque main hardie a inseré dans ses antiquitez lib. 18 c. 14 des paroles qui luy sont d'autant moins convenables, qu'elles contiennent un temoignage honorable, tant de la personne de nostre seigneur que de la sainteté & verité du Christianisme, de la profession duquel cet Auteur a toujours esté tres éloigné; & d'ailleurs qu'elles sont notoirement une piece d'attache sans liaison avec le reste de son discours tant precedant que suivant, & placée à l'endroit qu'elle occupe par affection de parti plustost que par raison. Tel est encore...l'eloge de saint Jean Baptiste inseré au chap. 6 car outre ce qu'il le qualifie [Passage on John the Baptist quoted] & que ce discours ne presuppose riens moins de celuy qui l'a fait, sinon qu'il estoit disciple de saint Jean: la teneur de l'histoire l'exclut formellement, & montre qu'il y a est fourré (peut estre) par zele, mais de tres mauvaise foy...& notez que la deffaitte d'Herode par Aretas étant arrivée sept ans apres la passion de saint Jean...il n'y a guerres d'apparence que les Juifs (qui avoient livré nostre Seigneur a Pilate, combien qu'ils l'eussent suivy & admiré apres le martyre de saint Jean, qui n'avoit causé aucune alteration entr'eux) eussent gardé tant de temps une si vive memoire, de l'indignité de sa mort & de la sainteté de sa vie. On estimoit aussi dès le temps d'Origene, que Joseph "recherchant la cause de la cheute de Jerusalem & la destruction du Temple" avoit dit que "ces choses estoient arrivées aux Juifs en vengeance de Jacques le Juste, qui estoit frere de Jesus dit le Christ, veu qu'ils l'avoient tué étant tres juste;" & la falsification en ce chef a perdu son credit.<sup>17</sup>

In this passage Blondel offers no new reasons for considering the Testimonium to be inauthentic: rather he echoes Cappel's assumptions that the passage is too laudatory to have been written by a Jew, and that it does not connect logically with the material that precedes and follows it. On the other hand, Blondel goes much further than any commentator before him by extending the argument that the Testimonium is too laudatory to have been written by Josephus to the argument that Josephus' passage about John the Baptist is too laudatory to have been written by anyone but a disciple of John the Baptist. Yet despite his exceptionally strong skepticism about the authenticity of the John passage, Blondel is strangely credulous of the reliability of Origen. According to Blondel, Origen wrongly claimed that Josephus connected the death of James to the destruction of Jerusalem because the copy of *Jewish War* known to him did indeed contain such an assertion; Blondel is certain some nameless Christian must have fabricated the Testimonium yet he cannot conceive of the possibility that Origen was guilty of either falsification or simple confusion.

In his letter to Arnold, sent in 1651 from the University of Amsterdam where he held a chair in history, Blondel reiterated, albeit with some refinement, two of the same arguments against the Testimonium that he had made two years earlier in *Des sibylles*: that the passage appears to be out of place, and that Josephus, being no Christian, would never have suggested that the prophets knew that Jesus would rise on the third day. However, in this letter Blondel raised one new objection to the textus receptus Testimonium that had not appeared in *Des sibylles*: that it was sociologically inaccurate. Blondel argued that Jesus had not in fact attracted πολλοὺς... τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ to him, as the textus receptus suggested. He furthermore suggested that Josephus erred in calling Christians a φῦλον since they were “ex Gentibus et Iudaeis, quo Josephus tempore scripsit, promiscue collecti.”<sup>18</sup> It is indeed ironic that Blondel used the argument that the church could not be a single φῦλον when it was made up of two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, to impugn the authenticity of the text, for in so doing he failed to consider that this very fact could be seen as an argument for authenticity. As one scholar has recently noticed, a Christian fabricator would probably not have ventured to contradict the gospels outright by claiming as the Testimonium does that Jesus had had many Jewish and many Gentile followers. Josephus, on the other hand, being under no such constraints, could well have projected the contemporary mixed Jewish and Gentile church known to him back into the time of Jesus’ ministry.<sup>19</sup>

### **Tanaquilus Faber**

The most influential letter in Arnold’s collection was the letter that argued most vigorously against the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum. This was written by yet another Reformed philologist, Tanaquilus Faber (Tannegui Lefèvre, 1615–1672). Educated for the Roman Catholic clergy, Faber had been hired by Cardinal Richelieu to run the royal printing press from the Louvre. The death of Richelieu led to a marked reversal of fortune for Faber, since Cardinal Mazarin was interested in neither him nor in the Louvre press; the Louvre press was terminated, and Faber was left without employment. Shortly thereafter, Faber quit Paris and publicly abjured Roman Catholicism. In 1651 Faber was hired as a professor of philology by the Académie of Saumur, the academic center of early modern French Calvinism.

Although Faber's letter on the Testimonium was placed last in Arnold's *Epistulae philologicae et historicae*, in fact it predated a few of the later letters in Arnold's collection, for it had been published in the first volume of Faber's own collected letters, which was issued from Saumur in 1659. The bulk of this published collection of letters, including Faber's letter attacking the Testimonium, consisted of philological criticism sent to friends and colleagues. In contrast to the other major letter writers in *Epistulae philologicae et historicae*, Faber himself apparently never had any direct intellectual exchange with Arnold. Faber's already published letter about the Testimonium Flavianum was first brought to Arnold's attention in a letter written to him by Johannes Henricus Ursinus in 1660.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, this letter was not the first attack Faber had made on the Testimonium; as early as 1655 he had written at Saumur a *diatriba* entitled *Flavii Josephi de Jesu Dom. testimonium suppositum esse*, which attracted the critical attention of one Roman Catholic scholar, Henricus Valesius (Henri de Valois, 1603–1676), royal historiographer of Louis XIII.<sup>21</sup> In his edition of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, first published in 1659, Valesius alluded in his notes to Eusebius' quotation of the Testimonium in a critical manner to "libelli cuiusdam qui nuper est editus in quo hic locus Josephi de Jesu Christo expenditur" without, however, naming Faber outright.<sup>22</sup>

Faber addressed his letter to a certain Johannes Chabrol, explaining that although he had already written, an apparent reference to his 1655 *diatriba*, that it would be very easy to disprove from the authority of Origen alone the widely-held scholarly opinion that Jesus had been lauded by Josephus,<sup>23</sup> he would also adduce further reasons for challenging this opinion. Some of these arguments were hardly new: they had in fact been articulated by writers before Faber. For example, Faber reiterated the idea, expressed by Cappel and other earlier critics of the Testimonium, that the text seems to be a sequential intrusion in its current context.

Nor were Faber's views about the theological plausibility of the Testimonium being written by a Jew particularly novel. Like Cappel before him, Faber assumed that the Testimonium was too laudatory to attribute to a Jewish writer.<sup>24</sup> For Faber it "sufficed merely to mention" that Josephus was a Jewish priest in order to invalidate the authenticity of the Testimonium, since he assumed that no Pharisee or Jewish priest

could have written such a passage about the Jesus who was so critical of both these groups.<sup>25</sup> Faber also assumed that the Testimonium's statement εἶγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρή must be interpreted to mean that Jesus was God. Thus he could conclude that since "the Jews" did not think the Messiah would be God, "ita a Iudaeo sacrificatore scribi quis credat?" Faber even argued that any Jewish person who had in fact held Jesus to be the Messiah would have written something much more impressive than the textus receptus Testimonium, and he unfavorably compared the Testimonium to Josephus' more lengthy passage on John the Baptist, derisively labeling the former a "dirge." For Faber, it seems, the Testimonium was simultaneously too laudatory to have been written by a non-Christian Jew, yet too laconic to have been written by a Christian Jew.

Some of Faber's other arguments against the Testimonium were more novel, and these novel arguments were to have a very long after life in the history of the Testimonium Flavianum debate. For example, Faber seems to have been the first scholar to attempt to argue against the authenticity of the Testimonium on the basis of its style, although unlike later scholars, he identified no specific words or phrases as allegedly uncharacteristic of Josephus. He was also the first scholar explicitly to give voice to the assumption, expressed very commonly by scholars after him,<sup>26</sup> that because the Testimonium would have been useful in patristic apologetics against Jews its absence in patristic texts before Origen is damning evidence against its authenticity.<sup>27</sup>

His arguments on this point were occasionally far-fetched: arguing that Justin Martyr, the author of the earliest extant Christian *apologia pro Iudaeos*, would have used the Testimonium had it existed, Faber even went so far as to dismiss the obvious point that Justin Martyr may simply not have known of Josephus' works by concluding that such ignorance is impossible given the fact that Justin was from second-century Samaria.<sup>28</sup> Valesius quite reasonably challenged Faber's argument about Justin's silence by pointing out that Justin wanted to prove Christian faith "non...ex profanis scriptoribus, sed potius ut ex sacris prophetarum libris." He also disputed the idea that Josephus' testimony would have carried much weight with the Jewish Trypho of Justin Martyr's apology.<sup>29</sup> This is an argument that is quite close to my own point that Josephus probably was not in fact a respected authority

for most ancient Jews because of his dubious role in the Roman-Jewish war, and that in any case no patristic writers before Pseudo-Hegesippus seems to have thought of Josephus as a weighty authority among Jews (Ch. 1 *supra*).

Faber seems also to have been the first in a long line of scholars to suggest that Jerome, when quoting the Testimonium in his *De Viris Illustribus*, deliberately changed the textus receptus' statement ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν to "credebatur Christus esse" because he was embarrassed by the implausibility of the former statement.<sup>30</sup> Nor was Jerome the only church father to be accused by Faber of fraud. Faber seems also to have been the first scholar to lay responsibility for the fabrication of the textus receptus Testimonium at the doorstep of Eusebius of Caesarea.

Faber felt justified in his suspicions of Eusebius not only because Eusebius was the first writer to have produced the text, but because of Eusebius' frequent Christian misreadings of Josephus: he pointed out that Eusebius unjustifiably tried to read support for the New Testament accounts of the slaughter of innocents (Matt 2:16) and the Quirinius census (Luke 2:1-3) in *Jewish Antiquities*. From his commission of these sorts of errors, Faber concluded that Eusebius was not above willful fraud in the service of the faith, as he put it "id ut vincat Eusebius, quid non molitur?" This charge against Eusebius was dismissed by Valesius, who argued that copies of Josephus must have been widely available in the time of Eusebius, and that Eusebius gained nothing from fraud since the question whether Christ was divine did not depend upon the testimony of Josephus.<sup>31</sup>

But of all the novel arguments that Faber brought to bear against the Testimonium, the most influential was his argument that Origen's statements in *Commentary on Matthew* and *Contra Celsum* that Josephus did not accept Jesus as the Christ prove that the textus receptus Testimonium was forged. However, unlike many later authors beginning perhaps with Voltaire, Faber did not conclude that Origen's statement that Josephus did not accept Jesus as the Christ proved that Josephus had written absolutely nothing about Jesus. On the contrary, Faber seems to have been the first in a long line of subsequent scholars to claim that Origen's statements proved that Josephus originally wrote a passage that was hostile to Jesus.<sup>32</sup>

It was Faber's argument from the evidence of Origen that one of the first scholars to read Faber's letter, Johannes Henricus Ursinus, had found most compelling. In his first letter to Arnold, Letter 20 of *Epistulae philologicae et historicae* dated March 1659, Ursinus used this argument against the Testimonium, without, however, crediting the idea to Faber.<sup>33</sup> In his second letter to Arnold, dated October 1660, Ursinus sent Arnold a copy of Faber's already published letter about the Testimonium, thereby revealing that his own earlier arguments that Origen did not know the textus receptus Testimonium had actually been taken from Faber.<sup>34</sup> Beginning with Ursinus, most scholars have followed Faber in assuming that Origen was not in fact acquainted with the textus receptus Testimonium. On the other hand, not all scholars conceded this point to Faber. Valesius had an immediate rejoinder, namely that there was no inherent contradiction between the textus receptus Testimonium and Origen's passage, since the Testimonium's statement ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν should not be understood to mean that Josephus himself believed Jesus was the Christ, but rather only that Jesus was understood to be the Christ.<sup>35</sup>

Faber himself seems to have felt that his argument from the evidence of Origen was his strongest point against the authenticity of the Testimonium, for he defined his argument against the Testimonium as one that was above all proven from the writings of Origen.<sup>36</sup> Faber's argument from the evidence of Origen was his most important argument because it is the first example of argumentation made against the text since the very beginning of the debate that was actually based on relevant textual evidence rather than on *a priori* assumptions about Jews, or on the dubious evidence of the *Josippon*.

Because of the importance of this kind of argumentation, however, it should be acknowledged that Faber himself may not have been the very first scholar to adduce positive textual evidence against the authenticity of the textus receptus Testimonium. For Faber alludes to the fact that a contemporary fellow Reformed theologian, Johannes Dallaeus (Jean Daillé, 1594–1670), had written letters to him arguing that Theodoret's closing remark to his *Commentary on Daniel* (Ch. 1, *supra*) also appears to contradict the precise wording of the textus receptus Testimonium.<sup>37</sup>

Dallaeus' interest in the Testimonium debate was not surprising given the fact that he had had intellectual contact not only with Faber



and Blondel<sup>38</sup> but even with Louis Cappel (Ch. 3 *supra*), who may well have been responsible for his interest in the Testimonium Flavianum controversy.<sup>39</sup> Like both Blondel and Faber, Dallaeus had a penchant for exploiting his philological expertise in the service of exposing literary forgery. In 1653 he published a work arguing against the authenticity of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, late antique works attributed to the first century apostles. In 1666 Dalleus published another work challenging the authenticity of both the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus and the so-called long recension of the letters attributed to early second century Christian martyr Ignatius of Antioch.<sup>40</sup> Like Lucas Osiander before him, who rejected the authenticity of all three of these works along with so many other early Christian writings,<sup>41</sup> Dallaeus had ample theological motivation to impugn the authenticity of such texts. The Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, which had been one of the few Greek Christian works to enter the West in the Carolingian period, had been particularly influential on medieval ecclesiastical thought, and it was precisely such medieval tradition that Protestants such as Dallaeus were eager to discredit. In attacking the authenticity of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus in particular, Dallaeus was following in the footsteps of not only fellow Reformer Martin Luther but the Catholic philologists Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus as well.<sup>42</sup>

Yet what is perhaps most striking about Faber's and Dallaeus' use of texts by Origen and Theodoret against the Testimonium is that it had taken so long for scholars participating in the debate over the Testimonium to use such evidence. After all, Origen's *Contra Celsum* had been known to Western scholars since the late fifteenth century and Theodoret's *Commentary on Daniel* had been known since the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>43</sup> Why had it taken over a century from the time that these texts first appeared, and over sixty years from the time that Lucas Osiander first impugned the authenticity of the Testimonium, for scholars participating in the debate over the text first to point to positive textual evidence against it?

Certainly the relevant passages of Origen, namely *Contra Celsum* 1.48 and *Commentary on Matthew* 10.17, were not simply overlooked by earlier scholars. Baronius, for example, had directly quoted the former passage for his own purposes, yet had failed to consider the possibility that it might have damning implications for his own arguments in favor of the authenticity of the Testimonium (*Annales Ecclesiastici*, Vol. I,

Ann. Chr 63.7). Translation may have been one factor behind this early silence about the evidence from Origen: while Baronius quoted *Contra Celsum* 1.48 as reading "Iosephus, etsi minus in Christum credidit," the edition of *Contra Celsum* used by Faber<sup>44</sup> has the same passage reading "Iosephus, quamvis Iesum non agnoscens pro Christo," which is closer to Origen's Greek than Baronius' translation, and which more clearly implies than Baronius' text that Origen had read something by Josephus demurring from the idea that Jesus was the Messiah.

On the other hand, there is another possible explanation why these passages by Origen were not viewed as damning the authenticity of the Testimonium when the works in which they appeared first came to the attention of Western scholars, and why they were used to impugn the text's authenticity only after it had already been first argued some sixty years earlier, on entirely *a priori* grounds, that the Testimonium was inauthentic. It is possible that it was only after the new paradigm that the Testimonium was spurious was first publicly voiced by scholars like Osiander that scholars like Faber could even perceive the relevant data, namely the passages of Origen, as evidence in support of the new paradigm that the Testimonium was spurious and against the old assumption that it was authentic.<sup>45</sup>

### Huetius

One of most prominent commentators on the Testimonium was Bishop Petrus Danielus Huetius (Pierre-Daniel Huet, 1630–1721). A fitting personification of the theoretical unification of state and church characteristic of French absolutism, Huetius probably spent as much of his life in the court as in the church. Not only was he a theologian, but something of a political theorist as well. And although he is probably best remembered in scholarly circles today for his edition of the works of Origen, published in 1668, and a critique of Cartesianism published in 1689, his writings on mercantile history, commissioned by Colbert, the great architect of mercantilism, are also noteworthy.

But in his own day his most well-known work was an apologetic introduction to Christianity, entitled *Demonstratio Evangelica*, which was first published in Paris 1672, reissued there in 1679, 1687 and 1690, and in Germany, Amsterdam and Naples in the early eighteenth century. In 1670, Huetius had been appointed sub-preceptor by one of the most

famous apologists of absolutism, Bossuet, and as such he was put in charge of the education of the Dauphin. It was to fulfill this commission that Huetius wrote *Demonstratio Evangelica*, which was intended to show certain contemporaries, who had suggested that the Hebrews had been influenced by the Egyptians, that on the contrary, "the whole of pagan theology derived from the acts, or the writings of Moses."<sup>46</sup> This work gave ample coverage to the Testimonium Flavianum controversy, perhaps because Huetius was personally acquainted with Tanaquilus Faber.<sup>47</sup> Certainly, it is noteworthy that he dedicated several pages of this work solely to an attempted refutation of Faber's attack on the Testimonium.

Huetius had also become acquainted with Menasseh ben Israel, apparently at the court of Queen Christina of Sweden. Following the example of his most famous mentor, Descartes, Huetius had visited her in 1652; from her he acquired many of the manuscripts that were used in his philological and theological endeavors. In *Demonstratio Evangelica* Huetius cited ben Israel's expertise on Jewish traditions several times.<sup>48</sup> After leaving Sweden in 1653, he apparently also came into contact with David Blondel in Amsterdam.<sup>49</sup> Thus it is entirely possible that Huetius' attention was first drawn to the Testimonium Flavianum controversy by either Blondel, or ben Israel or Faber personally.

Like Snell and Faber before him, Huetius remarked that Origen and Eusebius attributed to Josephus statements whose strict meaning cannot be found in the current works of Josephus.<sup>50</sup> He quoted Origen's claim in *Contra Celsum* that the destruction of Jerusalem was brought upon the Judeans because of the execution of James the brother of Christ, contrasting it with the actual passage from *Antiquities* about James' death in which no such claim can be found. Yet Huetius drew a quite different conclusion from the fact that Origen and Eusebius misinterpreted Josephus than did Snell and Faber. Rather than concluding with them that inaccurate citations of Josephus by church fathers proved that their citations of the Testimonium were worthless for proving its antiquity, Huetius argued that Origen's passage,

has been erased from the books of Josephus. Since Origen and Eusebius used him (Josephus) so openly and accurately...it cannot be believed that it was fabricated by either them or by others, or that it was under suspicion or in any doubt. In a similar manner, what Jerome claims about Josephus, and after him Freculph and Suidas, namely that he openly confessed that John the Baptist

was a true prophet, does not occur anywhere in his writings... What then? Shall we conclude that Origen, Eusebius, Jerome and the others were falsifiers? Surely not. It is much more credible that the ancient Jews expunged these things from the books of Josephus... For there have been similar problems with the frauds of the Jews in more weighty matters as well: Origen complained in his letter to Africanus that they had removed the Book of Susanna from the sacred Hebrew scriptures, since they preferred to violate with sacrilegious hands the codices of the divine prophecies, rather than openly admit the impiety and impudence of the greatest of their own men, those most respected by the people.<sup>51</sup>

In fact, Huetius frequently made recourse to an argument about the duplicity of the Jews in his defense of the Testimonium:

(My adversaries) say that Origen in more than one place openly wrote that Jesus was not acknowledged to be the Messiah by Josephus, and Theodoret also affirms the same... while Jesus is said in clear terms to be the Messiah in this passage. From this fact they hold that this statement in the manuscripts of Josephus now being used either did not once exist or is fabricated. But I respond to them that Origen and Theodoret could have possessed codices mutilated by the Jews.<sup>52</sup>

To the argument of Snell and Faber that Christians must have falsified Josephus, Huetius retorted that on the contrary Jews must have falsified Josephus, an unsurprising rejoinder in an age when scholars' desire to expose fraud had, as Peter Burke has shown (Ch. 3 *supra*), become commonplace.

However, Huetius' accusations suffered from a historical misunderstanding of both manuscript transmission and relations between Jews and non-Jews in the ancient period. Because it was in fact largely Christians, and to a lesser extent pagans, rather than Jews who copied the works of Josephus in antiquity, it was hardly believable that early churchmen like Origen and Theodoret could have read versions of these works that had been falsified by Jews. The fact that Huetius approached the question of the authenticity of the Testimonium in such an unconvincing and defensive manner, is a good sign that in his day scholarly opinion was turning against it. Nor was Huetius' larger project of highlighting parallels between Mosaic and pagan theology with the intent of proving the priority of the former much more persuasive. One contemporary reader of his *Demonstratio Evangelica* is alleged to have

remarked in reaction to it “it would be difficult to imagine a book more fundamentally irreligious; or one better fitted to persuade the budding free-thinker that, although one ought to have a religion, it did not greatly matter which, seeing there was good in all of them and that even Paganism could stand comparison with Christianity.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Thomas Ittig and Arnauld D’Andilly**

In 1691 a prolific Lutheran publisher from Leipzig named Thomas Ittig (1643–1710) issued a bilingual Greek-Latin edition of the works of Josephus. The text of this edition was not innovative: Schreckenberg claims that it merely reproduced the Greek text of the 1544 Basel *editio princeps* along with the Latin text of an earlier bilingual edition published in 1611.<sup>54</sup> What was new about this edition of Josephus’ works was its preface including a scholarly discussion of the Testimonium Flavianum controversy. Solely on the basis of the presence of this critical discussion, it could be argued that Ittig’s edition was the first really scholarly edition of Josephus’ works.

In contrast to Ittig, earlier editors of Josephus’ works had been largely concerned with solving the works’ textual problems: perfecting the Greek texts and faithfully rendering them into vernacular languages. These earlier editors of Josephus had not introduced into their editions significant critical discussion of the reliability of either Josephus or his Christian transmitters. Despite their philological acumen, these earlier editors, far from being critical, tended to repeat the sorts of paeans to the reliability and erudition of Josephus that had been characteristic of Josephus’ Christian readership since antiquity.

For example, as late as 1667, a scant six years after the publication of Arnold’s *XXX Epistulae philologicae et historicae*, Arnauld d’Andilly, whose French translation of Josephus from the Greek was reissued more often than any other vernacular version of his works after the English translation of William Whiston, could write in his preface,

Mais si cette histoire est si excellent en celle-même, on ne scaurait ne point reconnoître que nul autre n’étoit si capable de l’écrire que celui qui l’a donné son siècle et à toute la posterité car qui pouvoit mieux qu’un Juif très informé des coûtumes de des moeurs des Juifs? Qui pouvoit mieux qu’un sacrificateur très instruit de toutes les ceremonies et de toutes les observations de la loi? Qui pouvoit mieux qu’un grand capitaine rapporter les événements de tant de guerres? Et qui pouvoit mieux qu’un homme de grande qualité et grand

politique concevoir noblement les choses et y faire des reflexions très judicieuses? Or toutes ces qualitez se recontrent en Josèphe.<sup>55</sup>

Still more revealing of traditionally laudatory attitudes towards Josephus is D'Andilly's remark that the histories of Josephus were preferable to other histories because the latter recounted only the actions of men, whereas the former recounted "les actions de Dieu même."

On the other hand, it is true that even before the late seventeenth century not all Christian scholars were so convinced of Josephus' reliability. We have already seen, for example, that Baronius attacked Josephus' *deliria* in allegedly misdating the Quirinius census, and Osiander, noting that Josephus often reported the same event differently in *War* and *Antiquities*, warned his readers against placing more credence in Josephus than in sacred scripture. Yet these criticisms of Josephus were inspired either wholly, in the case of Baronius, or partly, in the case of Osiander, from *a priori* theological commitments to privilege the versions of the same events reported by the Bible over the versions reported by Josephus. In this respect, too, D'Andilly appears to have been one of the last major Josephus scholars reflecting this frame of mind: while excusing Josephus for leaving belief in miracles up to the readers' judgment, D'Andilly refused to excuse cases where Josephus contradicts scripture outright:

Je scai que quelques-uns s'étonnent qu'après avoir parlé des plus grands miracles il en diminue la créance en disant qu'il laisse chacun la liberté d'en avoir telle opinion qu'il voudra. Mais il ne l'a fait mon avis qu'à cause qu'ayant composé cette histoire principalement pour les Grecs et pour les Roumains...il a apprehendé que leur incredulité ne la leur rendit suspectes s'il assuroit affirmativement la vertité des choses qui leur paroisoient impossibles. Mais quelque raison qui l'ait porté en user de la sorte je ne prétens point de défendre ni en ces endroits ni dans tous les autres où il n'est pas conformé à la Bible, elle seule est la divine source des veritez écrites: on ne peut les chercher ailleurs sans courir fortune de se tromper, et l'on ne scauroit s'excuser de condamner tout ce qui s'y trouve contraire.

In contrast, Ittig's discussion of the Testimonium controversy and the reliability of the transmission of Josephus did not proceed from the prior theological commitment to scriptural inviolability that had animated Osiander, Baronius and D'Andilly.

In his preface, Ittig acknowledged the fact that there had been controversy over the Testimonium, and alerted his readers to the existence of Christopher Arnold's published collection of opinions concerning its authenticity. Ittig also mentioned other authors who had written on the question in the thirty years after the publication of Arnold's *Epistolae philologicae* in 1661 and before the publication of his edition of Josephus' works in 1691.

In addition to airing the views of previous scholars, Ittig did not hesitate to express his own skeptical view of the Testimonium, and was evidently the first editor of the works of Josephus to do so.

For if Josephus had indeed truly written these things, then I cannot fathom why the ancient doctors of the church, who habitually attacked the Jews, did not use this against the Jews. The writings of Josephus were not unknown to Justin Martyr, who greatly commends Josephus' *Antiquitates* in his *Paraenesis ad Graecos*. If there was indeed such a testimony to Christ in *Antiquitates* in the time of Justin Martyr, what would have been more opportune than to oppose Josephus to the Jew Trypho? And if it was known in the time of Tertullian, it can hardly be possible that Tertullian, who called Josephus the native champion of *Antiquitatum Judaicarum* and who wrote a special work disputing the Jews, would have omitted it.<sup>56</sup>

We have seen that this argument concerning the early patristic silence about the Testimonium, and particularly the silence of Justin Martyr, goes back to Faber. Ittig followed Faber in his uncritical assumption that Justin must have known the works of Josephus. Ittig's critical approach to Josephus also foundered upon his lack of criticism in regard to other ancient authors. For although the author of the *Paraenesis ad Graecos*, whom Ittig assumed to be Justin Martyr, does cite some observations about Moses as being from Josephus, the citation is so general that it is far from clear, as Ittig assumed, that the author had actually read any of *Antiquities*, and there certainly is no evidence that he was familiar with any of the later books of *Antiquities* let alone the eighteenth book where the Testimonium appears. Furthermore, since modern scholars are united in agreement against Ittig that the *Paraenesis ad Graecos* was not in fact written by Justin Martyr and indeed cannot have been written before the mid-third century,<sup>57</sup> Ittig's dating of the Testimonium to sometime after Justin Martyr cannot be maintained. In fairness to Ittig, it must be acknowledged that the widespread scholarly assumption that the *Paraenesis ad Graecos* manuscript was correctly

attributed to Justin Martyr was only first challenged in the *Patrologia* of J. Hülseman published in 1670,<sup>58</sup> a fact of which Ittig may have been ignorant. On the other hand, a single careful reading of Tertullian's *Apologeticus* would have sufficed for Ittig to realize that Tertullian had not in fact read Josephus' *Antiquities*, as he assumed, but rather only *Against Apion*.

### Carolus Daubuz

In 1706 a treatise in two parts defending the authenticity of the Testimonium and attacking Faber's views in particular was published in London under the title *Pro testimonio Flavii Josephi de Jesu Christo*. Not much is known about its author, Carolus Daubuz (Charles D'Aubus, ca. 1670–ca. 1740), except the fact that he was from a Huguenot family who had sought refuge in England after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, and that he eventually became vicar of Brotherton in Cheshire. Daubuz' approach to defending the authenticity of the Testimonium was far from uncritical, and his treatise as a whole is noteworthy for several reasons.

In response to Faber's unsupported allegation that the Testimonium did not accord with Josephus' linguistic style, Daubuz devoted the second part of his treatise to the compilation of a miniature concordance of all the words and phrases used in the textus receptus Testimonium in order to show that many of the phrases and words used in the Testimonium in fact had a counterpart elsewhere in Josephus' works. This was the first concordance ever made of any part of Josephus' works. The first part of the treatise is likewise remarkable insofar as it appears to contain the first history of the Testimonium Flavianum controversy.

It is true that ever since the beginning of the controversy it had not been uncommon for apologists on both sides of the debate to summarize the citation of the text from antiquity to the Middle Ages, thereby compiling something like a history of the text. Moreover, Christoph Arnold had published excerpts of writings from many of the most important earlier participants in the debate, such as Osiander and Cappel, in his *Epistolae philologicae et historicae de Flavii Josephi testimonio*. Insofar as he was the earliest collector of primary sources concerning the controversy over the text, and not just of sources citing



the text itself, Arnold could be seen as the first historian of the Testimonium controversy. Nevertheless, it was Daubuz who made the first attempt to synthesize these primary sources into a narrative resembling a history of the controversy itself.

In his defense of the Testimonium's authenticity Daubuz, like Valesius before him, criticized Faber for accusing Eusebius of forgery without evidence, and for dogmatically insisting that early patristic writers like Justin Martyr must have been familiar with Josephus' *Antiquities*. But the most remarkable argument that Daubuz used against Faber was that Eusebius of Caesarea had no need to forge the Testimonium and that early patristic authors like Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria had no need to cite the Testimonium, because no one in their day was denying the fact that Jesus Christ had really existed.<sup>59</sup> This is the earliest clear reference to contemporary doubts about Jesus having existed that I encountered in any of the literature on the Testimonium Flavianum controversy. We have seen earlier that use of the Testimonium Flavianum in the late antique and medieval period was prompted by a number of different apologetic concerns, but proving that Jesus had existed was not one of these concerns.<sup>60</sup> Nor did the controversy over the authenticity of the Testimonium that first arose in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries have anything to do with contemporary doubts about the existence of Jesus Christ.

That Daubuz directed against Faber in particular the argument that early patristic authors did not need to fabricate the Testimonium because they lived before people doubted Jesus' existence is even more remarkable. For the fact is that Faber had not even raised the question of Jesus' possible non-existence in his argument against the authenticity of the Testimonium. Faber assumed that Eusebius of Caesarea had forged the Testimonium to cast Jesus in a praiseworthy light, not to prove that he existed. The contrast between Daubuz' assumption that doubts about Jesus' existence were important to the consideration whether someone might have forged the Testimonium and Faber's lack of concern with the problem of Jesus' existence is a clear indication that hostility to Christian claims had increased considerably between the time when Faber's treatise was written in the mid-seventeenth century, and Daubuz' treatise was written at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Although Daubuz is to my knowledge the earliest author of literature on the Testimonium controversy to refer unambiguously to contemporary doubts about Jesus' having existed, doubts about Jesus' existence and the relevance of the Testimonium to such doubts had been touched on somewhat more obliquely seven years earlier in another apologetical treatise published in London. Ironically, its author, John Bradley, had written this treatise as a defense of Christianity in general and the miracles of Jesus in particular.<sup>61</sup> In his preface, Bradley, in an attempt to ridicule what he perceived as the excessive skepticism of certain contemporaries, remarked, "Some People would have a Passage in Josephus concerning Christ to be supposititious; I acknowledge they have some Pretence for that. If so, I ask whether there ever was such a Person as Jesus of Nazareth...because so exact an Historian as Josephus was doth not mention him."<sup>62</sup> Although such was far from his intent, it is even possible that Bradley's rhetorical question linking doubts about the authenticity of the Testimonium to doubts about Jesus' existence encouraged doubts about the historicity of Jesus.

### **William Whiston**

William Whiston (1667–1725) was one of the more colorful figures from the Age of Science: he is even alleged to have been the model for that satirical caricature, the title role of Oliver Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*. A mathematician and scientist who played an instrumental role in developing a method of calculating longitude, Whiston was hired in 1701 by Cambridge University at the urging of Isaac Newton to fill the post in mathematics that Newton himself was vacating for a more lucrative position in London. In 1709 Whiston published the first of his several apologetical works arguing that the Council of Nicea's position on the Trinity was a regrettable deviation from the superior theology of the early church. In 1710, as a consequence of this vocal Unitarianism, Whiston was banished from Cambridge, and thereafter he was forced to support himself largely as a dissenting clergyman. Like Newton, Whiston was known in his own day not only for his scientific and mathematical accomplishments, but for a firm belief in Biblical prophecy. Whiston, however, was more extreme in his interpretation of scripture than Newton, insofar as he apparently expected the second coming of Christ and the conversion of the Jews to happen within his

own lifetime.<sup>63</sup> But Whiston is chiefly remembered to posterity neither for his theological apologia nor his scientific endeavors but for what was to become by far the most popular translation of Josephus' works ever produced in a vernacular language. Heinz Schreckenberg cites over 130 reprintings of Whiston's 1737 English translation of Josephus' works, and Louis Feldman claims to have found 85 additional reprintings not cited by Schreckenberg.<sup>64</sup>

Whiston had already addressed the question of the authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum* even before completing his translation of Josephus' works. In 1734 he published a book-length collection of essays, *Six Dissertations*,<sup>65</sup> which is noteworthy for including, in addition to an essay about the *Testimonium*, a critical review of Isaac Newton's *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse*. The essay on the *Testimonium* from *Six Dissertations* was reprinted verbatim in his 1737 translation of Josephus, along with five new essays concerning various other controversies about the works of Josephus.

In this essay on the *Testimonium*, Whiston very reasonably pointed out that Faber's and Ittig's assumption that Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria must have been acquainted with copies of *Antiquities* before a Christian added the *Testimonium* to it was unjustified since neither ancient writer displayed any very thorough knowledge of *Antiquities*. More radically, Whiston endeavored to solve the problems posed by the most contested statement of the *Testimonium*, "ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν," by arguing that it was not necessarily meant to be a declaration that Jesus was the Messiah, but that it was merely a label, whereby "Jesus was distinguished from all others of that Name, of which there were not a few, as mentioned by Josephus himself, by the addition of the other name of Christ."<sup>66</sup> But the most notorious argument that Whiston made in defense of the authenticity of the *Testimonium* was the claim that,

though Josephus did not design here to declare himself openly to be a Christian, yet could he not possibly believe all that he here asserts concerning Jesus Christ, unless he were so far a Christian as the Jewish Nazarens or Ebionites then were, who believed Jesus of Nazareth to be the true Messiah, without believing he was more than a Man: Who also believed the Necessity of the Observation of the ceremonial Law of Moses in order to Salvation (*sic*) for all Mankind...Accordingly I have elsewhere proved, that Josephus was no other, in his own Mind and Conscience, than a Nazarene or Ebionite Jewish Christian; and have observed that this intire Testimony, and all that Josephus

says of John the Baptist, and of James, as well as his absolute Silence about all the rest of the Apostles and their Companions, exactly agrees to him under that Character, and no other. And indeed to me it is most astonishing, that all our learned Men, who have of late considered these Testimonies of Josephus, except the converted Jew Galatinus, should miss such an obvious and natural Observation.<sup>67</sup>

The “converted Jew Galatinus” to whom Whiston here refers is Petrus Galatinus (Pietro Galatino, ca. 1480–1539). A member of the Minor order of Franciscans originally from Apulia, none of the standard biographies of Galatinus confirms that there actually was any Jewish ancestry in his very obscure family genealogy, although, for reasons that are unclear, Daubuz, like Whiston, had also assumed that “Petrus Galatinus ex Judaeo factus Christianus.”<sup>68</sup> Galatinus’ apologetical treatise *Opus toti christianae Reipublicae maxime utile, de arcanis catholicae veritatis...contra obstinatum Judaeorum perfidiam* was first published in 1518, well before the Testimonium Flavianum controversy had begun. We have seen (Ch. 3 *supra*) that Sebastian Lepusculus had plagiarized this work’s arguments about the Testimonium to use in the preface to his 1559 edition of the *Josippon*.

Galatinus’ work was no commonplace early modern anti-Jewish apology. Despite its anti-Jewish title it was in fact a defense of Johannes Reuchlin, an early sixteenth century Christian Hebraist who had caused theological and intellectual controversy by arguing that the Jewish medieval Cabbalah should be studied because it proved the truth of Christianity. Galatinus’ apology is written in the form of a three-way dialogue among Galatinus, Reuchlin, who is called Capnius in the text, and the Dominican prior of Cologne, Jacob van Hochenstraten, who is called Hogostratus in the text. The latter had played a prominent role in spearheading an attempt to destroy all the Hebrew books in his own city after the Emperor Maximilian’s temporary authorization of such measures in 1509.<sup>69</sup>

In the first book, the following exchange between Galatinus and Hogostratus follows immediately after the Testimonium is quoted:

GALATINUS: [Testimonium Flavianum quoted] This from Josephus whom the Jews esteem greatly. These two excellent men [Philo and Josephus], though they wrote in Greek, were both Jews and avid emulators of their fathers’ traditions, and would not have had such an opinion of Christ, nor would they

have reported so truthfully those things they said about him unless they had rightfully understood that these things had been predicted about the Messiah by the prophets. For this reason, there can be no doubt that if they wrote such things in Greek, they must have written much more in Hebrew, explicating the law and prophets. For they both were skilled in letters and initiated into scriptures from the very cradle. For this reason, it seems reasonable to believe that aside from them, there must have been many others at that time who had the proper opinion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and wrote truthfully about him, drawing from the law and the prophets.

HOGOSTRATUS: If then they acknowledged the truth, why did they fail to convert? For it is certain that neither Philo nor Josephus, whom you bring forth as examples, were adherents of Christ, rather they remained in Judaism until their death.

GALATINUS: This is indeed true of Josephus...however, I do not want you to miss the point that after the resurrection of the Lord the Jews were divided into three types. Certain of them, seeing the sayings of the prophets fulfilled in him, became adherents in faith and works...Because almost without exception they did so not among the common or ignorant people, but among the nobler and wiser parts, as it says in the Acts of the Apostles, "The greater part of the priests conformed to the faith." And some of them wrote many marvels about Christ. Some of their works are still extant among the Jews, who strive to hide them from men, lest they fall into our hands...Others of them believed that our Lord Jesus was the Messiah, of whom the prophets spoke, but they did not want to abandon the Mosaic observances. These were adherents of Christian faith but not works, because they confessed Christ but clung to Judaism. I judge Josephus to have been of this type, as were countless others.<sup>70</sup>

It will be recalled from the preceding chapter that in the epistolary preface to his edition of the *Josippon*, Lepusculus had approvingly repeated Galatinus' argument from the first passage of the dialogue quoted above<sup>71</sup> that there must have been many first century Jews in addition to Josephus who had held favorable views of Jesus. This is an argument which, I have already suggested, is almost modern in its view of the relationship of the primitive church to Jews outside the church. Yet although Lepusculus had felt convinced enough by Galatinus' argument that many first century Jews such as Josephus had admired Jesus to plagiarize it practically verbatim for his own work, Lepusculus, unlike Whiston, did not venture to follow Galatinus' suggestion that Josephus must actually have been a member of one of the early Jewish groups who recognized Jesus as Messiah.

Whiston's radical idea that Josephus was an Ebionite was not new to his 1737 translation of Josephus' works. His claim to have "elsewhere

proved, that Josephus was no other...than a Nazarene or Ebionite Christian" is a reference to a passage written in an earlier work *A Collection of Authentic Records belonging to the Old and New Testaments*, which was published in 1727–28. In this work, Whiston simply assumed the authenticity of the Testimonium rather than attempt to prove it:

It appears by his Writings, that He speaks with great Respect of John the Baptist, whom the Nazarens or Ebionites highly esteem'd; of James the Brother of our Lord, the Bishop of the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, and in Judea, who was the Nazarens great darling; and of Jesus Christ himself, whose fulfilling the Prophecies, whose numerous Miracles and whose Resurrection he fully acknowledges; as he does also his being the true Messiah: all which they intirely agreed to. He also stiles our Saviour A Man, if it be lawful to call him so, which is the very Stile of a Nazarene or Ebionite, who esteemed him a meer Man...while yet he never directly owns his Divinity; as neither did those Hereticks. He never mentions any of his xiii Apostles, or any of their Companions, or any of their Travels, or Preaching, or Miracles, or Writings or Acts whatsoever, tho' they happened in his own Time. And this while he celebrates Izates...for being Circumcised...So that it seems plain to me, that Josephus in his own private Opinion, was no other than a Nazarene or Ebionite Christian; and with them esteemed our Saviour to be a meer Man...and supposed, with them, that Circumcision and the Observation of the Law of Moses were still in general necessary to Salvation. Tho' I think it no way appears that he submitted to be Baptiz'd or openly to Profess Christianity, even upon the Foot of that Nazarene or Ebionite Scheme.<sup>72</sup>

In the second dissertation of *Six Dissertations*, Whiston even tried to specify when Josephus had become an Ebionite, namely after the death of Vespasian (79 AD) or Titus (81 AD), arguing that it must have been "after the finishing of his seven Books of the *Jewish Wars*, about AD 75 but long before his finishing his twenty Books of the *Jewish Antiquities*, AD 93." This Whiston argued not only because Josephus wrote about John the Baptist, James and Jesus in *Antiquities* and not in *War*, but also because of the fact that in *War* Josephus had dismissed contemporary Messianic prophecies as referring to Vespasian himself, while he approvingly alluded to Daniel prophesying a Messiah who would overcome the Romans in *Antiquities*, "which Predictions he seems to me to have rightly and christianly applied."<sup>73</sup> From this latter observation Whiston suggested that Josephus' disappointment that Vespasian and

Titus, "to whom he had foretold their coming to the Roman Empire," had failed to improve the lot of the Jews, "must naturally make him cast his Eyes elsewhere. And since any Deliverance from the Romans could now be only hoped for from the Jews Messiah, Josephus' Circumstances and Notions directly led him to consider whether that Messiah was not already come, and so directly prepared him for the Examination and Belief of Christianity."<sup>74</sup>

Nor did Whiston stop at the already radical suggestion that Josephus had become an Ebionite Christian after the death of Vespasian or Titus. Apparently abandoning his earlier point of view expressed in *A Collection of Authentick Records* that "it no ways appears that he [Josephus] submitted to be Baptiz'd, or openly to profess Christianity," Whiston attempted to prove in the sixth dissertation appended to his translation of Josephus that the early Greek Christian work περὶ τοῦ παντός, which is attributed to Josephus in some manuscripts, was in fact by Josephus.<sup>75</sup> In the same essay, he even went so far as to argue that the fourteenth of the first fifteen Jewish bishops presiding over the Judean church before the Bar Kochba revolt, who was in fact named Joseph,<sup>76</sup> was none other than Flavius Josephus himself.

With Whiston's argument that Josephus was actually an Ebionite Christian, views on the Jewishness of Josephus and the Testimonium Flavianum had moved full circle since the beginning of the entire controversy. From the argument of many of the earlier participants in the debate that Josephus, as a Jew, could not possibly have written the Christian-sounding statements of the Testimonium Flavianum, Whiston moved to the argument that the Christian-sounding Testimonium in fact proved that Josephus was a Christian. Whiston did not credit himself with the idea that Josephus was an Ebionite Christian, but rather admitted that Petrus Galatinus, a scholar two hundred years before him, had given him the inspiration for this argument. It is probably no coincidence that the first writer to take this earlier scholar's unusual suggestion seriously was a religious radical, whose anti-Trinitarian apologetical concerns had sharpened his interest in the same sorts of early Jewish Christian sects that that earlier scholar himself had held. This interest apparently made both Whiston and his inspiration, Galatinus, able to appreciate, in contrast to so many of their contemporaries, that in the first century it had been much easier to be both Jewish and sympathetic towards Jesus than it was in their own day.

### Cotta

Whiston's eccentric ideas about Josephus did not escape comment from other scholars of Josephus. In 1735 the Lutheran theologian Johann Friedrich Cotta (1701–1779) produced the first German translation of Josephus' complete works since Conrad Lautenbach's edition of 1569.<sup>77</sup> The foreward to this work, which was entitled *Des fürtrefflichen Geschicht-Schreibers Flavii Josephi sämtliche Wercke*, was written in November 1735 by then chancellor of Tübingen University, Christoph Matthäus Pfaff (1680–1760). As professor of theology at Tübingen, Pfaff had directed Cotta's disputation exam on the Masoretic Bible some ten years earlier. Pfaff noted that many scholars in his day rashly promoted very speculative theories in order to make a name for themselves, and he characterized Whiston's suggestion that Josephus had become an Ebionite Christian in later life as an example of such speculative excess:

Doch wir leben in solchen Zeiten, da man sich hoch sich trägt, und aus Begierde sich dadurch einen Nahmen unter den Gelehrten zu machen, und die Leser zu belustigen, gar gerne etwas neues und abenteuerliches ausbrütet. Ja es finden sich Gelehrte, die von Natur ein ingenium fanaticum haben...dass sie auch die elendeste Mutmassungen vor gegründete und gewisse Wahrheiten falsch ansehen. Ich glaube, man findet fast in allen Facultaten dergleichen Leute...Sogar hat sich da der Fanatismus auch in die Critique eingeschlichen, und da mag wohl Whiston zu unsern Zeiten derjenige sein, dem es kein anderer vortut. Was ist das für eine abenteuerliche Meinung, dass Joseph ein Nazarer oder Ebionite gewesen?<sup>78</sup>

Cotta himself, on the other hand, was more tactful than his mentor Pfaff about Whiston's eccentric ideas, perhaps because he had met Whiston in person on a trip to England in 1731.<sup>79</sup> For example, he expressed his approval of Whiston's radical argument that Josephus had indeed written the early Christian work *περὶ τοῦ παντός*.

die Vergleichung dieses Fragmenti mit den übrigen Schriften Josephi mich veranlasset habe, ihn vor den Verfasser desselben zu halten. Die Schreibart, welche man in diesem Fragmentu antrifft, ist derjenigen, deren sich Josephus in seinen übrigen Wercken bedienet...Ich erachte auch solches um so weniger vor nöthig, nachdeme der Herr Whiston sich jüngsthin anheischich gemacht hat, seine Beweise, dass dieses Fragmentum würcklich von Josepho herkomme, der gelehrten Welt hier nächstens mitzuteilen. Ja ich lebe mit der Hoffnung, dass



auch diejenige, welche dieses Überbleibsel Josepho ansprechen, es dennoch nicht missbilligen werden, dass diese lesenswürdige Schrift gegenwärtiger neuen Ausgabe der Wercke Josephi beigefüget worden.<sup>80</sup>

As can be seen in this passage, Cotta did not provide any real evidence to justify his approval of Whiston's claim that the fragment of *περὶ τοῦ παντός* was written in a style similar to the style of Josephus' undisputed works. This passage also indicates that Cotta sensed that other scholars of Josephus might disapprove of including *περὶ τοῦ παντός* in future editions of his works, and it is probably significant that Cotta himself, in contrast to Whiston, did not bother to include a translation of *περὶ τοῦ παντός* in his own edition of Josephus' works. Furthermore, although Cotta, like Whiston, believed that the *Testimonium Flavianum* was genuine, Cotta avoided basing his argument in its favor on Whiston's remarkable claim that Josephus was an Ebionite Christian. All of this suggests that Cotta's assessment of Whiston's ideas about Josephus was more tactful than enthusiastic.

In contrast to Whiston, Cotta made sober, indeed, unoriginal arguments in favor of the *Testimonium*. He argued that all of the manuscripts contained the passage, that it was known to writers beginning with Eusebius, that Daubuz' exhaustive study showed that its style matches Josephus, and that it was unlikely that Josephus wrote nothing specifically about Jesus when he wrote a passage specifically about John the Baptist and Jesus' brother James. On the other hand, Cotta's arguments against those who argued that the text was inauthentic were more interesting than his arguments in favor of the text.

For example, in response to those who argued that Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Cyprian would have used the *Testimonium* in their *apologia pro Judaeos* had Josephus indeed composed it, Cotta, like Valesius before him, perceptively remarked that for most Jews Josephus "als ein halber Apostat keine sonderliche Autorität würde gehabt haben," and that Justin, Tertullian and Cyprian had used the scriptures rather than Josephus to dispute the Jews of antiquity precisely because the Hebrew Bible, unlike Josephus, had authority among Jews. These arguments resemble ones that I also made in addressing the question of the early patristic silence about the *Testimonium* (Ch. 1 *supra*). Specifically, I argued that Eusebius' use of the *Testimonium* within *Demonstratio Evangelica* clearly indicates that he thought that the Hebrew Bible, rather than the *Testimonium*, would carry weight among

Jews, while conversely the Testimonium, rather than scripture, would carry weight among “unbelievers in the prophetic writings” (*Dem. Ev.* 3.2.102).

### Voltaire

Some measure of the impact of the Testimonium Flavianum controversy can be garnered from the fact that Voltaire, the most famous figure of the Enlightenment and hardly a man to eschew a famous controversy, could not resist using it more than once in his writings for his own polemical purposes. Reference to the Testimonium Flavianum appeared in Voltaire’s first important work, *Letters concerning the English Nation*; it was to reappear many times in his later works. In each case, Voltaire exploited a presumption of the text’s inauthenticity for the purpose of casting aspersions on Christian claims in general.

Voltaire’s *Letters concerning the English Nation* originally appeared in an English version in 1733 with a French translation following in 1734. Voltaire’s second edition of the French version, known as *Lettres philosophiques*, differed chiefly from both the earliest French and English versions by the inclusion of one additional letter. This “letter” was in fact a commentary on the *Pensées* of Pascal, whom Voltaire ventured to criticize with the remark, “c’est en admirant son génie que je combats quelques-unes de ses idées.” It is in this commentary letter on *Pensées* that Voltaire’s first reference to the Testimonium Flavianum appeared. In response to Pascal’s statement “je crois volontiers les histoires dont les témoins se font égorger.” Voltaire wrote,

La difficulté n’est pas seulement de savoir si on croira des témoins qui meurent pour soutenir leur déposition, comme ont fait tant de fanatiques; mais encore si ces témoins sont effectivement morts pour cela, si on a conservé leurs dépositions, s’ils ont habité les païs où on dit qu’ils sont morts. Pourquoi Joseph né dans les temps de la mort du Christ, Joseph ennemi d’Herode, Joseph peu attaché au Judaïsme n’a-t-il pas dit un mot de tout cela? Voilà ce que Mr Pascal eût débrouillé avec succès, comme ont fait depuis tant d’écrivains éloquents.<sup>81</sup> (Letter 25, Comment XXXIII)

Although Voltaire was rarely given to understatement, what is noteworthy about his thoughts on the Testimonium Flavianum in this remark is the extreme conclusion that he drew from them. For Voltaire,

not only was the Testimonium unquestionably an interpolation, but this fact proved that Josephus had not written so much as “un mot” about Jesus.

In several of his later works Voltaire stated even more categorically than he had in *Lettres philosophiques* that Josephus had been silent about Jesus. In “Sermon des Cinquante,” dating probably to 1762, Voltaire wrote, in the process of criticizing early Christians, “on falsifie l'historien Josèphe pour lui faire dire un mot de Jésus, quoique Josèphe soit un historien trop grave pour avoir fait mention d'un tel homme.” In *Dictionnaire philosophique*, published in 1764, under the heading “Christianisme: Recherches historiques” Voltaire wrote, “plusieurs savants ont marqué leur surprise de ne pas trouver dans l'historien Josèphe aucune trace de Jésus-Christ: car tous les vrais savants conviennent aujourd'hui que le petit passage où il en est question dans son histoire est interpolé...il ne dit pas un mot ni de la vie ni de la mort de Jésus.”

Despite these several references to the Testimonium Flavianum, it is significant that in none of his voluminous writings does Voltaire say anything about Josephus' passage on James the brother of Jesus (*Ant.* 20.200). For if Voltaire had recalled this passage, it would have undermined his implication that “aucune trace” of Jesus appeared in the works of Josephus. Knowledge of the passage might likewise have raised a question why Josephus, whom Voltaire assumed to be “trop grave” to have written about the obscure Jesus of Nazareth, would have bothered writing about his even more obscure brother.

Yet it is interesting to observe that in his work *Dieu et les hommes* (*oeuvre théologique mais raisonnable*), published in 1769, Voltaire's extreme conclusions about Josephus' attitude towards Jesus had been surpassed by the views of those who were more hostile to Christian claims than even himself. Like Daubuz before him, Voltaire was perturbed by contemporaries who denied that Jesus had ever existed, and he found it necessary to argue against those who had drawn this unwarranted conclusion from his own insistence that, concerning Jesus, Josephus “n'en dit rien du tout.”

Conclura-t-on de là qu'il n'y a point eu de Jésus, comme quelques-uns ont osé conclure par le Pentateuque même, qu'il n'y a point eu de Mose? Non, puisque après la mort de Jésus on a écrit pour et contre lui, il est clair qu'il a existé...J'ai vu quelques disciples de Bolingbroke, plus ingénieux qu'instruits,

qui niaient l'existence d'un Jésus parce que l'histoire des trois mages et de l'étoile, et du massacre des innocents, est, disaient-ils, le comble de l'extravagance...mais ils tiraient une très fausse conclusion...Apollonius de Tyane n'a certainement ressuscité personne; Pythagore n'avait pas une cuisse d'or; mais Apollonius et Pythagore ont été des êtres réels. Notre divin Jésus n'a peut-être pas été emporté réellement par le diable sur une montagne...Mais il y a eu un Jésus respectable, à ne consulter que la raison.<sup>82</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The period under study in this chapter, the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, is the turning point in the history of the reception of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, for it is in this period that scholarly opinion first turned against the assumption that the text was indeed written by Josephus, forcing scholars who accepted its authenticity to defend themselves rigorously. By the end of this period the controversy over the authenticity of the text had come to an end because its inauthenticity had become so widely assumed among scholars. Indeed, by this time, hostility to Christian claims in general had become so strong in certain intellectual quarters that the assumed inauthenticity of the text was even being used to bolster the view that Jesus Christ had never existed. Moreover, during this period, positive hostility to Christianity, as opposed to mere skepticism towards certain Christian claims, seems for the first time to have become a factor in some critics' rejection of the authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum*.

The controversial literature about the *Testimonium Flavianum* from this period stands in contrast to the earlier controversial literature of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century because, unlike the latter, much of it was informed by the observation that significant textual evidence, from the writings of Origen above all, actually cast doubt on the authenticity of the wording of the *textus receptus*. In contrast, we noted that in the controversial literature of the earlier period it was above all Reformation polemics and *a priori* theological assumptions about Jews, rather than substantive textual evidence, that provoked attacks on the authenticity of the text. Thus one could argue that the literature of the later period is on the whole more skeptical than the literature of the earlier period precisely because it actually introduced relevant textual evidence for objecting to the authenticity of the text.

But why did the later critics of the text like Faber feel moved to search for textual evidence in support of the new paradigm that the *Testimonium* was inauthentic? It would seem that Faber was responding to demands for relatively higher standards of proof than those expected in the time of Lucas Osiander and Cardinal Baronius. Although some historians have located the beginning of the critical use of sources in the early Renaissance,<sup>83</sup> or the sixteenth century,<sup>84</sup> in the case of the literature of the *Testimonium Flavianum* controversy, a critical use of the relevant sources seems to have proceeded more tardily. In this literature, it was not until the second half of the seventeenth century that a "sceptical attitude prevailed," as the historians Marc Bloch and Arnaldo Momigliano likewise argued about a somewhat different kind of literature and set of sources.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the literature of the *Testimonium* controversy shows no evidence of a decline in critical attitudes towards sources over time, as is alleged by some historians to have occurred in political histories written between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>86</sup>

On the other hand, not all of the growing hostility towards the *Testimonium Flavianum* among scholars that is characteristic of the controversial literature from the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries should be interpreted as the result of accumulating skepticism and higher standards of proof. From Snell, who was the first of all the authors examined to argue that patristic authors could not be cited for evidence about the text because they so often misused Josephus, to those "disciples of Bolingbroke"<sup>87</sup> cited by Voltaire, who concluded that the text's inauthenticity proved that Jesus had not ever existed, those who were most vocal in assailing the text's authenticity often made more dubious assumptions and cited less evidence than the more cautious critics. Thus it would probably be misleading to divide commentators on the text from this period into "skeptics" and "believers." Sometimes, those who were most critical of the text's authenticity were those with the least skeptical approach in general. Voltaire, for example, used the assumption that the text was forged mainly for the purpose of provoking the defenders of Christianity. His provocative intent, it could be argued, encouraged his uncritical claim that Josephus had not written about Jesus at all. Christoph Matthäus Pfaff's observation that intellectual endeavor in his day was plagued by scholars' desire to make provocative claims, regardless of the evidence, in order to make an intellectual name

for themselves<sup>88</sup> could aptly be applied to Voltaire's contemporary use of the Testimonium controversy for his own anti-Christian purposes.

Overall, it may be doubted whether the religious skepticism of the Enlightenment added much new to the Testimonium Flavianum debate. After all, it was seemingly devout Protestant scholars Lucas Osiander, Louis Cappel, David Blondel, Johannes Dallaeus and above all Tanaquilus Faber who respectively pronounced the text a forgery and marshaled the evidence to prove it. Religious skeptics like Voltaire and the unnamed "disciples of Bolingbroke" he alludes to simply accepted that these scholars were correct without venturing to examine the question themselves. While it is true that Voltaire seems to have been the first to explicitly insist that Josephus had written nothing about Jesus at all, the devout Lutheran church historian Lucas Osiander had long before already assumed the same, without explicitly stating so, when he rejected the authenticity not only of the Testimonium Flavianum but of the passage about the death of James the brother of Jesus, which appears in *Antiquities* 20.200.

If there is one continuity between the controversial literature of the early period, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and of the late period, the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, it is that critics of the Testimonium's authenticity were disproportionately members of the Reformed tradition while Roman Catholics were conspicuously absent from the ranks of the critics.<sup>89</sup> How are we to account for the willingness of so many Protestants, and particularly Reformed Protestants, to attack the authenticity of the Testimonium? Did Protestantism naturally lead to skepticism, as some contemporary critics of Protestantism and some later observers both have argued?<sup>90</sup>

What is clear is that Protestants had much less commitment than Roman Catholics to maintaining the validity of texts outside the scriptural canon: presumably for many Protestants the Testimonium was just one more dispensable text. Thus perhaps it is not so surprising that the Lucas Osiander, who was so eager to outdo the *Magdeburger Centurien* in exposing the dubious nature of texts used in church histories and who criticized those who preferred Josephus' version of events to that of scripture, should have been the first to reject the authenticity of the Testimonium publicly. His hostility to this particular text was, arguably, just one more example of his hostility to the many

other texts cherished by the church since the Middle Ages, which, in his opinion did not legitimately further the cause of Christian truth. Moreover, as I already suggested, Protestants such as Osiander were reluctant to accept miracles outside the early church; consequently many could not accept what they perceived to be the miracle of a first-century Jew writing in laudatory terms about Jesus Christ.

# NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The impact of Arnold's *Epistulae philologicae et historicae* is shown by the fact that the book was reprinted in its entirety in the scholarly notes of the influential 1726 edition of Josephus' works published by Sigebert Haverkamp.
- <sup>2</sup> Haud raro...eruditissimo Snellio...fictam intendi liticulam; quasi manibus pedibusque in clarissimi Ruperti P. M., praeceptoris quoque mei fidelissimi, sententiam illico arbiturus...Cum primis, ubi vir integerrimus petivisset a me, in Belgio tum temporis degente, maxima contentione, ut celeberrimorum virorum ea de re iudicia perscriberem. Nam leniter & verecunde...ac sine detestatione nimia sineque opprobatione acerba reprehensionis, causam suam in Abravanele propositam, porro tueri atque defendere, illi quidem propositum erat. Sed immatura morte praeventus, quod animo intenderat, ex constituti fide...resignavit, neque ultimas meas vidit. Exaravi quidem ad varios varia quoque epistolia, sed reculas, vel nugas potius meas, contemsi semper, ac pro nihilo putavi. Quare pauciores literas, a beatissimo Snellio inter schediasmata sua relictas & ab amico dein mihi communicatas, caeteris immiscui (Arnold, *Epistulae historicae et philologicae*, Nürnberg, 1661, Praefatio).
- <sup>3</sup> According to Erwin Rosenthal, Abravanel knew that the works of Josephus and the *Josippon* were different, but he still thought the latter was an ancient source ("Don Isaac Abravanel," in *Studia Semitica*, Cambridge University, 1971, 43-44).
- <sup>4</sup> 'Incertum est, an Iudaei eraserint ex Hebraico volumine magnificum illud praeconium, quod Josephus tribuit Salvatori nostro Jesu Christo cap. 6 libr. 18 aut ipse autor data opera id omiserit, ne suis illudere videretur.' An tantum abest ut alterutra conjectura eruditae nostrae aetate se probet, ut Jo. Cloppenburch disceptatione Epistolica cum CC Viro Lud. Cappello censeat, Josephum narratione simul illi quam de Paulina a Decio Mundo sub specie Dei substrat subiicit, eludere voluisse fidem Christianorum qui Jesum e virgine natum confitebantur...(apud Sebald Snell, *Disp. theol. quae Is. Abravanel ad Es. 34 & 35 prophetiam, contra fidem Christ. scripsit*, 26 apud Arnold, *Epistulae*, 39).
- <sup>5</sup> Itaque hactenus nihil obstat quo minus ante Hieronymum et Eusebium illa de Christo sint Josepho addita, per quae cohaesio luxata est, optime sibi constituta, ea si tollantur...illa enim cum antecedentibus & consequentibus nihil habere commune, agnoscit in responsione ad propositam quaestionem; etsi aliam connexionis causam suggerat... (Snell, *Disp. theol.* 29 apud Arnold, *Epistulae*, 42-43).



- <sup>6</sup> Uti igitur Iudaeos sublatis testimoniis de Salvatore nostro e Gorionide non insimulamus quod a nostris in Flavio forte suppositum non insciamur (Snell, *Disp. theol.* 29 apud Arnold, *Epistulae*, 43).
- <sup>7</sup> Non possum non sentire hos Patres hactenus fuisse deceptos, secumque alios in errorem abripuisse (Snell to Rupert, Ep. 2 apud Arnold, *Epistulae*).
- <sup>8</sup> Subiicit deinde alium locum e Ant. 20 de caede Jacobi fratris Jesu qui Christus dicebatur, hodie comparet: Jacobus frater J. Christi. Equidem Photius cod. 238 de Flavio agens vocat "fratri Domini" non ex huius, sed propria mente, quomodo occasione Herodis nascentis Christi & Bethlehemitici infanticidii mentionem facit. Similiter Suidas etsi pericopem de Christo exhibet, tribuit tamen Flavio scripsisse, propter caedam Jacobi Apostoli vastata fuisse Hierosolym & Baptistam vere fuisse Prophetam, quorum neutram hodiernus Flavius asserit. Caeterum locus Eusebii tibi persuadebit quae Hieronymus in eundem sensum allegavit, non scripsisse eum quasi secutus sit loquentem ex consequentia... Quid igitur miri Hieronymum & Eusebium in recipienda aliqua particula Josephi errasse, qui toto errasse libro Flavii videntur; certissime autem Eusebius, qui... bis 'Ιωσήφον memorat, qui Hieronymi indicio, erat Egesippus? (Ep. 2, Snell to Rupert, apud Arnold, *Epistulae*, 91–92)
- <sup>9</sup> non mirarer, a Flavio fieri mentionem fidei ac veritatis Christianae etiam hoc loco controverso... si nudam faceret mentionem, sed testimonium edere, confiteri, scribere, quae hodie exstant, Flavium, numquam probaverit... quod dicit τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ, quo ipso eum refert in classem Impostorum, qui saepe Messiam iactantes, Romanos molestia, plebem Iudaicum damno mactarunt... Quid ergo sciverit, vel crediderit de hac quaestionis parte Flavius, primo Pharisaeus; deinde miles, in Magistratum legitimum Romanum seditiosus... Repeto superiorem distinctionem inter nudam mentionem et confessionem (Ep. 14, Snell to Arnold, apud Arnold, *Epistulae*, 179–81).
- <sup>10</sup> Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, *Censorship and freedom of expression in Jewish history*, New York, 1977, 206–208.
- <sup>11</sup> Jean Paquot, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire littéraire des dix-sept provinces des Pays-Bas*, Louvain, 1763, 31 (apud *Biografisch Archief van Benelux*, 343–55).
- <sup>12</sup> vero vel ipse ego persuadere mihi vix potero, Iosephum in religione, vel etiam secta sua, non inconstantem, nedum titubantem fuisse; in primis, si data opera multa scripserit in gratiam Romanorum, in plurimis adversatus & Josippo, placitis saepe magistrorum. Iudicium Isaaci Abravanelis... de hoc scriptore Flavio... productum, ignorare haud potes; ubi inter alia fides ei derogatur a Iudaeis... (Ep. 13, Arnold to ben Israel, *Epistulae philologicae*).

- <sup>13</sup> Super haec Fl. Josephum, et Iosippum, hunc quidem Ebraeum, illum vero scriptorem Graecum, prorsus diversos et satis distinctos fuisse, quis non videt? (Ep. 13, Arnold to ben Israel, *Epistulae philologicae*).
- <sup>14</sup> Testimonium Manassis de Flavio valde mihi arridet; pro communicatione habeo magnas gratias (Ep. 14, Snell to Arnold, apud Arnold, *Epistulae philologicae*, 183).
- <sup>15</sup> It is probably no accident that Blondel published this work, with its potential for offending Reformed Protestants, not in Geneva, where he had published his *Pseudo-Isidorus*, but rather in the less religiously partisan Amsterdam.
- <sup>16</sup> Richard Montagu's *Acts and monuments of the Christian church*, alluding to the controversy and published posthumously in 1641, was written in English, but it is unclear whether Montagu intended to publish the work in Latin or English.
- <sup>17</sup> Blondel, *Des sibylles celebres*, Book 1, Ch. 7. From the 1661 English translation of this work, the passage was translated as follows: Others there were, who looking with a jealous eye on whatever was remarkable, among either Jews or Heathens, would needs make it contribute to Christianity...Thus to rob the Grecian Jews of their golden-mouth'd Philo, it must be feign'd he had some conversation with St. Mark...With the same design of making some advantage of Josephus, hath some bold hand or other inserted into his Antiquities, Lib. 18. cap. 4. certain words which are so much less likely to come from him; for they contain honourable testimony, as well as of the person of our Saviour as of the holiness and truth of Christian religion, from the profession whereof that Author ever stood at a great distance; besides, it is notoriously remarkable, that they are hedg'd in, so as not to have any coherence with the rest of his Discourse, either going before or coming after...Of the same thread is also that Encomium of St. John...for...he describes him as "a good man...[passage on John quoted]." And that this Discourse can speak no less of him who made it, then that he was a Disciple of St. John's, the contexture of the whole Story...evidently shews, that it was thrust in (it may be) out of some zeal, but certainly with much want of sincerity...And it is to be noted, that the defeat of Herod by Aretas, appearing seven years after the suffering of John...there is very little likelihood, that the Jews (who had delivered our Saviour to Pilate, though they had follow'd and admir'd him, after the martyrdom of St. John, which had not wrought any alteration in them) should have had, for so long time, so lively a remembrance, both of the unworthiness of his death, and the sanctity of life. It is also conceiv'd in the time of Origen, that Josephus, desirous to find out the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the Temple, had said, that those things were happened to the Jews, in revenge of James the Just, who was the brother of Jesus called the Christ, since they had kill'd him, though a just person. And no doubt, these words were to be read in his time in the History of the Jewish War, but at

present, there's no such thing to be found, and the falsification as to that particular, hath lost its credit.

- 18 Blondel to Arnold, Ep. 17 apud Arnold, *Epistulae philologicae*.
- 19 John P. Meier, *A marginal Jew*, 64–65 n. 13.
- 20 Ursinus to Arnold, Ep. 25 apud Arnold, *Epistulae philologicae*.
- 21 Heinz Schreckenber, *Bibliographie zu Flavius Josephus*, Leiden, 1968, 23.
- 22 Valesius alludes to “libri duo” which could refer to both the 1655 diatriba and the letter to Chabrol, *Eusebii Pamphili Ecclesiasticae Historicae* I.13, Amsterdam, 1695, Annotationes in librum I, p. 18. Another early scholar who seems to have read Faber’s original *Diatriba* was Cambridge scholar William Spencer, whose scholarly notes to Origen’s *Contra Celsum* were published in an edition of 1658. In the note to Origen’s reference to the Testimonium Flavianum, Spencer remarks “ex his Origenis locis Tanaquilus Faber, in eius Diatriba, colligit Fl. Josephi testimonium de Jesu Domino supposititium esse” (*Origenis Contra Celsum libri octo*...Cambridge, 1658, Annotationes in librum I, 30).
- 23 Quum non ita pridem, Chabroli Clarissime, scriptum a me fuisset, posse Originis auctoritate perquam facile refelli illorum hominum opinionem, qui a ita existimant, Iesum D. fuisse olim a Iosepho, rerum Iudaicarum scriptore, laudatum...(Faber, Ep. 43, *Fabri Epistolae* I, Saumur, 1674).
- 24 Non enim saltem decuerat, ea apud Iudaeum scriptorem lectitari, quibus ampliora aut magnifica magis habere nequeant scriptores ii, qui ritum Christianae religionis sequuntur (Faber, *Epistolae*... Ep. 43).
- 25 sed erit, opinor, satis dixisse, sacrificatorum fuisse, ideoque, ut par est, religionis Iudaicae tenacissimum: dein secta Pharisaicum, id est, ex eo hominum genere, quos sibi praecipue exagitandos D. Jesus existimaverat...(Faber, *Epistolae*... Ep. 43)
- 26 For a modern scholar’s version of this argument see Louis H. Feldman, “The Testimonium Flavianum: The state of the question,” in *Christological perspectives*, New York, 1982, 181–85.
- 27 Quidnam autem validius adversus Iudaeum hominem, quam Iudaei sacrificatoris testimonium? (Faber, *Epistolae*... Ep. 43).
- 28 Nam quum Samarites fuerit, qui quaeso, fieri potuisse credas, ei ut Josephi scripta ignota fuerint, hominis nomen non audierit? Plane incredibile (Faber, *Epistolae*... Ep. 43).

- 29 Aut quasi testimonium Iosephi historiarum scriptoris, magnum pondus habiturum fuisset apud Tryphonem (Faber, *Epistolae*... Ep. 43).
- 30 Hieronymus in Catalogo scriptorum ecclesiasticorum locum hunc quum faceret Latinum, non vertit, hic erat Christus, itidem ut Graece legitur, sed hic credebatur esse Christus. Id quamobrem quaeso? Videlicet sagasissimo viro, cuique librariae fraudes probe notae erant, paulo durius visum est in ore Iudaei hominis istuc dictum quamobrem emollire tentavit...et quum dicere debuisset erat Christus, erubuit scilicet, scripsitque, credebatur Christus (Faber, *Epistolae*... Ep. 43).
- 31 Nam cui bono id Eusebius confingere voluisset? An ex testimonio Iosephi pendebat divinitas Christi? Annon Eusebius aetate libri Antiquitatum Iosephi in omnibus bibliothecis visebantur...(Henricus Valesius, *Eusebii Pamphili*, Annotationes in librum I, 13, p.18)
- 32 Unde ex hoc quoque Origenis loco constat, a Iosepho Iesum D. laudatum non fuisse, sed contra: itaque adeo id verum esse, quod antea saepe significavi, adversus Iesum D. scripsisse Iosephum (Faber, *Epistolae*...Ep. 43).
- 33 Origenes ipse indicat, suo aevo non ita lectum fuisse illud in Iosepho, ait enim Iosephum Iesum nostrum parum agnovisse pro Christo (Ep. 20, Ursinus to Arnold, apud Arnold, *Epistulae philologicae*).
- 34 libero fidem meam, tibi...promissum exemplum Epistulae Fabri mitto (Ep. 25 Ursinus to Arnold, apud Arnold, *Epistulae philologicae*).
- 35 Ad illud autem argumentum quod ex Origene ducitur, facilis est et expedita responsio. Negat quidem Origenes in libris Contra Celsum, Iosphum agnovisse Iesum Christum, id est credidisse Christo, seu Christianum fuisse. Sed neque ex hoc Iosephi loco quem hic citat Eusebium, sequitur Iosephum Christi fidem amplexum fuisse. Quamvis enim dicat ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν sub audiendum est λεγομένος, id est, hic erat qui dicebatur Christus (Valesius, *Eusebii Pamphili*, Annotationes in librum I, 13, p. 18). Similarly, William Spencer wrote: "haec verba...ostendunt eundem Iosephum quaedam de Iesu Domino scripsisse...scripturae Iudaicae praedixerunt Messiam, non agnovisse, etenim haud aliter Jesu fidem non habuit, nisi prout nonnulli Iesum pro Christo et Messia haberi voluerunt (*Origenis Contra Celsum libri octo*...Annotationes in lib. I, p. 30. Cambridge, 1658).
- 36 Faber had opened his letter with the statement "...posse Origenis auctoritate perquam facile refelli illorum hominum opininem, qui ita existimant, Iesum D. fuisse olim a Iosepho...laudatum," and he adds a little later, "Ostendamusque πῃσιν

hanc tam insulse ac negligenter intrusam fuisse, ut Origenis testimoniis, quae a nobis proferetur, facile carere possimus (Faber, *Epistolae*... Ep. 43).

- 37 Et tamen Theodoretus, Episcopus Cyri, ut mihi per Epistolas indicavit Iohannes Dallaeus, extremis in Daniele commentariis affirmat, 'Ιώσηπον τὸν Ἑβραῖον οὐ δέξασθαι τὸ Χριστιανικὸν κήρυγμα. Id autem qui potuisset scribere Theodoretus, si apud Iosephum reperisset, quod hodie legimus...? (Faber, *Epistolae*... Ep. 43)
- 38 The preface to Dallaeus' *Apologia pro ecclesiis reformatis*, first published in 1652, is dedicated to David Blondel.
- 39 J. F. Dreux du Radier, *Bibliothèque historique et critique du Poitou* (1754) apud *Archives biographiques françaises*, 313.
- 40 The long recension of Ignatius' letters is in fact partially authentic, or rather interpolated. This was first persuasively demonstrated in 1644 by Archbishop James Ussher, who also restored the original text of the letters on the basis of manuscript evidence (Kirsopp Lake, *Apostolic Fathers* I, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University, 1912; reprint 1985, 169–70).
- 41 Osiander, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Cent. I, lib. 3, Ch. 4, p. 141–43, lib. 3, Ch. 8 p. 105–106 and Ch. 23, p. 130–32.
- 42 On the medieval influence of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, and the attack on its authenticity by Valla and Protestant Reformers see Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, Oxford University, 1993, 14–17, 237–40.
- 43 Christopher Persona's translation of *Contra Celsum* was published in 1481 in Rome. According to the National Union Catalogue, the earliest edition of Theodoret's *Commentary on Daniel* was published in 1562 in Rome.
- 44 Faber (*Epistolae*... Ep. 43) claims that he used the translation of Origen's work by Gilbert Genebrard (1537–1597), which, according to the National Union Catalogue, was published in Paris in 1604 and 1619.
- 45 In his well known essay Thomas S. Kuhn seems to be arguing that after a new paradigm for a given phenomenon is proposed, the perception of the relevant data itself is changed: scientists discover data that they had earlier ignored to support the new paradigm (*Structures of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago, 1970, 111–35).
- 46 Paul Hazard, *The European Mind, 1680–1715*, 45.

- 47 E. Haag, *La France protestante*, Paris 1846–59 apud *Archives biographiques françaises* 40.
- 48 Petrus Danielus Huetius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, Paris, 1689, 401E–419A, 422A–E.
- 49 David S. Katz, “Vossius and the English Biblical critics,” in *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Leiden, 1993, 148–49.
- 50 Testimoniorum Josephi alterum recitat Origenes in libris contra Celsum; utrumque Eusebius; quorum nunc unum duntaxat apud Josephum reperire licet (Huetius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, Bk. 1, Prop. 3, 32).
- 51 Locus e Josephi libris erasus est. Quem quoniam tam aperte & fidenter usurpant Origenes, & Eusebius...minime credi potest vel confictum ab iis fuisse, vel ab aliis, aut omnino suspectum fuisse & dubium. Simile & illud est, quod de Josepho praedicat Hieronymus, et post Hieronymum Freculphus, & Suidas, manifestissime eum confiteri decimo octavo Antiquitatum libro, Johannem Baptistam vere Prophetam fuisse, quod tamen illic nusquam occurrit...Quid ergo? falsarios dicemus Origenem, Eusebium, Hieronymus, Hieronymum & alios? minime vero. Longe credibilis est haec e Josephi libris expunxisse priscos illos Judaeos...Similis fuit in re graviore Judaeorum dolus, quos historiam Susannae ex Ebraicis scripturae sacrae voluminibus detraxisse queritur Origenes in Epistola ad Africanum; cum divinorum oraculorum codices sacrilega manu violare maluerint, quam majorum suorum, virorum scilicet in hac gente spectabilium, impietatem & impudicitiam ingenue confiteri (Huetius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, Bk. 1, Prop. 3, 32).
- 52 Nunc quid opponant Adversarii videamus. Originem non uno loco aperte scripsisse aiunt, Jesum a Josepho non fuisse pro Christo agnitum, idem quoque Theodoretum asservasse...cum in hoc tamen loco Jesus clarissimis verbis Messias fuisse dicatur...Unde efficitur, vel haec in Josephi exemplaribus, quibus usi sunt, non extitisse, vel pro falsis & suppositiis habuisse. Ego vero respondeo in mutilos & Judaeorum manus expertos codices incidere potuisse Originem, & Theodoretum...(Huetius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, Bk. 1, Prop. 3, 34).
- 53 Quoted by Paul Hazard in *The European Mind, 1680–1715*, Cleveland, 1964, 46.
- 54 Heinz Schreckenber, *Biographie zu Flavius Josephus*, Leiden, 1968, 28.
- 55 Similar sentiments are expressed some one hundred years earlier by Conrad Lautenbach in the preface to his sixteenth century translation of Josephus’ works (*Flavii Josephi, dess hochberühmten Jüdischen Geschichtschreybers Historien und Bücher...* Strassburg, 1574).

- <sup>56</sup> Si vere ista Iosephus scripsit, mirari satis nequeo, quod antiqui ecclesiae doctores qui ex instituto Iudaeos impugnarunt, telo hoc contra Iudaeos usi non fuerint. Non incognita erant Iosephi scripta Iustino Martyri, quippe qui in Paranesi ad Graecos Iosephi Antiquitates egregie commendat. Quid ergo opportunius fuisset, quam Tryphoni Iudaeo Iosephum opponere si Iustini aevo illud de Christo testimonium in Iosephi Antiquitatibus lectum fuisset? Tertullianus quoque, qui Iosephum Antiquitatum Iudaicarum vernaculum vindicem appellat etsi peculiari opere contra Iudaeos disputet, Iosephi tamen de Christo testimonium omittit, quod sane fieri vix potuisset, si Tertulliani aetate cognitum fuisset (Ittig, *Flavii Iosephi Hierosolymitani sacerdotis opera...* Praef. Leipzig, 1691).
- <sup>57</sup> The most plausible hypothesis regarding the composition of the Pseudo-Justin *Paranesis ad Graecos* remains that of the nineteenth century patristic scholar J. Dräseke: that it is the lost apologetical treatise of Apollinarius of Laodicea (Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.18) written in response to emperor Julian's anti-Christian measures ("ΛΟΓΟΣ ΠΑΡΑΝΕΤΙΚΟΣ ΠΡΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΑΣ," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 7 (1885) 277–302).
- <sup>58</sup> According to M. Marcovich, the attribution to Justin was also questioned in L.E. Du Pin's *Nouvelle bibliothèque des auteurs ecclésiastiques* published in 1686 (*Pseudo-Iustinus: Cohortatio ad Graecos, De Monarchia, Oratio ad Graecos*, Berlin, 1990, 3).
- <sup>59</sup> Ut vobis producam auctores Eusebius antiquiores, cum nulla his esset necessitas ad Iosephum provocandi? nemo ante Eusebium negabat existisse Christum... Vel itaque non habuit Clemens hujus Libros vel saltem non tanti duxit, ut saepius laudare fuerit necesse, in re praesertim ubi Iosephus Clementem non multum adjuvare potuisset. Nemo tum negabat Christum existisse... licet non citaverit in Apologia Tertullianus, cur non utitur hoc Argumento adversus Iudaeos? Sed facilis est responsio, nempe quia hi neque Iosephi auctoritate moventur ut ea credant, quae in hoc Testimonio reperiuntur: praesertim cum eo tempore de Christi existentia nemo dubitaret (Daubuz, *Pro Testimonio Flavii Iosephi de Iesu Christo*, Book 1, 7 and 29–31).
- <sup>60</sup> I cannot agree with Louis Feldman that Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* 8 contains any allusion to doubts about Jesus' existence (*Iosephus, Judaism and Christianity*, Wayne State University, 1987, 57). The context of Trypho's argument "but if the Messiah has been born and exists anywhere, he is unknown, nor is he conscious of his own existence, nor has he any power until Elijah comes to anoint him and make him manifest to all. But you [Christians] have believed this false rumor and invented a Messiah for yourselves" suggests only that Trypho, like most of his Jewish contemporaries, did not agree with Christians that Jesus was the Messiah.

- 61 Bradley expends a great deal of energy in his treatise impugning Apollonius of Tyana's miracle-working abilities, a clear sign that some contemporaries were comparing Jesus and Apollonius in a manner unfavorable to the former (*An impartial view of truth of Christianity with the history of the life and miracles of Apollonius of Tyana...* London, 1699).
- 62 John Bradley, *An impartial view of truth of Christianity...* Preface.
- 63 James E. Force, *William Whiston, honest Newtonian*, Cambridge, 1985, 10–31.
- 64 Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus and modern scholarship (1937–1980)*, Berlin 1984, 29.
- 65 William Whiston, *Six Dissertations*, London, 1734.
- 66 Whiston, *Six Dissertations*, I.5, 55.
- 67 Whiston, *Six Dissertations*, I.5, 57–58.
- 68 Daubuz, *Pro Testimonio Flavii Iosephi de Jesu Christo*, Bk. 1, 18 (apud S. Haverkamp, *Flavii Iosephi quae reperiri potuerunt*, 1726, 197).
- 69 On Reuchlin and van Hochenstraten see Jerome Friedman, *The most ancient testimony*, Ohio University, 1983, 26–27.
- 70 HOG. si ergo isti veritatem agnoverunt, quare ipsam amplecti neglexerunt? Constat enim (ut alios praetermittam) & Philonem, & Iosephus, quos exempli gratia attulisti, haud quaque Christo adhaesisse, sed usque ad obitum in iudaismo permansisse. GAL. Id quidem verum est, & de Iosepho praesertim... Te tamen non ignorare velim, post Domini resurrectionem in triplex Iudaeos divisos fuisse genus. Quidam enim videntes prophetarum dicta in eo consummata, & fide & opere illi adhaeserunt... Quod & alii pene infiniti fecerunt, non de plebeis, aut ignaris tantum, sed de nobilioribus atque sapientioribus. Nam ut in actibus Apostolicis scribitur, maxima pars sacerdotum obtemperabat fidei. Et horum nonnulli multa de Christo miranda scripserunt. Quorum opuscula aliqua adhuc extant apud Iudaeos, quis ne ad manus nostras perveniant, pro viribus oculere nitantur... Quidam vero eorum credebant quidem ipsum Dominum Iesum fuisse Messiam illum, de quo prophetae locuti fuerant, mosaicas tamen observantias deserere nolebant. Hi fide tantum & non opere Christo adhaeserunt. Quia Christum quidem confitebantur, in iudaismo tamen perseverabant. Qualis (ut arbitror) Iosephus fuit ac alii fere innumeri (Galatinus, *Opus totius christianae Reipublicae...* Book 1, Chap. 5).



- <sup>71</sup> For the sake of brevity, I did not transcribe the Latin of this passage in the footnote immediately preceding, since it can be found in Chapter 3, *supra*.
- <sup>72</sup> Whiston, *A Collection of Authentick Records*, Part II, London, 1727–28, 959–960.
- <sup>73</sup> Josephus' application of contemporary Messianic prophecy to Vespasian is *War* 6.313, while his oblique allusion to a Messiah destroying the Romans is *Ant.* 10.210.
- <sup>74</sup> Whiston, *Six Dissertations*, II, 129–131.
- <sup>75</sup> Most modern scholars attribute this work to Hippolytus of Rome. For a recent overview of the question, and an argument why the work was misattributed to Josephus see A. Whealey, "Hippolytus' Lost De Universo and De Resurrectione: Some new hypotheses," *Vigiliae Christianae* 50,3 (1996) 244–250.
- <sup>76</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.5.3.
- <sup>77</sup> According to Heinz Schreckenberg, *Bibliographie zu Flavius Josephus, Supplementband*, Leiden, 1979, 180–81.
- <sup>78</sup> Despite his criticism of Whiston's speculative excesses, it is noteworthy that Pfaff's own reputation as a critical scholar, rather like that of Goldast von Haiminsfeld (Ch. 3 *supra*), has been tarnished by the suspicion that he most likely forged fragmentary quotes in the name of the early church father Irenaeus (Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and critics*, Princeton University, 1990, 32).
- <sup>79</sup> G. W. Goetten, *Das jetzlebende gelehrte Europa*, 1736 apud Deutsches Biographisches Archiv, 99.
- <sup>80</sup> Cotta, *Des furtrefflichen Geschicht-Schreibers Flavii Josephi...Praefatio*, 16.
- <sup>81</sup> Although recent scholars have argued that most of the English version of *Letters concerning the English nation* is actually from the pen of Voltaire and must be considered equal if not superior in authenticity to the French, the opposite is the case with this particular letter, which was only first published in the second French version, *Lettres philosophiques*. The first English version of this letter appeared in the second English version of the work, published in 1741. The anonymous translator rendered this passage, "The difficulty is not only to know, whether we ought to give credit to witnesses, who die in defence of their testimony, as so many enthusiasts have done; but likewise, whether such witnesses really lost their lives on that account; whether their testimony has been transmitted to us; whether they lived in the countries where 'tis related they died. How comes it to pass, that Josephus, who was born at the time of Christ's death; Josephus, who hated Herod; Josephus,

who was but faintly attach' d to the Jewish principles, does not once mention any of these particulars? This is what Mr. Pascal would have unravell' d with success, as so many eloquent writers have done, since his death (*Letters concerning the English nation*, ed. Nicholas Cronk, Oxford 1994, xvi–xxxii, 122–23).

- 82 Voltaire, *Dieu et les hommes*, Chapter 31, De Jésus.
- 83 For a general argument about the early Renaissance see Peter Burke, *Renaissance sense of the past*, London, 1969. E. B. Fryde makes the same case focusing more narrowly on the case of national political histories in his *Revival of scientific and erudite historiography in the earlier Renaissance*, University of Wales, 1974.
- 84 For France, see George Huppert, *The idea of perfect history*, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1970, and Donald R. Kelley, *Foundations of historical scholarship*, New York, 1970. However, Huppert looks almost entirely at the case of national French history and Kelley looks mainly at legal history. The Testimonium Flavianum controversy was treated mainly by church historians and philologists, not by political or legal historians.
- 85 See Marc Bloch, *The historian's craft*, trans. P. Putnam, New York, 1959, 82 and Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient history and the antiquarian," *Studies in historiography*, London, 1966, 10. However, while Momigliano particularly emphasized the importance of non-literary sources to the skeptical approach of much late seventeenth century history writing, non-literary evidence was not relevant to the Testimonium Flavianum controversy in this period.
- 86 Both E. B. Fryde and George Huppert argue that the absolutism of the seventeenth century hobbled the writing of critical national histories compared to the early Renaissance and sixteenth century (E.B. Fryde, *The revival of a scientific and erudite historiography*, 3, and Huppert, *The idea of perfect history*, 170–75; 178–81).
- 87 Lord Bolingbroke (1678–1751) seems not to have left a record of doubting Christ's existence, but in any case Voltaire attributes these doubts to his "disciples" not to Bolingbroke himself.
- 88 wir leben in solchen Zeiten, da man sich damit hoch träget, und aus Begierde, sich dadurch einen Nahmen unter den Gelehrten zu machen, und die Leser zu belustigen, gar gerne etwas neues und abenteuerliches ausbrütet... So bin ich versichert, dass es Philosophos fanaticos gibt, die auch auf die abenteuerlichsten Sätze, die wider allen sensum communem lauffen, fallen... Sogar hat sich da der Fanatismus auch in die Critique eingeschlichen...(C. M. Pfaff, apud *Des furtrefflichen Geschicht-Schreibers Flavii Josephi*).

- <sup>89</sup> The only Roman Catholic who attacked the authenticity of the Testimonium in the early modern literature as far as I was able to discover was the author of an essay appearing in Richard Simon's *Bibliothèque Critique*. This essay is alleged to be written by "Mr. Piques Docteur de Sorbonne...on ne croit pourtant pas qu'elle soit de lui, mais d'un de ses amis." The concern evident here not to identify too precisely the author of this piece, which made no new arguments but rather cited the arguments of the Calvinists Blondel and Faber, is itself evidence of the hesitation among early modern Roman Catholics to dismiss the text openly (*Bibliothèque Critique*, Vol. I, Ch. 2. Amsterdam, 1708, 26–41).
- <sup>90</sup> Anthony Kemp writes "if the Reformation was a movement of great religious revival, it also contained within itself the opposite tendency: toward Deism and the withdrawal of God from human experience" (*The estrangement of the past*, Oxford University, 1991, 81). The intellectual historian Richard Popkin has suggested that the Reformation was particularly instrumental in the development of religious and intellectual skepticism and thereafter the birth of the Enlightenment because reformers called into question the traditional basis for establishing truth (*The history of scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*, University of California, Berkeley, 1979, 15–17). Max Weber notoriously tried to connect Reformed Protestantism in particular to the intellectual and social rationalization of the modern world in such works as *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

## Chapter 5

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### The Revival of Controversy

In the preceding chapter it was suggested that by the end of the period under examination, that is by around 1750, the controversy over the Testimonium Flavianum had essentially come to an end because the weight of intellectual opinion had turned so decisively toward the view that the text was forged. This preponderance of intellectual opinion, which denied the authenticity of the text, would continue into the nineteenth century. Yet in the twentieth century controversy over the text was revived on at least two separate occasions. This chapter will examine the question why the weight of scholarly opinion moved from a complacent consensus that the text was a forgery in the nineteenth century to the climate of controversy that is still with us today.

#### Emil Schürer

The argument that real controversy over the Testimonium Flavianum text had ended already by about 1750 does not mean, of course, that there were no scholarly commentators from this period until the twentieth century who argued in favor of the text's authenticity. On the contrary, numerous scholarly articles, appearing mainly in academic journals, were written in favor of the position that the text was genuine during this period. However, it is probably fair to assert that none of these *apologia pro Testimonio* advanced really new arguments in favor of the text's authenticity, although many repeated reasonable arguments that had been made in the past.

We may take the opinions of the Protestant scholar and theologian Emil Schürer (1844–1910) as representative of the more weighty strain of nineteenth century scholarly opinion that rejected the Testimonium's authenticity. Schürer was the author of a highly influential three volume work called *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesus Christi*, which was first published as a handbook for theology students in 1874, revised into a second edition in 1886–90, and revised again in 1901–1909. This work has been considered so definitive that a new version, which reproduced much of Schürer's original text while incorporating

some modern scholarship based on new discoveries made after his death such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, was reissued as recently as 1973. The work as a whole was the product of the highly critical analysis of Biblical sources typical of nineteenth century academia that was one time known as "higher criticism."<sup>1</sup>

Schürer was so confident that the *Testimonium Flavianum* was forged that he insisted that there should no longer be any controversy at all over the text. As he put it: "...man sollte billigerweise wenigstens darüber einig sein, dass die Worte so...von Josephus nicht geschrieben worden sind." To him it was patently obvious that readers should recognize both the "völlige Unechtheit" of the *Testimonium*, and the fact that "Josephus überhaupt von Christo geschwiegen habe."<sup>2</sup> Schürer's reasons for rejecting the authenticity of the *Testimonium* were not original. He cited the fact that Origen does not seem to have known the *textus receptus*, and he resorted to the sort of *a priori* reasoning that was used by the earliest critics of the text: that too many phrases in the text reflect the tenets of Christian faith and thus Josephus could not possibly have written them since he was not a Christian.

While Schürer's dismissal of the *Testimonium* was more typical of his age than remarkable, Schürer's argument that the passage on James the brother of Jesus in Book 20 of *Antiquities* was likewise forged was, and remains, unusual.<sup>3</sup> Schürer argued that Josephus could have made no reference to Christ at all, not even as the brother of James, because he wanted to avoid all references to a Messiah in order to present the Jews to Greco-Roman readers as reasonable people rather than as messianic fanatics. Schürer also seized on the fact that Origen wrongly attributed to Josephus the statement about Jerusalem being destroyed because James was killed as evidence that Origen had read a text of Josephus with such a statement. From this he concluded that already in the time of Origen, Josephus' works were being interpolated by Christians. Like so many scholars before him, Schürer neglected to consider the possibility that Origen had simply misinterpreted Josephus.

### **Benedikt Niese**

Although the Renaissance, defined in its broadest extent from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, was a period of new critical attitudes towards sources, this development did not include a very critical understanding of the transmission of these sources. It was not until the

second half of the nineteenth century that systematic principles of manuscript dating and collation were first fully developed.<sup>4</sup> All previous editions of Josephus' works up to the late nineteenth century had depended heavily upon the *editio princeps* published by Arnold Arlenius in Basel in 1544. As noted earlier (Ch. 3 *supra*), this text was largely based upon one manuscript, Escorialensis gr. 307 (304), which had been copied as late as 1542 in Venice. This manuscript had not been chosen for its age or quality for, as already noted, in the sixteenth century scholars were not making any very systematic attempt to classify and date manuscripts. Rather, the choice of manuscript probably had something to do the fact that Arlenius, the publisher, had had personal contacts with the owner of the manuscript, Charles V's ambassador to Venice.

The first edition of Josephus' works based on an attempt to critically classify, date and collate the manuscripts of Josephus was published by Benedikt Niese in Berlin in 1885–95. In his edition of *Antiquities*, Niese placed editorial brackets around the Testimonium Flavianum passage, which is a clear indication that, in his opinion, the text was not genuine. Niese also published an argumentative essay on the authenticity of the Testimonium. In this essay he reiterated several old arguments against the text, like the fact that it does not fit in smoothly with its surrounding context, and that Origen seems not to have known the text in its current form.

In a more innovative vein, Niese did bring his extraordinary familiarity with the text of Josephus' works as a whole to bear on the question of the Testimonium's authenticity. Niese noticed that there is no entry concerning the Testimonium Flavianum in an ancient table of contents to *Antiquities*, which might have been composed by Josephus himself.<sup>5</sup> Like many scholars since Tanaquil Faber, Niese also questioned whether the style of the Testimonium was Josephan. But unlike most of these previous scholars, Niese attempted to point to some real evidence that might impugn the authenticity of the text, namely that the Testimonium uses the first person plural to refer to Jews as a group, which according to Niese is not typical of Josephus. However, while it is true that Josephus often refers to Jews as a group in the third person rather than in the first person, Niese exaggerated in his assertion that “a Josephi more aliena sunt παρ' ἡμῖν, pro quibus παρὰ Ἰουδαίους.”<sup>6</sup> In

fact the term  $\pi\alpha\rho' \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$  to mean 'among us Jews' appears in quite a few other passages of *Antiquities*.<sup>7</sup>

### Christ as Myth

Contributing to the widespread conviction among nineteenth century scholars that the Testimonium was a forgery was the fact that doubt about Jesus' very existence was quite strong in certain intellectual quarters during this period. As we have seen from the previous chapter, the earliest clear reference to these sorts of doubts in the literature of the Testimonium Flavianum controversy appears in Charles Daubuz' treatise, which was published in 1706. Some fifty years later Voltaire also claimed that certain "disciples of Bolingbroke" had also denied that Jesus had been a real person. The idea that Jesus was a product of the imagination of the early church was first argued at length by Bruno Bauer in a work entitled *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte und der Synoptiker*, published in the 1840s.

But it was in the early twentieth century that disbelief in the existence of Jesus seems to have reached its peak. This is shown by the popularity of works from this period like *Die Christus Mythe* by Arthur Drews, which underwent three editions between 1910 and 1911, and the critical responses it inspired in works like Shirley Jackson Case's *The historicity of Jesus*, which was first published in 1912, and reissued in a second edition in 1928, Johannes Weiss' *Jesus von Nazareth: Mythos oder Geschichte* (1910), Fred Conybeare's *The historical Christ* (1914), and Maurice Gogel's *Jésus de Nazareth: Mythe ou histoire* (1925). In a climate where doubts about Jesus' existence were so widespread, it was hardly surprising that like Arthur Drews (1865–1935) could dismiss the Testimonium Flavianum as "so evidently an after-insertion of a later age that even Roman Catholic theologians do not venture to declare it authentic."<sup>8</sup>

Scholarly doubt about the historicity of Jesus in the early twentieth century seems to have been related to the late nineteenth century's fascination with comparative mythology.<sup>9</sup> This in turn had probably been encouraged by the archeological recovery of previously unknown Near Eastern sources dating from Biblical times during the nineteenth century. For example, parallels between the flood story contained in the Epic of Gilgamesh, which was first brought to light in the 1870s, and the flood story in Genesis suggested that Noah was not a real person, but rather a

mythical figure drawn from a common fund of Near Eastern lore. Given this, it is hardly surprising that some should assume the same of Jesus as well. The short-lived but influential History of Religions school of late nineteenth century German seminaries had shown that many non-Christian Hellenistic religions shared such elements with early Christianity as a belief in redemption through the sacrifice of a god.<sup>10</sup> From this fact Drews and others of his persuasion thought it was but a small step to conclude that Jesus had been just such a mythical god.

### **The Slavonic Josephus**

Yet while controversy over the Testimonium Flavianum had, as I argued, more or less ended already by the mid-eighteenth century and stalemated in the nineteenth century, at the opening of the twentieth century controversy over the authenticity of the text was once again revived, even as doubts about the very existence of Jesus reached their peak. In 1906, a German professor of ecclesiastical history at the Baltic University of Dorpat, Alexander Berendts (1863–1912), published a monograph entitled *Die Zeugnisse vom Christentum im Slavischen De Bello Judaico des Josephus*. In this work, Berendts argued that an Old Russian adaptation of Josephus' *Jewish War*, which had traditionally been dated to the Middle Ages, might actually be a translation of the original Aramaic version of *Jewish War* that Josephus claimed to have composed prior to his publication of *War* in Greek (*War* 1.3). This remarkable claim had implications for the Testimonium Flavianum controversy because this Slavonic adaptation of *Jewish War* contained several passages about Jesus, John the Baptist and other New Testament figures that were not based on anything in the extant Greek *War*. If the Slavonic *War* with its passages about Jesus was indeed based on an original composition by Josephus, then it seemed more likely that the Testimonium Flavianum was also either authentic or, at the very least, based upon a passage composed by Josephus.

Before Berendts it had been assumed that the Slavonic *War* was a medieval Orthodox Christian adaptation of the Greek text of *Jewish War*. The earliest manuscript of this Old Russian text is dated to the fifteenth century, although this manuscript itself is evidently based upon an earlier manuscript that was begun in the year 1261.<sup>11</sup> Before Berendts there had been little doubt that there had been a Greek precursor to the



Slavonic *War*, because of the fact that many words in the work are straight transliterations from Greek.<sup>12</sup> Although most Old Russian patristic texts were translated from Greek through the medium of Old Church Slavic rather than directly from Greek, no Old Church Slavic version of the Slavonic *War* has yet been found.<sup>13</sup> Even the Serbian version of the Slavonic *War*, and a Romanian hagiographic text, which is noteworthy because it may have used an older version of the Slavonic *War* than the extant manuscripts of the Old Russian text itself, appear to derive ultimately from the Old Russian rather than from either an Old Church Slavic or a Greek text.<sup>14</sup>

Berendts thought the fact that there was no extant Greek version of the Slavonic *War* significant evidence against the common belief that the text was a medieval Slavic version of an originally Greek text. But the bulk of Berendts' argument against the consensus of contemporary scholarship that the Slavonic *War* was a medieval Orthodox rather than ancient version of *War* rested upon his observation that its material about Jesus, John the Baptist and other New Testament figures is too theologically unorthodox to have been interpolated by a medieval Orthodox Christian.

Berendts thought it unlikely that a medieval Orthodox Christian would have made John the Baptist enjoy a religious following in the time of the ethnarch Archelaus (4 BC to 6 AD), as the Slavonic *War* does, in direct opposition to the third gospel (Luke 3:1–2), which dates the beginning of John's ministry more than twenty years later.<sup>15</sup> Berendts noted that the Slavonic *War* contradicts all the books of the New Testament in crediting the idea of proselytizing lands outside Palestine not to the early church but to the Roman and Jewish authorities who hoped to ascertain whether the mission was from God based on whether it succeeded or failed.<sup>16</sup> Berendts also argued that by portraying Pilate as a more harsh and corrupt ruler than the New Testament and most later Christian tradition the Slavonic *War* represented more Jewish than Christian or pagan attitudes.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, Berendts pointed out that the Jesus who appears in the Slavonic *War* does not accord well with the image that one might expect a medieval Orthodox Christian to have held of Jesus. For example, the text never uses the term Christ for Jesus or alludes to him being the Messiah.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to the New Testament, the Slavonic *War* certainly makes Jesus' followers and possibly makes Jesus himself political rebels

against Roman rule in Palestine.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps most surprising, it vacillates on the question of Christ's divinity in a peculiar manner. The Slavonic text contains a passage that seems to have been inspired by the *Testimonium Flavianum*, but instead of the *textus receptus* it reads:

At that time there appeared a certain man,<sup>20</sup> if it is permissible to call him a man. His nature and form were human but his appearance more than a man, at least his works were divine. He worked miracles wonderful and mighty. Therefore it is impossible for me to call him a man, but again, if I look at the nature which he shared with all, I will not call him an angel. And everything whatsoever he wrought through an invisible power.<sup>21</sup>

Because of its ambivalent attitude towards Christ's divinity and Messiahship, as well as for other reasons, Berendts argued that the Slavonic *War* probably was composed by someone or some group with Jewish interests or background.<sup>22</sup>

Berendts' radical hypothesis that the Slavonic *War* derived from Josephus himself was thoroughly censured by his more sober scholarly colleagues. Immediately upon publication of *Die Zeugnisse vom Christentum im slavischen De Bello Judaico*, indeed, almost as it came off the printing press, Emil Schürer wrote a scathing review of the work in the April 1906 edition of *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, which he co-edited with the well-known German theologian and scholar Adolf von Harnack. Of Berendts' thesis as a whole, Schürer remarked, "es ist wirklich schwer, darüber zu sprechen, ohne satirisch zu werden." Against Berendts, Schürer duly pointed to the overwhelming evidence that the author of the Slavonic *War*, unlike Josephus, was acquainted with the New Testament gospels. He also noted that the Slavonic *War* and Josephus' *Antiquities* contradicted each other on several points, which he assumed meant that Josephus could not be the author of both texts. Schürer also pointed out the improbability of anything being translated directly from Aramaic into a Slavic language, as Berendts had speculated, rather than through the medium of Greek.

Nevertheless, reaction to Berendts' hypothesis among scholars did not remain uniformly hostile. In 1922, a Russian scholar named Viktor Istrin revived Berendts' hypothesis, albeit with some modification. Istrin apparently acknowledged more unambiguously than Berendts that the Slavonic *War* had to be based on an intermediary Greek text. He

proposed that Josephus himself had made two Greek versions of *Jewish War*, the first being based on the Aramaic original alluded to in *War* 1.2, and the second being the extant version of *War*. To account for the unusual scenario of Josephus publishing two Greek versions of *War*, Istrin, noting the presence of some diatribes against “the Latins” in the Slavonic *War* that are absent from the Greek *War*, proposed that for political reasons Josephus had revised his first version of *War* to be more favorable to the Romans.<sup>23</sup> Evidently Istrin accounted for the appearance of this long lost Greek version of *War* in Old Russian translation by noting that old Slavonic texts often preserve Byzantine works in redactions that have not been preserved in the original. Istrin went on to publish a scholarly collation of the Slavonic text with an accompanying French translation in the 1930s. This was only the second version of the Slavonic *War* ever to be translated into a modern language; the first version was Berendts’ translation of the text into German made 1906–12, but first published, with the collaboration of Konrad Grass, in 1924–27.<sup>24</sup>

Berendts’ and Istrin’s hypotheses about the Slavonic *War* gained an indefatigable champion in the person of the Jewish Austrian economist and historian, Robert Eisler (1882–1949). In 1929–30 he published at Heidelberg University a massive, two volume, 1560 page work, which was in part a defense of the authenticity of the Slavonic *War*. Its striking title, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΣ or “Jesus the king who did not reign” refers to a passage, present in the Slavonic *War* but missing from the Greek *War*, which claims that above the inscription on the temple in Jerusalem forbidding entry to non-Jews (*War* 5.194) there was an additional inscription announcing that “Jesus (the) king did not reign but was crucified by the Jews because he prophesied the destruction of the city and the devastation of the temple.” This work was rapidly translated into a popular abbreviated English version less than half the length of the German original, entitled *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist*. It was published in 1931 by the non-academic presses Methuen in London and Dial in New York.

But Eisler’s ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ was more than just a defense of the authenticity of the Slavonic *War*. Indeed, it could be argued that the work belongs to the larger genre of the life of the historical Jesus, that is a biography of Jesus that is intended to be stripped of all miraculous and hagiographic embellishments. This genre had been made popular in the

nineteenth century by the pioneering efforts of, most famously, Gerhard Strauss and Ernst Rénan.<sup>25</sup> His concern to recapture the historical Jesus led Eisler on the one hand to attack the idea that Jesus was a mythical figure who had never existed, a theory which, as we have noted above, was still very much in vogue in Eisler's day.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, it also led Eisler to attempt to prove, in line with the demythologizing aims of the genre of the life of the historical Jesus,

that there once existed a rich fund of historical tradition about the Messiah Jesus both among the Jews and the non-Christian Greeks and Romans...that this material was deliberately destroyed or falsified by a system of rigid censorship officially authorized ever since the time of Constantine...that, in spite of the tireless efforts of ecclesiastical revisers, enough has been preserved in certain out-of-the-way corners of the world...to allow us to reconstruct with sufficient clarity and plausibility...the fundamental features of Jesus' personality and his mission, particularly as they appeared to his enemies...that through a careful comparison of this mercilessly cold, detached, and unsympathetic open-portrait of the man Jesus with the naively idealizing presentation of the Kyrios Christos by the writers of the early and later Christian Church, it is possible to come quite close to the historical truth about the Nasorean prophet king.<sup>27</sup>

It is hardly surprising, given his interest in uncovering uncensored and unfavorable sources that might help the reader reconstruct "the historical truth" about Jesus, that Eisler was motivated to argue that the Slavonic *War* was in some way based on Josephus' original Aramaic *War*. Because of its anti-Latin diatribes and its portrait of Jesus' followers as anti-Roman agitators, it seemed to Eisler that the Slavonic *War* might have escaped the censorship of Christians who, in the period when Christianity was still an illicit religion, were concerned not to appear as enemies of the Roman state. Eisler devoted a great deal of intellectual energy trying to convince his readers that the Slavonic *War* was accurate in depicting Jesus' followers as a band of anti-Roman Zealots.<sup>28</sup> Like Berendts before him, Eisler was inclined to raise the question, not without some justification, why the presumed medieval Orthodox Christian adapter and interpolator of Josephus' *War* would have grossly exaggerated the politically subversive aims of Jesus' followers when Christians have generally taken pains to allay the perception that either they or Jesus' early followers were anti-Roman.

Given his interest in uncovering uncensored and unfavorable sources that might help the reader reconstruct “the historical truth” about Jesus, it is hardly surprising that Eisler wanted to argue not only that Josephus had written a version of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, but that he had written a version more hostile than the extant *Testimonium*, which Eisler naturally considered too favorable to Jesus to have escaped alteration by Christian scribes. He proposed several emendations to the *textus receptus* in order to recapture this originally hostile passage; for example, instead of “at that time there arose Jesus, a wise man (σοφὸς ἀνὴρ)” Eisler proposed, “at that time there arose a new occasion for disturbances, a certain Jesus, a sophist of a man (σοφιστῆς ἀνὴρ).”

Against Eisler’s elaborate emendations, it should be pointed out that there is textual support from extant manuscripts for only two of his emendations, namely, the addition of the word τις (“certain”) after Jesus, and the change of “he was the Christ” to “he was believed to be the Christ.”<sup>29</sup> Moreover, one of Eisler’s proposed emendations, the insertion of a seventeen word disclaimer to the comment, εἶγε ἄνδρα λέγειν χρή, is simply too complicated to be convincing; it is plausible to propose that a word or two of a text was either deleted or altered, for example from “was” to “believed to be,” but it is quite implausible to propose that a seventeen word sentence replete with several subordinate clauses can be reconstructed in the manner that Eisler proposed.

Eisler’s argument about the genesis of the Slavonic *War* as a whole was at least as complicated as his argument about the genesis of the *textus receptus Testimonium Flavianum* in particular. Like Istrin, he recognized that the text was not a direct translation from Aramaic but was based on an intermediary Greek text. Like Istrin, he argued that Josephus wrote two Greek versions of *War*, the first of which was the basis of the Slavonic *War*, and the second of which was the extant *War*. Like Istrin, Eisler assumed that Josephus rewrote *War* to correct the first version’s rough Greek and anti-Roman slant. But Eisler’s theories about the origin of the Slavonic *War* were more elaborate than Istrin’s. The translation, or at least the core of it, Eisler dated to the thirteenth century, arguing that the translator was a Judaizing heretic who was motivated to expropriate Josephus’ *War* for the aim of converting to Judaism his contemporary, the still pagan Lithuanian King Mindowe.

Eisler accounted for the existence of so many fifteenth and sixteenth century manuscripts of the Slavonic *War* by the theory that this thirteenth century pro-Jewish Slavonic translation was recopied for the use of both Judaizing heretics and their opponents in response to a later Judaizing heresy that was popular among Russian nobles and clerics in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As if this theory of the origins of the Slavonic *War* was not complex enough, Eisler further argued that both the first Greek *War*, which had been the basis of the Slavonic *War*,<sup>30</sup> and the extant Greek *War*, although largely derived from Josephus himself, had accumulated a variety of Christian interpolations over the centuries, such as the ones that he pinpointed in the *Testimonium Flavianum*.

Eisler's theories about both the Slavonic *War* and the *Testimonium Flavianum* gained an indefatigable opponent in Solomon Zeitlin (1886–1976). This American scholar, who may well be remembered chiefly for having distinguished himself as one of the few scholars to argue that the famous Dead Sea Scrolls are medieval rather than ancient manuscripts, published three articles in the 1928, 1929 and 1930 editions of the American academic journal, *Jewish Quarterly Review* relentlessly attacking the idea that either the Slavonic *War* or the *Testimonium Flavianum* was in any sense the product of Josephus. In 1931 Zeitlin issued a summary of these articles in a separate monograph entitled *Josephus on Jesus*, which, like *Jewish Quarterly Review*, was published by Dropsie College. In 1948–49 the same journal, of which Zeitlin by this time had become an editor, published another one of his attacks on the Berendts-Istrin-Eisler hypothesis. Even as late as 1968 the same journal felt moved to publish yet another one of Zeitlin's attacks on the Berendts-Istrin-Eisler hypothesis, which suggests that the hypothesis was still alive, at least in certain intellectual quarters.<sup>31</sup>

Zeitlin's argument against the authenticity of the Slavonic *War* rested above all on vocabulary. He noted that Josephus occasionally included the Hebrew names of months in addition to the Macedonian names, while the Slavonic *War* used only the Macedonian names. He also noted that Josephus' works, unlike the Slavonic *War*, did not use the term "Latins;" the use of this term he took to be a clear indication that the text was Byzantine. He was first inclined to date it the seventh or eighth century, but later was inclined to date it to the eleventh century.

Zeitlin expended a good deal of effort arguing that the Slavonic *War* was dependent on patristic authors, but, strangely, he paid very little attention to its more obvious dependence on the New Testament.<sup>32</sup> He also argued that the Slavonic *War* was dependent on the *Josippon*, which he boldly dated as early as the fifth to sixth century.<sup>33</sup> In response to Eisler's and Berendts' arguments that the Slavonic *War* was too close-mouthed about Jesus to be the compilation of an orthodox Christian, Zeitlin did make the interesting suggestion that it "may be that this version was compiled by a converted Jew...who, being apprehensive lest the book be taken as the work of a Christian, refrained from mentioning the name of Jesus, substituting the word "Wonder-doer."<sup>34</sup> This suggestion, of course, has something in common with Berendts' original idea that the text was compiled by someone with some sort of Jewish interests or background.

Zeitlin's views on the *Testimonium Flavianum* were more extreme than his views on the Slavonic *War*, for he insisted that Josephus had not made any mention of Jesus at all: not only was the *Testimonium* inauthentic but, against scholarly consensus, he also insisted that the passage on the death of James the brother of Jesus was also inauthentic. Zeitlin's reasons for insisting that Josephus did not mention Jesus at all were largely *a priori* as can be seen, for example, in his sweeping argument that, "the Jews at large, up to the Destruction of the Temple, did not believe in the idea of a Messiah, a Supernatural person, and did not expect any, and Josephus likewise was not a believer in the Messianic doctrine."<sup>35</sup>

Zeitlin attributed the composition of both the *Testimonium Flavianum* and the passage on James the brother of Jesus to Eusebius of Caesarea. Zeitlin claimed that the Eusebian origin of the *Testimonium* was proven by the fact that Eusebius used the term  $\phi\lambda\omicron\nu$  for Christians in *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.33.2, as does the *textus receptus Testimonium*. However, this is inconclusive evidence since we cannot deny the possibility that the term  $\phi\lambda\omicron\nu$  went from the text of Josephus to Eusebius by way of influence rather than from Eusebius to the text of Josephus by way of forgery.<sup>36</sup> After Origen, Josephus was arguably the writer who most influenced Eusebius. Given his extensive use of Josephus in his own works, it would be surprising if Josephus' vocabulary had not influenced Eusebius' vocabulary in some way.

Despite the vehement objections of Zeitlin, and despite their complex and radical nature, Eisler's theories about the Slavonic *War*

were quite influential, at least in the English-speaking world. Eisler's views were treated sympathetically, albeit cautiously by the Oxford Josephus scholar H. St. John Thackeray, who translated *Jewish War*, *Against Apion* and the *Life* for the widely-used Loeb Classical Library's Greek-English edition of Josephus' works.<sup>37</sup> Thackeray attributed his own conversion to the view that the *Testimonium Flavianum* was largely genuine, albeit partially altered by Christians, to Eisler's influence.<sup>38</sup>

The influence of Eisler's ideas can also be seen throughout the Loeb Classical Library's edition of Josephus' works. Loeb included both an appendix containing the principal additions of the Slavonic *War* in its edition of Josephus' *Jewish War*, which was first published in 1928, and a footnote containing Eisler's proposed emendations to the *Testimonium Flavianum* in its edition of *Jewish Antiquities*, which was first published in 1965. When Loeb reissued *Jewish War* in 1979, its new editor, G. P. Goold, justified the inclusion of this appendix by noting that although "the theory of the late Robert Eisler, that the Slavonic version of the *Jewish War* preserves in some places a genuine tradition overlaid in our Greek manuscripts by Christian interpolation, has failed to win any authoritative support...nevertheless, the Appendix has been retained for its intrinsic interest."<sup>39</sup> Zeitlin complained bitterly about the inclusion of this appendix with material from the Slavonic *War* in the 1928 Loeb Classical Library edition of *Jewish War*, evidently because he felt it lent the Berendts-Istrin-Eisler hypothesis more credence than he believed it deserved.<sup>40</sup>

An appendix with the principal additions of the Slavonic version of *War* also appeared in the first Penguin Books edition of *Jewish War*, which was published in 1959 and reissued in 1970. The translator of Josephus' text, G. A. Williamson, could scarcely disguise his favorable opinion of the authenticity of both the Slavonic *War* and the *Testimonium Flavianum*:

...the MS from which the [Slavonic] version was made was undoubtedly written in Greek. Perhaps this was the first Greek version of the Aramaic to which the Preface refers, published in Titus' reign and followed in Domitian's by a considerably revised second edition, forming our present text. The Slavonic...contains additional matter entirely missing from the Greek. Most of these passages are of little intrinsic interest...Some few passages, however, are of the greatest interest, containing as they do records of John the Baptist, Jesus



Christ, and the early Christians. These records, like the famous allusions in Antiquities, are condemned as spurious by critics who, victim of their own wishful thinking and bent on destruction, are prepared without a trace of MS authority to bracket or reverse the meaning of any passage that conflicts with their pet theories. Such a proceeding is in the last degree unscientific. It is to be observed also that the forging of these passages for propaganda purposes could not have rendered the least service to a Christian apologist; they could never influence anyone not already convinced by the Gospels; they are in many important points irreconcilable with Christian tradition; and they clearly reveal their author not as a believer but as a doubting, if curious, onlooker.<sup>41</sup>

Williamson's comments indeed reveal how intertwined was the assessment of the *Testimonium Flavianum*'s authenticity with an assessment of the authenticity of the Slavonic *War* in certain academic circles even as late as the mid-twentieth century.

When Penguin Books reissued a third edition of *Jewish War* in 1981, it removed the appendix containing the Slavonic *War*'s additions from the work altogether, even though it retained Williamson's translation of Josephus' text. And Williamson's favorable remarks about the authenticity of the Slavonic *War*'s additions were replaced by the more neutral assessment of E. Mary Smallwood,

There are basically three possible interpretations of them: that Josephus, who is likely to have been aware of the main facts of Christ's life and of the existence of the Church as a schismatic sect, wrote them; that they are wholesale interpretations (but of whom? hardly by a Christian, since such travesties of the New Testament tradition would have done little to promote belief or to enhance the prestige of the Church); or that they are elaborations of shorter, less sensational passages written by Josephus.<sup>42</sup>

Smallwood's cautious remarks indicate that the origin of the Slavonic *War* is still something of a scholarly mystery, and no new theories about its origin have yet replaced the Berendts-Istrin-Eisler hypothesis, despite its many weaknesses.

Perhaps the greatest weakness with Eisler's elaborate version of this hypothesis was its failure to account for the lack of any unambiguous ancient allusions to more than one Greek version of *War*, and its excessive complexity. In particular, Eisler's scenario of a text which, although basically Josephan, was, like the extant Greek *War*, constantly being interpolated by Christians, is self-defeating. If one assumes that the numerous texts copied by Christians were constantly being

interpolated, how can one prove anything about the Western past at all? Yet naturally Eisler did attempt to prove a great many controversial propositions about the Western past, such as, to name a few, that Jesus' followers were indeed anti-Roman, that Josephus did indeed write two Greek versions of *War*, and that the Slavonic *War* was produced and copied for Judaizing heretics in medieval Russia. Eisler's only real criterion for distinguishing which parts of the Josephan texts are inauthentic and which parts genuine was whether or not they accorded with Christian interests or with Josephus' assumed anti-Christian interests. Quite apart from the fact that we do not really know that Josephus was anti-Christian, as a general method, this criterion for judging a text's authenticity has its limits, as Eisler himself recognized.<sup>43</sup>

There are other objections to Eisler's theories. For example, Eisler resorted to the theory that the Slavonic *War*, in addition to being both a product of Josephus and Judaizing heretical interests, was interpolated by orthodox Christians partly because he could not avoid the conclusion that the author(s) responsible for the Slavonic *War* had been familiar with the New Testament. It would seem that Eisler, like Schürer and other opponents of the Berendts hypothesis, did not clearly grasp the point that an author's familiarity with parts of the New Testament, or texts dependent on them, does not necessarily mean that the author was a Christian of any kind, orthodox or otherwise.

Besides the near certainty that the author(s) of the Slavonic *War* had read the New Testament gospels or texts dependent on them, it is also highly probable that the author(s) of the Slavonic *War* had been exposed to some version of the Testimonium Flavianum. For the first sentence of the Slavonic *War*'s Testimonium appears to be a more or less direct translation of the textus receptus' version of the passage "at that time there appeared a man, if it is permissible to call him a man." Several Greek manuscripts of *Jewish War* in fact contain an interpolated Testimonium Flavianum, and most significantly, one Greek manuscript of Josephus' *War* contains a Testimonium inserted in precisely the place where it appears in the Slavonic *War*. i.e. between *War* 2.174 and 2.175.<sup>44</sup> On the basis of this evidence, it is difficult to avoid any other conclusion than that the author(s) of the Slavonic *War* used just such an interpolated Greek manuscript of *War*. On the other hand, its lack of any allusion to Jesus being the Messiah could possibly indicate that the

author(s) of the Slavonic *War* had been exposed to a version of the Testimonium which, like the Greek original that most likely stands behind the Testimonia of Jerome, Pseudo-Hegesippus and Michael the Syrian (Ch. 1 *supra*), probably read something like, "he was believed to be the Christ" rather than "he was the Christ."

On the positive side, Eisler's proposal that the extant Slavonic *War*, although going back to Josephus' original Aramaic *War*, nevertheless contained later Christian interpolations has quite perceptively raised the question whether it may be misleading to assume that only one interpolator was responsible for the unique passages of the Slavonic *War*. While I have argued that Eisler's specific theories about interpolation are generally too complex to be probable, the fact that the version of the Slavonic *War* used by one Romanian hagiographer appears to be a simpler version of the same work may indicate that the extant Slavonic *War* has been reworked by at least one other Slavic or Greek scribe in addition to the original Slavic or Greek adapter of Josephus' *War*.

One can easily quarrel with Berendts' hypotheses as well as Eisler's hypotheses on a number of grounds, such as his assumption that the lack of a Greek original containing the additional material of the Slavonic *War* is significant evidence that this material does not originate in a medieval Slavic environment. Neither Berendts nor any other later scholar has conclusively shown why the unique material in the Slavonic *War* could not have been produced by a Slavic rather than a Greek author. In fact, there is still no scholarly consensus today whether the Slavonic *War*'s modifications of Josephus' *War* were produced in a Greek medieval or Slavic medieval milieu; both positions have in fact been argued.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, both proponents and opponents of the Berendts-Istrin-Eisler hypothesis have too often constructed the debate about the origins of the Slavonic *War* as a case of the author having been either a Christian or Josephus himself. Familiarity with the New Testament is no guarantee of an author's adherence to any form of Christianity, let alone an orthodox form of Christianity. Perhaps the greatest contribution of Berendts was to direct scholars' attention to the fact that the Slavonic *War* hardly presents the picture of Jesus or his early followers that one might expect from the medieval Orthodox Christian, whether Greek or Slav, who is usually assumed to have adapted Josephus' text. The great contemporary

Josephus scholar Louis Feldman seems inclined to attribute the Slavonic *War* to some heretical Christian individual or group. For while he writes that on the one hand "the translation, or at least the passage about Jesus, is the work of a Christian" on the other hand he also writes,

it seems hard to believe that a Christian, unless we are dealing with a heretical group and perhaps with a non-canonical Gospel, would have failed to mention Jesus' name at all, that he would not have stated that he was the Messiah, that he would equivocate by declaring that he was "something more than a man" but that he would "not call him an angel," that in many things he disobeyed the Law, that his followers expected him to rout the Roman troops, and that the Jewish rabbis gave thirty talents to Pilate in order to put him to death, in disagreement with the Gospel account.<sup>46</sup>

Regardless of whether Eisler's specific theories about the medieval Judaizing heresy responsible for the Slavonic *War* are true or not, his and Berendts' suggestion that the text was compiled by a Judaizing heretical individual or group, and Zeitlin's similar suggestion that it was compiled by a Jewish convert to Christianity, are worth further investigation.<sup>47</sup> Arguably, the most vexing problem about the Slavonic *War* is that, like Pseudo-Hegesippus' *De excidio Hierosolymitano*, the text has rarely been treated as historically interesting in its own right; rather it has been treated as a text whose importance depended solely on whether it was authored by Josephus or not. Perhaps this explains why, even more than the late antique Latin work of Pseudo-Hegesippus and the medieval Hebrew *Josippon*, the most basic questions about the origins of the Slavonic *War* still remain unanswered.

### **The Testimonium in Semitic Sources (Reprise)**

In 1971 the Israel Academy of Arts and Science published a brief English-language monograph entitled *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and its Implications* by Shlomo Pines, a renowned scholar of Semitic languages. Pines opened his essay with the following remarks:

Few historical texts, or none, have been more often quoted, more passionately rejected and denounced as literary forgeries (*sic*), more devotedly defended, more carefully edited and more variously emended than the so-called "Testimonium Flavianum"....It is therefore surprising that a recension of the

Testimonium that is significantly different from the vulgate text has not been given any attention by the numerous scholars who studied this text of Josephus. This neglect may even appear inexplicable if we consider the bibliographical data: the recension occurs in...an Arabic historical work of the tenth century...which has been edited twice.<sup>48</sup>

Pines wanted to draw scholars' attention to the version of the Testimonium Flavianum that appears in an Arabic language chronicle written in the tenth century by the Melkite bishop of Hierapolis (Manbij), known as Agapius (Mahbub Qustantin). As Pines pointed out, this text had already been published twice in the twentieth century, the first time in 1911, with a French translation, and shortly thereafter without translation in 1912.<sup>49</sup> Since, as he put it, "few texts, or none" had inspired as much scholarly controversy as the Testimonium, Pines thought it surprising that scholars had not commented on this version of the Testimonium in the early twentieth century when Agapius' text was first edited and published.

Pines translated the version of the Testimonium Flavianum found in Agapius' chronicle as:

At that time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And 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. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.

Pines then noted that several differences between this text and the textus receptus Testimonium reveal the former to be much less reflective of Christian interests than the latter. These differences include the fact that Agapius does not question whether it is right to call Jesus a man, that Agapius does not refer to Jesus working miracles, that Agapius does not refer to the role played by Jewish notables in Jesus' condemnation, that Agapius treats Jesus' *post mortem* appearance as clearly the report of his disciples, and that Agapius qualifies the assertion about Christ's Messiahship dubitatively. Since it had been widely assumed from the very beginning of the controversy over its authenticity that the Testimonium Flavianum, as Pines put it, had too many "pronounced Christian traits" to be written by Josephus, and since "in Agapius' version these traits are conspicuous by their absence"<sup>50</sup> the obvious

implication was that Agapius' version of the Testimonium was closer to the text that Josephus had actually written than any other recension of the text.

In his essay, Pines drew scholars' attention not only to the overlooked Testimonium of Agapius, but also to a Syriac version of the Testimonium contained in the twelfth century chronicle of Michael the Syrian, Patriarch of Antioch (1166–1199). It is quite clear that Michael's Testimonium, in contrast to Agapius' Testimonium, is a literal rendition of the Testimonium extant in current manuscripts of Josephus' *Antiquities*. It differs from the *textus receptus* Testimonium only in two significant respects: it states that Jesus "was believed to be the Christ" rather than that he "was the Christ," and it adds "and he died" after the Testimonium's statement that Pilate condemned Jesus to the cross.

Now Pines had discussed Michael's version of the Testimonium not because he thought that it was important *per se*, but because he believed that its similarities to Agapius' version might shed light on the original Syriac source that most likely stood behind Agapius' Testimonium. Although Pines conceded that Agapius' version of the Testimonium must have been based on a text originally written in Syriac, instead of seriously considering the simple possibility that Michael's Testimonium transmitted more or less precisely this Syriac original, and that it thus might actually reflect more closely what Josephus had written than Agapius' Arabic Testimonium, Pines instead proposed a more complex theory, namely that Michael's Testimonium reflected a mixture of both the *textus receptus* Testimonium and the original Testimonium that Agapius had read in his Syriac source.<sup>51</sup>

Pines proposed this complex theory about Michael's Testimonium because he was convinced that Agapius' Testimonium was closer to the original Testimonium that Josephus had written than Michael's Testimonium. And he was convinced of this because he thought it "inconceivable" that a tenth century Christian bishop like Agapius would have "weakened" the Testimonium's "references to Jesus' extraordinary qualities and actions"<sup>52</sup> if he had encountered in his Syriac source a Testimonium like the one quoted by Michael. Despite the fact that he saw there might be problems with letting one's "personal subjective view of the probable position of Josephus with regard to Jesus"<sup>53</sup> interfere with one's arguments about the authenticity of the

Testimonium, like so many scholars before him, Pines nevertheless assumed that Agapius' Testimonium was more likely than Michael's Testimonium to reflect what Josephus actually wrote simply because the former is less favorable towards Jesus than the latter. In other words, Pines let his "personal subjective view," i.e. that the "probable position of Josephus with regard to Jesus" was closer to Agapius' Testimonium than to Michael's Testimonium, dictate his assumption that the former was more authentic than the latter. Like so many scholars before him, Pines' thinking about the authenticity of the Testimonium was more animated by *a priori* assumptions about what a Jew like Josephus would have said about Jesus than by the evidence itself.

Unfortunately, with the exception of the Biblical scholar André Dubarle, the scholars who reviewed Pines' essay followed Pines' assumption that Agapius' Testimonium was more likely than Michael's Testimonium to reflect what Josephus had actually written about Jesus, and few even addressed the question of the authenticity of Michael's Testimonium. Those who were favorably inclined to Pines' suggestion that Josephus had written a passage about Jesus at all agreed with Pines that Agapius' Testimonium probably approximated this Josephan original text better than any other extant version of the passage, and hailed his essay as an important contribution to the controversy about the authenticity of the Testimonium.<sup>54</sup> Those who were inclined to believe that Josephus had written nothing about Jesus at all, or who believed that he could only have written something hostile, dismissed Agapius' text as nothing more than an attempt to avoid the appearance of gross falsification.<sup>55</sup> Like Pines, none of these reviewers seriously pursued the crucial question of what sources Agapius and Michael used, although Dubarle seems to have made the intelligent deduction, without actually drawing attention to what he was doing, that probably the Testimonia of both Agapius and Michael the Syrian were dependent on a Syriac version of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Dubarle thus implied that Michael's Testimonium was more important than Agapius' Testimonium because, unlike the latter, it was quite clearly a literal translation of Eusebius' Testimonium.

As I have shown in my first chapter, a comparison of Agapius' and Michael's entire chronicles reveals that they did indeed use the same source up to the point where Agapius' chronicle breaks off in the late eighth century. Other scholars have deduced independently of my own

investigation that Agapius and Michael, as well as a number of other chroniclers writing in Syriac, as well as the Greek chronicler Theophanes, are all dependent on the same Syriac source.<sup>56</sup> Agapius tells us that he used a chronicle by Theophilus of Edessa (*Kitab al-Unwan* 2.2[240]), and this is confirmed by the fact that Agapius' chronicle breaks off around the time Theophilus died (785 AD), which is also a full century and a half before Agapius compiled his own chronicle. Michael the Syrian seems to have depended mainly on James of Edessa's works for earlier history, as well as on a chronicle by Dionysius of Tel Mahre, who himself used Theophilus of Edessa for the period beginning with the emperor Maurice (Michael, *Chron.* 10.20[378]). The probable conclusion to be drawn from these facts is that Theophilus of Edessa most likely used James of Edessa's historical compilations for the earlier part of his history as well. Since the Testimonia of Michael and Agapius appear in this earlier part of the chronicle, they most likely derive from James' writings rather than from the original chronicles of either Theophilus of Edessa or Dionysius of Tel Mahre.

Given the evident fact that both Michael and Agapius took their Testimonia from the same earlier Syriac source, another important question that neither Pines nor most of his reviewers considered when judging the authenticity of Agapius' Testimonium is whether Agapius or Michael transmitted this source more faithfully. In fact, the most probable answer to this is Michael the Syrian. First of all, he was transmitting a Syriac source in Syriac rather than translating into Arabic as Agapius was. Moreover, the entire nature of their two chronicles reveals that Michael is certain to have transmitted his Syriac source with its version of the Testimonium more faithfully than Agapius. Agapius' chronicle is clearly a paraphrase and abbreviation of a much longer source; in contrast, Michael often quotes entire sources literally as, for example, when he transcribes the preface to Dionysius of Tel Mahre's own chronicle (Michael, *Chron.* 10.20[378]).

As I have already argued above (Ch. 1 *supra*), there is no evidence that either Michael or Agapius directly consulted Josephus' works. Citations of Josephus in their works are taken from Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and *Chronicon*, and possibly some patristic commentary on Genesis that alluded to information contained in



the first book of *Antiquities* and *Against Apion*. Although their Testimonia most likely are immediately dependent on a Syriac rather than Greek version of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the sentence that qualifies Jesus' Messiahship found in both Michael's and Agapius' Testimonia, must ultimately reflect the reading of an earlier copy of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* in Greek. That there once was a Greek *Historia Ecclesiastica* containing a Testimonium reading "he was believed to be the Messiah" is confirmed by Jerome's Testimonium, which, like Michael's Testimonium, reads "he was believed to be the Messiah." Both Jerome's and Michael's Testimonia are almost certainly dependent on a Greek version of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. It is not plausible to assume that Michael or his earlier Syriac source were dependent on Jerome, since, as Pines himself noted, Latin and Syriac writers only knew each other's works through the medium of Greek.<sup>57</sup>

Other than the articles of André Dubarle, the most thoughtful response to Pines' essay was an article written by Ernst Bammel in 1974. Bammel unfortunately ignored Michael's Testimonium, but made the interesting argument that Agapius' Testimonium "originated in an Islamic environment," and that it thus could not reflect a form of the Testimonium Flavianum earlier than the *textus receptus*.<sup>58</sup> According to Bammel, Agapius might have modified the Testimonium in order to make the text "serviceable in a three-cornered contest about the truth" among Christians, Jews and Muslims. Bammel's argument on this point is quite complex; according to his conception, Agapius modified the Testimonium because a qualified statement of support from a Jew could have been used against Muslims, while a full statement of support from a Jew would be unbelievable to a Muslim. As he puts it, "the qualified support given by the representative of one religion could be used as an argument vis à vis the other religion, whereas the claim of a (sic) full support rendered by the one side to the other was bound to be met by the disbelief of the third participant."

It is to Bammel's credit that he directed scholars' attention to the larger question of the origin of Agapius' chronicle. Although he raised the interesting question of possible Islamic influences on Agapius, Bammel did not even note the possibly significant fact that in his preface Agapius indicates that his chronicle was in fact written for a Muslim patron; it is unfortunate that a Near Eastern specialist of Pines' caliber did not address this fact and its possible significance. But despite his

acumen in raising the question of how an "Islamic environment" might have influenced Agapius' modification of the Testimonium, I must dispute a few of Bammel's specific suggestions as to how an "Islamic environment" could have motivated Agapius to paraphrase the Testimonium.

First, the evidence of Michael's chronicle indicates that Agapius' qualification of ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν to "he was perhaps the Messiah" was not made to render the "Testimonium serviceable in a three-cornered [Jewish-Christian-Muslim] contest about the truth." For the Testimonium in Michael's chronicle independently contains the dubitive qualification "he was thought to be the Messiah," even though Michael's chronicle, unlike Agapius' chronicle, was written for Christian rather than Muslim readers. Second, there would have been no need to qualify the Testimonium's statement about Jesus' Messiahship to use "as an argument *vis à vis*" Muslims, since the Quran calls Jesus the Messiah several times. Agapius could not have been motivated to write "he was perhaps the Messiah" because he needed the "qualified support given by a representative of one religion," i.e. Judaism, to use "as an argument *vis à vis* the other religion" i.e. Islam. For it would have made little sense to have a Jew try to convince Muslims, who already accept Jesus as the Messiah, that Jesus is the Messiah. Likewise, Agapius could not have omitted the Testimonium's reference to Jesus' miracles or to Jewish responsibility for Jesus' death in deference to Muslims, for the Quran exaggerates both Jesus' miracle-working and the role of Jews in Jesus' death beyond anything contained in the New Testament.

On the other hand, it is more plausible that Agapius could have omitted the Testimonium's rhetorical question whether it was right to call Jesus a man to avoid offending Muslims.<sup>59</sup> In addition, against Pines, who wrote "it is very improbable that a Syriac author extending from the fourth...to the twelfth century...should for vague, presumably doctrinal, reasons have inserted into the Testimonium the word *vmit*—and he died,"<sup>60</sup> Bammel has rightly suggested that Agapius had good reason, at least in theory, to amplify the obvious meaning of the textus receptus Testimonium by making it explicitly refer to Jesus' death. For Muslims have usually interpreted the Quran as denying that Jesus died on the cross (Sura 4:156–159). However, the evidence of Michael's chronicle, which contains a Testimonium also stating that Jesus died,

indicates that it cannot have been Agapius himself, or indeed anyone else writing for Muslim readers, who added the reference to Jesus' death. If the Testimonium was modified in this way, the modification must go back to the common Syriac source of both Michael and Agapius. It is possible that this Syriac writer consciously or unconsciously amplified the Testimonium in this way for his Syriac Christian readers, who undoubtedly would have been exposed to Muslim denials of Jesus' death by crucifixion. Indeed the amplified reference to Jesus' death can be viewed as evidence that the common Syriac source of Agapius and Michael dates to sometime after the Islamic conquest of the Middle East.

On the other hand, Bammel's point that the reference to Jesus' death in Agapius' Testimonium could reflect anti-Muslim Christian apologetics is problematic for his suggestion that the same Testimonium is also deliberately "hesitant" in its "expression of belief." It is not very plausible to assert that Agapius simultaneously amplified and toned down parts of the passage in response to Muslims, both transmitting that part of the Testimonium most potentially offensive to Muslims, namely the reference to Jesus' death by crucifixion for apologetic ammunition against Muslims, and at the same time, qualifying dubitively the Testimonium's reference to Jesus' Messiahship so Muslims would be convinced by the point because it came from the pen of a Jew. It is clear enough that Agapius paraphrased the Syriac source he used throughout his Arabic chronicle, in the Testimonium as elsewhere, but there simply is not enough evidence to assert that the way he paraphrased the Testimonium that he encountered was motivated by Christian apologetic concerns, whether towards Muslims or any other group.

### Conclusion

In the twentieth century there have been two major attempts to argue that Josephus did in fact write a passage about Jesus, and that the textus receptus Testimonium extant in copies of his *Antiquities* is at least partly authentic. The first such attempt was orchestrated by the scholars Alexander Berendts, Viktor Istrin and Robert Eisler, who sought to prove the partial authenticity of material concerning Jesus and other New Testament figures in an Old Russian adaptation of *Jewish War*. The second was Israeli scholar Shlomo Pines' attempt to argue that the

version of the Testimonium Flavianum found in the medieval Arabic chronicle of Agapius of Hierapolis is largely authentic.

One distinctive feature of the controversial literature spawned by these two recent attempts to prove the Testimonium at least partially authentic is that they both involved the examination of long-neglected sources more or less outside of the Western literary and historiographic tradition, which before this time had produced so much of the commentary on the works of Josephus in general and on the Testimonium in particular. Another distinctive feature of the twentieth century controversial literature on the Testimonium is that it was largely centered in academic journals, a continuation of a trend that had begun in the nineteenth century. In contrast, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Testimonium controversy inhabited the pages of theological disputations, histories of ancient Judaism and the Christian church, and letters exchanged between philologists. By the mid-seventeenth century, the controversy began to appear in the scholarly notes to editions of works by Origen, Eusebius, and finally, at the end of the same century, in the notes to editions of works by Josephus himself.

Another distinctive feature of the twentieth century controversies over the Testimonium Flavianum is that, for the first time, Jewish scholars were prominent participants in the debate over the text's authenticity, and they could be found on both sides of the question. In contrast, we have seen that in the early modern period it was Protestants who dominated the debate over the text's authenticity. In the early modern period, there is no known case of a Jew defending the Testimonium's authenticity. After Josephus himself, the only named Jews treating the Testimonium's authenticity who even feature in the preceding chapters of this study were Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508) and Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657). Moreover, neither one of these early modern Jewish scholars can be called central participants in the debate over the text, although, as we have seen (Ch. 3 *supra*), the anonymous Jew who compiled the medieval *Josippon* played an major albeit indirect role in the birth of a controversy over the text's authenticity in the sixteenth century. In contrast, it is difficult to imagine the twentieth century controversy over the authenticity of the Slavonic *Jewish War* without the striking figure of Robert Eisler, and there would have been

no late twentieth century controversy over the authenticity of the Arabic Testimonium of Agapius of Hierapolis at all without the scholarship of Shlomo Pines.

On an intellectual level, the phenomenon of twentieth century Jewish scholars arguing for as well as against the basic authenticity of the Testimonium can be seen as the result of a relatively recent realization that in the first century the line between Jews outside the church and Christians was not always as clear as they were assumed to be by the various Protestant and Jewish early modern commentators who had argued that no Jew, not even Josephus, could possibly have written a text like the Testimonium Flavianum. On a social level, the more prominent role taken by Jewish scholars in the twentieth century debates over the Testimonium is presumably a reflection of the greater integration of Jewish scholars into the Western intellectual tradition, the secularization of that intellectual tradition, and perhaps also a reflection of recent trends towards religious ecumenism.<sup>61</sup> A trend towards more secular and ecumenical scholarship, or at least an ideal of more secular and ecumenical scholarship, is presumably also responsible for the contrast between the controversial literature of the early modern period, when all of the known Roman Catholic writers on the Testimonium investigated in this study were defenders of its authenticity, and the twentieth century, when there no longer seemed to be significant differences between the views of Roman Catholics and the views of others.<sup>62</sup> In the twentieth century, it would seem that attitudes of all scholars—whether Jewish, Protestant, Roman Catholic or secular—towards the Testimonium have drawn closer.

### Epilogue

In his attempt to write a life of the historical Jesus, one recent Biblical scholar contrasted the current state of continuing controversy over the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum with the dominant scholarly view of the nineteenth century that the text had been conclusively proven a forgery.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, Louis Feldman's recent bibliographic survey of literature on Josephus indicates that scholarly opinion has tended to be more favorable to the view that the Testimonium is largely authentic, especially since the publication of Shlomo Pines' monograph on the Testimonium in Arabic and Syriac

sources in 1973.<sup>64</sup> It is doubtful whether any scholars today would defend the hypothesis of Alexander Berendts, Viktor Istrin and Robert Eisler that the Old Russian adaptation of *Jewish War* contains any material deriving directly from Josephus. On the other hand, the question whether the Syriac Testimonium that Shlomo Pines identified in the medieval chronicle of Michael the Syrian is in certain respects a more authentic rendition of the Testimonium than that contained in the extant Greek manuscripts of *Antiquities* is still inadequately examined. While many other texts also touched on this study were first persuasively shown be forgeries in the early modern period—the Donation of Constantine, the correspondence between Paul and Seneca, the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, the Sybilline Oracles, the Apostolic Constitutions, and the False Decretals—after four hundred years the question of the Testimonium Flavianum's authenticity has still not been settled.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> It is now more often referred to simply as modern Biblical criticism. A very general overview of the development of modern Biblical criticism can be found in Alan Richardson, "The rise of modern Biblical scholarship," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the present day*, ed. S. L. Greenslade, Cambridge University, 1963, 294–338, and "Biblical Criticism," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 1, Doubleday, New York, 1992, 728–736.
- <sup>2</sup> Emil Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesus Christi*, Vol. 1. Hinrich, Leipzig, 1901; reprint Hildesheim, 1970, 546–548.
- <sup>3</sup> Under the heading "Josephus" in the standard English-language reference work, Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, which is roughly contemporary with Schürer's work and was apparently written by Alfred Edersheim, the following remark on *Ant.* 200.20 can be read "the last quoted passage about St. James is regarded by most interpreters as on the whole genuine" ("Josephus," *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, Vol. 3, William Smith and Henry Wace, eds., London, 1882, 459).
- <sup>4</sup> For a brief treatment of this development see L. D. Reynolds and Nigel G. Wilson, *Scribes and scholars*, Oxford University, 1978, 186–89.
- <sup>5</sup> It should be noted that many other passages in *Antiquities*, and not just the Testimonium, are also missing from this table of contents, as can be ascertained from even a cursory perusal of its contents. See *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Books 18–19*, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University, 1965; 1992 reprint, 391–401.
- <sup>6</sup> Benedikt Niese, *De testimonio Christiano quod est apud Josephum antiqu. Jud. XVIII.63 sq. disputatio*, Marburg, 1894, V.
- <sup>7</sup> The specific term  $\pi\alpha\rho' \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$  is used to mean 'among us Jews' in the following other passages of *Antiquities*: *Ant.* 1.5, 9, 11; 3.172, 248, 318, 320; 8.46; 10.267; 11.107; 12.277; 14.106, 187; 15.50, 259, 371, 379; 16.177; 20.71, 198, 264. Moreover, the use of the first person plural to mean 'we Jews' appears in every book of *Antiquities* except Book 6 and Book 19 (K. H. Rengstorff, *A complete concordance to Flavius Josephus*, Vol. 2, Brill, Leiden, 1973, 297–98).
- <sup>8</sup> Arthur Drews, *The Christ Myth*, University of Chicago, 1911, 230–31. Drews disposes of the authenticity of Josephus' passage on James the brother of Jesus less casually, but does cite Schürer's authority against its authenticity.

- <sup>9</sup> Witness the fact that the widely influential English language treatment of comparative mythology, *The Golden Bough* of James George Frazer, was first published in 1890.
- <sup>10</sup> Warren Kissinger, *The Lives of Jesus*, Garland, New York, 1985, 32–34.
- <sup>11</sup> Alexander Berendts, *Die Zeugnisse vom Christentum im Slavischen "De Bello Judaico" des Josephus*, Texte und Untersuchungen 29,4, Leipzig, 1906, 3–4, 15.
- <sup>12</sup> Berendts, 72.
- <sup>13</sup> Berendts, 17.
- <sup>14</sup> Although the Romanian text seems to have been based on a Polish intermediary. On the Romanian text see Robert Eisler, *Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist*, Methuen, London, 150 n. 1, 597–602.
- <sup>15</sup> Berendts, 29.
- <sup>16</sup> Berendts, 63.
- <sup>17</sup> Berendts, 57. In the Slavonic *War*, Pilate is harsher than in the New Testament insofar as he has the multitude of Jesus' followers slain, and more corrupt in that he accepts 30 pieces of silver from the anti-Jesus Jewish leaders to have Jesus killed (Slavonic *War*, Book 2. 9. 3).
- <sup>18</sup> Berendts, 46.
- <sup>19</sup> Berendts, 40. The passage that makes this most clear is translated in the Loeb Classical Library as: "And there assembled unto him (Jesus) of ministers one hundred and fifty, and a multitude of the people. Now when they saw his power...and when they had made known to him their will, that he should enter into the city and cut down the Roman troops and Pilate and rule over us, he disdained us not." The Romanian version, and at least one Russian manuscript suggest that the last sentence should be translated: "he heeded not" rather than "he disdained us not." This distinction is important since the former translation implies that Jesus himself was anti-Roman, while the latter translation implies that Jesus, unlike his followers, was not anti-Roman.
- <sup>20</sup> The translation "a certain man" *muzh nekii* is important because it supports the reading of the Testimonium in at least one manuscript of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which reads ἰησοῦς τις. The inclusion of this "certain" is often



assumed to be more authentic than the extant manuscripts of *Antiquities*, which lack the word "certain" (*Kirchengeschichte. Eusebius Werke*, Ed. Eduard Schwartz, Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller 9, 2, 1. Hinrich, Leipzig, 1903, 78). Niese has erred in claiming that this reading appears in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*: in fact Eusebius does not quote the Testimonium in this work at all (*Flavii Iosephi Opera*, Ed. Benedikt Niese, Vol. 4, Berlin, 1890, 151).

- 21 I have largely followed the translation of the Loeb Classical Library's edition of *Jewish War*, Books 4–7, 648–49, incorporating the suggestions of Professor David Frick of the Slavic Studies Department at UC Berkeley.
- 22 Berendts, 59.
- 23 For these diatribes against "the Latins" see Loeb Classical Library's *Josephus: The Jewish War*, 639–641. My discussion of Istrin is based on Nikolai Gudzi, *History of Early Russian Literature*. Trans. Susan Jones, Macmillan, New York, 1949, 59–60.
- 24 Feldman, *Josephus and modern scholarship (1937–1980)*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 1984, 49.
- 25 For a brief overview discussion see Warren Kissinger, *The lives of Jesus*, 21–32.
- 26 • Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus*, 4–7.
- 27 Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus*, Preface.
- 28 It is Eisler himself who suggests that Simon the Zealot (Luke 6:15) was a Zealot in the sense used by Josephus in *Jewish War* to mean those belonging to an anti-Roman group, *Jesus the Messiah*, 100. In contrast, most contemporary scholars do not think that Luke 6:15 is evidence of the political leanings of Jesus' followers.
- 29 Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus*, 49–62 and ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ, 46–88.
- 30 Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus*, 217.
- 31 As already noted, Zeitlin was remarkable for rejecting the scholarly consensus that the Dead Sea Scrolls date to antiquity. In this 1968 article, he compared the scholars who consider the Dead Sea Scrolls to be ancient manuscripts to those who see the Slavonic *War* as an ancient rather than medieval text. As he put it, "the fairy tales about the antiquity of the Hebrew Scrolls and their importance for history is on a par with the finding of the Slavonic Josephus" ("The Slavonic Josephus and the Dead Sea Scrolls: An expose of recent fairy tales," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 58, 1968–69, 191).

- <sup>32</sup> Zeitlin, *Josephus on Jesus*, 51.
- <sup>33</sup> Somewhat inconsistently, Zeitlin argued that the words of medieval Italian origin found in most versions of the *Josippon* were later additions, while he denied the possibility that the Slavonic *War* could contain later alterations such as a change of Hebrew month names to Macedonian month names (*Josephus on Jesus*, Dropsie College, 1931, 32, 53).
- <sup>34</sup> Zeitlin, *Josephus on Jesus*, 60.
- <sup>35</sup> Zeitlin, *Josephus on Jesus*, 70–72.
- <sup>36</sup> Moreover, Eusebius has been influenced to use the term  $\phi\upsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$  here because he is discussing Tertullian's *Apologeticus* 2.7, where the term "genus" is put in the mouth of Emperor Trajan as referring to Christians. That Christians were occasionally called a tribe by non-Christians long before Eusebius is indicated by Suetonius (*Nero* 16.2).
- <sup>37</sup> H. St. John Thackeray, *Josephus, the man and historian*, Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, 1929, 31–36, 149–53.
- <sup>38</sup> Thackeray, 138–148.
- <sup>39</sup> G. P. Goold, ed. *Josephus III: The Jewish War, Books 4–7*, H. St. John Thackeray, trans. Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University, 1979 reprint.
- <sup>40</sup> Solomon Zeitlin, "The Slavonic Josephus and its relation to Josippon and Hegesippus," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 20,1 (1929); Solomon Zeitlin, "The Hoax of the Slavonic Josephus" *Jewish Quarterly Review* 29 (1948–49) 179.
- <sup>41</sup> G. A. Williamson, trans. *Josephus: Jewish War*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1959, 403.
- <sup>42</sup> E. Mary Smallwood, ed. *Josephus: Jewish War*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1981, 470.
- <sup>43</sup> Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus*, 382. Among other problems are the sheer number of texts that Christians have written or copied, the fact that Christian dogma and interests have constantly been changing and never monolithic even at a single time, and the fact that Christian dogma and interests have occasionally converged with non-Christian dogma and interests.

- <sup>44</sup> Berendts, 18.
- <sup>45</sup> Louis Feldman summarizes some of the conflicting claims made on this issue in *Josephus and modern scholarship*, 50–54.
- <sup>46</sup> Louis Feldman, *Josephus and modern scholarship*, 54–55.
- <sup>47</sup> That the Slavonic *War* is often anti-Jewish, for example in ascribing the crucifixion to Jews, cannot automatically invalidate the theory of its origins in Judaizing interests. It is often the case that Jewish and Judaizing Christians are quite hostile to non-Christian Jews precisely because they feel that the latter have betrayed true Judaism by failing to acknowledge Jesus in the requisite manner.
- <sup>48</sup> Shlomo Pines, *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and its implications*, Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1971, 5.
- <sup>49</sup> These texts were edited by A. Vasiliev for *Patrologia Orientalis* 7, Paris, 1911, and by L. Cheikho for *Corpus Scriptorum Christianuorum Orientalium. Scriptores Arabici* 10, (=Ar.III, 5) Louvain 1912; reprint 1954.
- <sup>50</sup> Pines, *An Arabic version of the Testimonium*, 67.
- <sup>51</sup> Pines, *Arabic version*, 40–43.
- <sup>52</sup> Pines, *Arabic version*, 44.
- <sup>53</sup> Pines, *Arabic version*, 21.
- <sup>54</sup> One reviewer, for example, suggested that with Pines' essay the hypothesis that Josephus wrote something about Jesus "vient de recevoir...une confirmation éclatante" (Antoine Guillemont, "Données nouvelles sur le Testimonium Flavianum," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 181 (1972) 102–3).
- <sup>55</sup> For example, Heinz Schreckenberg wrote, "ein...christlicher Urheber...die den Anschein plumper Fälschung geschickt zu vermeiden trachtete" in his *Rezeptionsgeschichtliche und textkritische Untersuchungen zu Flavius Josephus*, Brill, Leiden, 1977, 11. And another reviewer wrote "pourquoi la version dont témoigne Agapius n'aurait-elle pas fait...rendre vraisemblable un invraisemblable témoignage?" (Pierre Geoltrain, "Débat récent autour du 'Testimonium Flavianum,'" *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 185 (1974) 112–14).
- <sup>56</sup> Lawrence I. Conrad, "The Conquest of Arwad," in *Byzantine and early Islamic Near East*, Princeton University, 1992, 322–38.

- <sup>57</sup> Pines, *Arabic version*, 44 n. 159.
- <sup>58</sup> Ernst Bammel, "A new variant form of the Testimonium Flavianum," *Expository Times* 85 (1974) 145–47.
- <sup>59</sup> Although it has been pointed out that the Quran does not call Jesus mortal (Willem A. Bijlefeld, "Other faith images of Jesus: Some Muslim contributions," in R. Berkey and S. Edwards, *Christological Perspectives*, New York, 1982, 200–215).
- <sup>60</sup> Pines, *Arabic version*, 30.
- <sup>61</sup> On the process of Jewish integration into mainstream Western scholarly endeavor since the late nineteenth century see Benjamin Harshav, *Language in time of revolution*, University of California, Berkeley, 1993, 3–67, esp. 42–46.
- <sup>62</sup> John P. Meier notes several twentieth century Roman Catholic scholars who rejected the authenticity of the Testimonium in *A Marginal Jew*, Doubleday, New York, 1991, 74 n. 15. In contrast, Eisler quotes a Roman Catholic work published in 1903 that characterizes opposition to the Testimonium as typical of Jews and Protestants (*Jesus the Messiah*, 39 n. 4).
- <sup>63</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 74 n.15.
- <sup>64</sup> Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus: A supplementary bibliography*, New York, 1986, 618–19, 677.



# Conclusion

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This is an examination of the history of a brief passage about Jesus Christ contained in the extant manuscripts of Josephus' *Antiquities*. In modern times this text, known as the Testimonium Flavianum, has been considered to be the only extra-Biblical witness to the historicity of Jesus. In ancient and medieval times it was the most frequently quoted passage from Josephus' works, and it played no small role in making Josephus the most widely read Greek-language historian of the pre-modern Western world. In the late sixteenth century the text was pronounced a forgery by some scholars, creating an intellectual controversy that has not been resolved even today. As a result of its great popularity from antiquity to modern times and the controversy over its authenticity since early modern times, the text may very well be the most discussed non-Biblical passage in all of ancient literature. Because it has been enormously popular from antiquity to the present, this text has been a barometer of intellectual development through the centuries; because it has been enormously controversial since the early modern period, the treatment of its authenticity can tell us something about the origins of modern history writing and the development of critical attitudes towards historical sources.

Josephus' reputation as the most widely read Greek-language historian in the medieval and early modern West was created by the many Christian writers of late antiquity who cited and appropriated his works. Although the Testimonium was often cited for anti-Jewish apologetics in the late antique and medieval periods, it was first cited, by church fathers Eusebius of Caesarea (d. ca. 330) and Jerome (d. ca. 420), not for anti-Jewish apologetical purposes, as is often assumed, but rather for anti-pagan apologetical purposes. There is no evidence that the authenticity of the passage was questioned by the writers of late antiquity. The fact that the passage is quoted by Jerome in a variant form in this period is not proof of Jerome's own doubts about its authenticity, as is occasionally alleged. Rather it is evidence that in addition to the *textus receptus* a variant version of the passage was still in circulation during this period.

In the High Middle Ages (1050–1350), it was not uncommon for Jewish scholars to argue that the Testimonium Flavianum was a forgery.

However, their charge was not based on a critical examination of relevant sources but on their *a priori* assumptions that a Jewish historian could not have written favorably about Jesus. Although they cited as evidence the lack of an analogous Testimonium in most copies of the tenth century Hebrew adaptation of Josephus' works known as the *Josippon*, this lacuna was itself a product of such *a priori* assumptions on the part of its Jewish author and copyists. Jewish charges against the authenticity of the Testimonium in this period were ignored or dismissed without critical examination by Christian scholars. On the other hand, there is suggestive evidence that the twelfth century Christian historian Otto of Freising entertained some doubt about the exact wording of the Testimonium Flavianum that was based on a comparison of the relevant extant sources, namely the variant of the Testimonium quoted by Jerome and the textus receptus Testimonium of the Latin *Antiquities*. However, since Otto never explicitly voiced such doubt and since contemporary Jewish charges against the text were not taken seriously by Christians, there was no public controversy over its authenticity in this period either in the West or the East.

The authenticity of the Testimonium was first openly challenged in works by Christian scholars in the late sixteenth century. The first such work was an ecclesiastical history, published in 1592 in Tübingen by a Lutheran theologian named Lucas Osiander. These first charges against the text were prompted by the same sort of *a priori* assumptions about Jewish hostility towards Jesus that had animated Jewish medieval scholars' rejection of the text. In the beginning of the early modern debate over the text's authenticity, the fact that the *Josippon* lacked a parallel to the Testimonium was for the first time seen as significant by Christian scholars. Evidently this was because in this period some scholars assumed that the *Josippon* was an ancient text; but even for those scholars who knew quite well that the *Josippon* was not a source of direct relevance to assessing the authenticity of the Testimonium, the silence or even hostility of the *Josippon* towards Jesus raised the question why Josephus had not been likewise silent or hostile towards Jesus.

It was only in the mid-seventeenth century that critics of the Testimonium's authenticity began to enlist textual evidence to support their *a priori* assumption that the Jewish Josephus could not have possibly written something about Jesus as favorable as the Testimonium.

The first scholar to point to such textual evidence was the Reformed theologian Louis Cappel (1585–1658) who noted that the passage does not fit into its surrounding context very smoothly. Cappel was followed by fellow Reformed scholars Tanaquilus Faber (1615–72) and Johannes Dalleus (1594–1670), who claimed that the passage contradicted statements about Josephus made respectively by early church writers Origen and Theodoret. Following widespread exposure of Faber's arguments in particular, the mainstream of scholarly opinion moved towards the view that the text had indeed been proven a forgery, and, for that reason, by the mid-eighteenth century, controversy over the question of the text's authenticity had largely come to an end.

The birth of a controversy over the authenticity of the Testimonium in the early modern period was the product of new intellectual currents originating in the Renaissance and Reformation, including a greater awareness than was typical of the ancient and medieval periods of the possibility that Hebrew literature like the *Josippon* could shed light on early Christianity; doubts among Protestant scholars in particular about the scope of the miraculous, which caused them to doubt that Josephus could have miraculously written something he did not believe; and above all a greater skepticism towards the authenticity of many ancient sources than was typical of the late antique and medieval periods, particularly sources that had been used to write church histories. The fact that all the early critics of the Testimonium were Protestants, and the great majority were Reformed Protestants, suggests that Protestants were particularly receptive to these intellectual currents. This fact should raise doubt about the arguments of those scholars who draw a strong opposition between the intellectual character of an allegedly rational, non-sectarian Renaissance and that of an allegedly non-rational, sectarian Reformation, and it adds ammunition to the arguments of those who would posit a connection between the Reformed tradition in particular and the origins of intellectual modernity.

Enlightenment-era skepticism added relatively little new in terms of textual criticism to the Testimonium Flavianum debate, since the text had already been so vehemently denounced by earlier Christian scholars like Osiander and Faber. During this period for the first time in Western Christendom the argument that Jesus had never existed was advanced in certain unusually skeptical intellectual quarters. These arguments may have been prompted by the prior denunciation of the Testimonium as a



forgery, although the evidence for this is unclear. Certainly it can be asserted that during the Enlightenment era, for the first time, positive hostility towards religion became a factor in some critics' rejection of the text, whereas we have seen that the attempt to prove the text a forgery was originally made by devout Protestants who entertained no doubts about Christ's existence. Yet one should not characterize this era as one of uniform hostility towards the text among critical-minded scholars. Scholars such as Johann Friedrich Cotta (1701–1779) and Charles Daubuz (ca. 1670–1740) made reasonable criticism of those who rejected the text, and although William Whiston (1667–1725), the great eighteenth-century English translator of Josephus, did not always rely on a very critical approach to the works of Josephus in general, his radical suggestion that Josephus may have been a Jewish Christian did contain one insight lacking in the attitudes that most prior scholars had brought to the *Testimonium Flavianum* debate: that relations between Jews and Christians in Josephus' day were not as polarized as they were later to become.

More than two centuries after scholars such as Tanaquilus Faber appeared to have proven conclusively to both contemporaries and posterity that the *Testimonium Flavianum* was a forgery, controversy over the authenticity of the text was revived by twentieth century scholars. They claimed to have found variants of the text or indeed variants of whole works by Josephus in long-overlooked sources from the margins of the Western historiographical tradition, which until then had produced so much of the literature on the *Testimonium Flavianum* controversy. These sources were a medieval Old Russian adaptation of *Jewish War* and two medieval Christian Semitic chronicles.

Twentieth century controversy over the text can be distinguished from controversy over the text in the early modern period insofar as it seems generally more academic and less sectarian. While the challenge to the authenticity of the *Testimonium* in the early modern period was orchestrated almost entirely by Protestant scholars, the twentieth century controversies over the text have been marked by the presence of Jewish scholars for the first time as prominent participants on both sides of the question, and in general the attitudes of Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish and secular scholars towards the text have drawn closer together. On the one hand this can be interpreted as the result of an increasing trend towards secularism, which is usually seen as product of modernity.

On the other hand it can be interpreted as a sort of post-modern disillusionment with the verities of modern skepticism, and an attempt to recapture the sensibility of the ancient world, when it apparently was still possible for a first-century Jew to have written a text as favorable towards Jesus Christ as the *Testimonium Flavianum*.



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The Testimonium Flavium, a brief passage in *Jewish Antiquities* by Flavius Josephus (37 AD–ca. 100 AD), is widely considered the only extant evidence besides the Bible of the historicity of Jesus Christ. In the sixteenth century the authenticity of this passage was challenged by scholars, launching a controversy that has still not been resolved. *Josephus on Jesus: The Testimonium Flavianum Controversy from Late Antiquity to Modern Times* is a history of this passage and the long-standing debate over its authenticity. Because it may be the most quoted ancient text next to the Bible, this book not only illuminates the history of the Testimonium Flavianum through the ages, but also the general development of historical criticism in the Western world.

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