

EXCURSUS II—JOSEPHUS ON JESUS AND JAMES
Ant. xviii 3, 3 (63-4) and xx 9, 1 (200-3)*

The literature on this subject is so vast that only a selection of references can be given here. A few of the more important older works are mentioned with several recent ones. The division into three groups, in accordance with the authors' views, is only approximately accurate. Some writers maintain that our text of the two passages is authentic in all essentials, whilst not disputing that minor alterations may have been made in Josephus's own text. Others consider the possibility—or even claim—that Josephus wrote about Jesus, but think that what he wrote has been changed by a later hand out of all recognition, and that the extant text is spurious.

1. *Defending authenticity:*

- C. G. Bretschneider: *Capita theologiae Iudaeorum dogmaticae e Flavii Iosephi scriptis collecta* (1812), pp. 59-66.
 F. C. Burkitt, 'Josephus and Christ', *ThT* 47 (1913), pp. 135-44.
 A. von Harnack 'Der jüdische Geschichtsschreiber Josephus und Jesus Christus', *Internationale Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik* 7 (1913), cols. 1037-68; cf.: *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius I* (1893), pp. 858-9, 2 (1897), p. 581.
 B. Brüne, 'Zeugnis des Josephus über Christus', *ThStKr* 92 (1919), pp. 139-47 ('genuine, but a Christian censor deleted something Josephus had written').
 W. E. Barnes, *The Testimony of Josephus to Jesus Christ* (1920).
 R. Laqueur, *Der jüdische Historiker Josephus* (1920), pp. 274-8 ('Josephus himself added the passage, when he published a second edition of the Antiquities').
 L. van Liempt, 'De testimonio Flaviano', *Mnemosyne n.s.* 55 (1927), pp. 109-16.
 F. Dornseiff, 'Lukas der Schriftsteller, mit einem Anhang: Josephus und Tacitus', *ZNW* 35 (1936), pp. 129-55, esp. 145-8; 'Zum Testimonium Flavianum', *ibid.*, 46 (1955), pp. 245-50.
 R. H. J. Shutt, *Studies in Josephus* (1961), p. 121 ('the Testimonium, as Josephus probably wrote it, was long enough to arouse suspicion, and not long enough or bitter enough to win commendation from Jews').

2. *Against authenticity:*

- H. C. A. Eichstädt, *Flaviani de Iesu Christo testimonii adverbia quo iure nuper rursus defenda sit* (1813-1841); *Questionibus sex super Flaviano de Iesu Christo testimonio auctarium* (1841).
 H. Ewald, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel bis Christus V, Geschichte Christus' und seiner Zeit* (1867), pp. 181-6 ('Josephus could not fail to write about the Christians, but the passage about Jesus has unmistakably been refashioned by a Christian').
 E. Gerlach, *Die Weissagungen des Alten Testaments in den Schriften des Flavii Iosephus und das angebliche Zeugnis von Christo* (1863), pp. 90-109.

* This excursus originally published by Paul Winter under the title 'Josephus on Jesus', *Journ. of Hist. Studies* 1 (1968), pp. 289-302, was revised by him shortly before his death in 1969.

- B. Niese, *De Testimonio Christiano quod est apud Iosephum ant. Iud. XVIII, 63 sq. disputatio* (1893/4).
 E. Schürer, 'Josephus', *Realenzyklopädie für die protestantische Theologie und Kirche* IX (1901), pp. 377-86.
 G. Hölscher, *Die Quellen des Josephus für die Zeit vom Exil bis zum Jüdischen Krieg* (1904), p. 62; 'Josephus', *RE* IX, cols. 1934-2000, col. 1993-4.
 W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen* (1909), p. 344; E. Hennecke's *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* (ed. W. Schneemelcher) I (1959), pp. 324-5. [*E. T. New Testament Apocrypha* I (1963), pp. 436-7].
 P. Battifol, *Orpheus et l'Évangile* (1911).
 E. Norden, 'Josephus und Tacitus über Jesus Christus und eine messianische Prophetie', *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur* 16 (1913), pp. 637-66.
 J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain. Leur condition juridique, économique et sociale* II (1914), pp. 127-49, esp. pp. 139-40, n. 2.
 P. Corsen, 'Die Zeugnisse des Tacitus und des Pseudo-Josephus über Christus', *ZNW* 15 (1914), pp. 114-40 ('Wir können der Frage nicht ausweichen, ob nicht etwa an Stelle dessen, was wir jetzt lesen, vorher etwas anderes gestanden hat', p. 128; 'man versteht . . . dass ein Christ auf den Gedanken kam, den Josephus mit einem Zeugnis für Jesus zu belasten, wenn er bereits einen Satz bei ihm vorfand, der ihn zum Widerspruch reizte', p. 132).
 E. Meyer, 'Das angebliche Zeugnis des Josephus über Jesus', *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums* I (1921), pp. 206-11.
 L. Wohleb, 'Das Testimonium Flavianum', *Römische Quartalschrift* 35 (1927), pp. 151-69 (he does not reject the view that something that Josephus wrote about Jesus may have been distorted by a copyist).
 S. Zeitlin, 'The Christ Passage in Josephus', *JQR n.s.* 18 (1928), pp. 231-55.
 G. Mathieu et L. Herrmann, *Oeuvres complètes de Flavius Josephus* IV (1929), p. 145.
 H. Conzelmann, 'Jesus Christus', *RGK* III (1959) cols. 619-53, on col. 622 ('the passage reflects the Lucan kerygma, and was added as a whole to the text of Josephus').
 F. Hahn, 'Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus und die Eigenart der uns zur Verfügung stehenden Quellen' in F. Hahn, W. Lohff u. G. Bornkamm, *Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus* (1966), pp. 7-40, on pp. 18 f.

3. *Maintaining the theory of interpolation:*

- J. C. L. Gieseler, *Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte* I (1844, pp. 81 f.).
 F. A. Heinichen, *Eusebii Pamphili Scripta Historica—Meletemata Eusebiana* III (1870), pp. 623-54.
 K. Wieseler, 'Des Josephus Zeugnisse über Christus und Jakobus den Bruder des Herrn', *JDTh* 23 (1878), pp. 86-109.
 G. Müller, *Christus bei Josephus Flavius* (1895).
 A. v. Gutschmid, 'Vorlesungen über Josephos' Bücher gegen Apion', *Kleine Schriften* IV (1893), pp. 352-3.
 Th. Reinach, 'Josèphe sur Jésus', *REJ* 35 (1897), pp. 1-18.
 K. Linck, *De antiquissimis veterum quae ad Iesum Nazarenum spectant testimoniis, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten*, XIV 1 (1913).
 R. Götz, 'Die ursprüngliche Fassung der Stelle Josephus Antiquit. XVIII 3, 3 und ihr Verhältnis zu Tacitus Annal. XV, 44', *ZNW* 14 (1913), pp. 286-97 ('zu kleinerem Teile echt, in der längeren jetzigen Fassung dagegen stark von einem christlichen Fälscher ergänzt und zurechtgestutzt nach christlichem Gutdünken', p. 291).

- J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth. His Life, Times and Teaching* (1925), pp. 55-8.
 R. Eisler, *ἸΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΣ* (1928-30).
 H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus, The Man and the Historian* (1929) ('The paragraph in the main comes from Josephus or his secretary, but the Christian censor or copyist has, by slight omissions and alterations, so distorted it as to give it a wholly different complexion', p. 148).
 M. Goguel, *The Life of Jesus* (1933), pp. 75-82 (91).
 W. Bienert, *Der älteste nichtchristliche Jesusbericht. Josephus über Jesus* (1936).
 Ch. Martin, 'Le Testimonium Flavianum. Vers une solution définitive?' *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 20 (1941), pp. 409-65.
 F. Scheidweiler, 'Sind die Interpolationen im altrussischen Josephus wertlos?', *ZNW* 43 (1950/51), pp. 155-78; 'Das Testimonium Flavianum', *ibid.* 45 (1954), pp. 230-43.
 C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background. Selected Documents* (1956), p. 198.
 P. Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin, 1961), pp. 27, 165, n. 25; 'The Trial of Jesus', *Commentary* 38 (1964), p. 35.
 T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (1962), pp. 18-19.
 A. Pelletier, 'L'originalité du témoignage de Flavius Josèphe sur Jésus', *RSR* 52 (1964), pp. 177-203.
 L. H. Feldman, *Josephus* (Loeb) IX (1965), p. 49.
 S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (1967), pp. 121, 359-68; *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (1968), pp. 52-55, 151-2.

In our texts of the *Antiquities* of Josephus are two passages that refer to Jesus of Nazareth, viz. *Ant.* xviii 3, 3 (63-4) and xx 9, 1 (200). Neither of them is universally accepted as authentic, but scholars who consider the second passage genuine are more numerous¹ than those who accept the first. Since the explanation of *Ant.* xx 9, 1 (200) does not involve as many difficulties as the interpretation of the other text, we may deal with the easier passage first.

Writing about James, the leader of the Jerusalem community of Jewish Christians (Acts 15:1 ff., 21:18 ff.), Josephus refers to him with the words ὁ ἀδελφὸς Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ. We need to rid our-

1. Most authors who reject *Ant.* xviii 3, 3 (63-4) as spurious have no doubts about the genuineness of *Ant.* xx 9, 1 (200). Exceptions are B. Niese, *De testimonio Christiano quod est apud Iosephum ant. Iud. XVIII, 63 sq. disputatio* (1893/4); E. Schürer, *Geschichte* I (1901), pp. 548, 581 f., n. 45; J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain* II (1914), pp. 139-41; and G. Holscher, in *RE* IX cols. 1934-2000, on col. 1993.

Schürer's objection was based on Origen's statement in *Contra Celsum* I 47 where Origen mentioned that Josephus thought of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple as God's punishment for the stoning of James. A similar statement, in *Contra Celsum* II 13, says: 'Titus destroyed Jerusalem, as Josephus reports, [in retribution] for the execution of James the Just, the brother of Jesus called Christ'. Yet no manuscript of Josephus extant today connects the destruction of Jerusalem with James's stoning. Schürer thought that Origen's statement proved the existence of several Christian interpolations in the *Antiquities*, of which that quoted by Origen failed to survive. It is, however, possible that Origen's memory was at fault, and that he assumed to have read in Josephus what he may have found in Hegesippus (in Eusebius, *HE* ii 23, 11-18).

minds of the notion that λεγόμενος implies doubt, as though it meant 'so-called' or 'alleged'. The word is rather similar to ἐπικαλούμενος which Josephus applies to John the Baptist, Ἰωάννης ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος βαπτιστής.² While ἐπικαλούμενος is best translated, 'with the byname', and therefore requires always that the actual name should be mentioned—Ἰωάννης in the case of the Baptist—λεγόμενος introduces an alternative name which might stand by itself.³ It should be translated, according to its context, as 'said to be', or 'who is spoken of as', or simply 'called'. The usage in *Ant.* xx 9, 1 (200) also occurs in Mt. 1:16, where certainly no doubt is involved about the appropriateness of the title.⁴ In *Ant.* xx 9, 1 (200) we have a statement which any writer of the first century could have used to describe the family relationship between James and Jesus, without intending to express doubts as to whether the latter was rightly or wrongly called Χριστός. A considerable number of persons with the name Jesus are mentioned by Josephus,⁵ who therefore found it necessary to distinguish between them. For instance, he called the Jesus who succeeded Ananus in the high-priesthood τὸν τοῦ Δαμαίου⁶ so as to avoid confusion with Jesus the son of Gamaliel, or any other bearer of the same name. 'λεγόμενος Χριστός' would be enough to specify Jesus of Nazareth.

However, the matter takes on a different aspect if it is assumed that the words, 'the brother of Jesus called Christ', were interpolated at a later time into Josephus's text. If a Christian forger had inserted a reference to Jesus, he would scarcely have been content to mention Jesus in such non-committal fashion. In all likelihood, he would have used a more direct expression to make clear the reality of the messiahship of Jesus. Furthermore, the word Χριστός soon came to be used among Christians of Gentile descent as a proper name. The phrase λεγόμενος Χριστός betrays awareness that 'messiah' was not a proper name, and therefore reflects Jewish rather than later Christian usage.

2. *Ant.* xviii 5, 2 (116-19).

3. Χριστός without Ἰησοῦς, is fairly often used as a proper name in the NT.

4. A scholion to Codex Vaticanus Graecus 354 (S) gives Pilate's question in Mt. xxvii 17 in the following form: τίνα θέλετε τῶν δύο ἀπολύσω ὑμῖν Ἰησοῦν τὸν Βαραββᾶν ἢ Ἰησοῦν τὸν λεγόμενον χριστόν.

5. Jesus son of Phabi, *Ant.* xv 9, 3 (322); Jesus son of See, *Ant.* xvii 13, 1 (341); Jesus son of Damnai, *Ant.* xx 9, 1 (203), 9, 4 (213); Jesus son of Gamaliel, *Ant.* xx 9, 4 (213), 9, 7 (223); Jesus son of Gamala, *B.J.* iv 3, 9 (160), 4, 3 (238), 4, 4 (283); 5, 2 (316), 322, 325, *Vita* 38/193, 41/204; Jesus son of Sapphas, *B.J.* ii 20, 4 (566); Jesus son of Sapphias, *B.J.* ii 21, 3 (599), iii 9, 7 (450-2), 9, 8 (457), 10, 1 (498) etc.; Jesus son of Thebuti, *B.J.* vi 8, 3 (387-9); Jesus son of Ananias, *B.J.* vi 5, 3 (300-9); Jesus, the rival of Josephus, *Vita* 22/105-11; Jesus, the Galilean, who attempted to depose Josephus from his command of Jewish troops, possibly identical with the last-named, *Vita* 40/200; Jesus, the brother-in-law of Justus of Tiberias, *Vita* 35/178, 37/186; and an undefined Jesus, *Vita* 48/246.

6. *Ant.* xx 9, 1 (203).

Origen, who was familiar with Josephus's writings,⁷ expressed astonishment that Josephus, *disbelieving in the messiahship of Jesus* (*ἀπιστῶν τῷ Ἰησοῦ ὡς Χριστῷ*), should write in a deferential manner about James, his brother.⁸ Hence the reading in *Ant.* xx 9, 1 (200) is attested as existing before the time of Origen, and there is no good reason for thinking that the words *ὁ ἀδελφὸς Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ* in the passage about James were written by somebody other than Josephus.

If, then, in *Ant.* xx 9, 1 (200) Josephus referred to James as being 'the brother of Jesus who is called Christ', without more ado, we have to assume that in an earlier passage he had already told his readers about Jesus himself. Thus we are led to consider the passage in *Ant.* xviii 3, 3 (63-4). It reads:

(63) At about this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one might call him a man. For he was one who accomplished surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth with pleasure. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. (64) He was the Messiah. When Pilate, upon an indictment brought by the principal men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him from the very first did not cease to be attached to him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the holy prophets had foretold this and myriads of other marvels concerning him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has to this day still not disappeared.

Throughout the Middle Ages the authenticity of this passage was undisputed. Indeed, it considerably helped to exalt the reputation of Josephus in the Christian world; it was eagerly seized upon as impartial proof of the gospel story. But from the sixteenth century onward critical voices were raised and the dispute has continued since then.

The bibliography at the heading of this Excursus indicates the variety of views held by different scholars on the origin of our text. When examining it, we should not proceed in the same manner as did our predecessors in the main. Since all extant manuscripts of the eighteenth book of the *Antiquities* contain the passage—there are only three such manuscripts in existence, and none of them is earlier than the eleventh century—they started from the premise that the onus of proving lack of authenticity rests on those who refuse to accept it. This situation

7. He mentioned Josephus in *Contra Celsum* I 47, II 13 and *Com. in Matthaicum* X 17. Christian writers prior to Origen who also mention Josephus include Theophilus of Antioch (*Ad Autolyicum* III 23; GCS VI, 1156); Tertullian (*Apologeticum adversus gentes pro christianis* 19, 6; PL I, 445, CSEL lxix 51; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* I 21, 147, 2 (GCS lli 91). None of these authors shows any acquaintance with the passage in *Ant.* xviii 3, 3 (63-4).

8. Origen's testimony is important, and may be quoted. *Com. in Matthaicum* 10:17 (ad Mt. 13:55): *θαυμαστόν ἐστὶν ὅτι τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἡμῶν οὐ καταδεξιόμενος εἶναι Χριστόν, οὐδὲν ἤτρον Ἰακώβω δικαιοσύνην ἐμαρτύρησε τοσαύτην. Contra Celsum* I 47: *καίτοι γε ἀπιστῶν τῷ Ἰησοῦ ὡς Χριστῷ* This proves beyond dispute that Origen found Jesus mentioned in his copy of Josephus, but that this mention did not give him the impression that Josephus considered Jesus to be the Christ.

no longer obtains. Doubt has won the day, and scholars of established reputation—Niese, Norden, Eduard Meyer, Conzelmann—consider our passage a complete fabrication. It is largely recognized by other authorities that Josephus could not have been the author of the passage as it stands. Today, the onus of proof lies on those who either maintain the genuineness of the entire passage, or maintain at least that Josephus did write something about Jesus, and that parts of *Ant.* xviii 3, 3 (63-4)—even single sentences or perhaps isolated words—preserve a trace, however incomplete, of what he wrote. Unlike our predecessors, therefore, we shall attempt to show first that certain parts of the testimony in *Ant.* xviii 3, 3 (63-4) are not compatible with a Christian interpolator's outlook. *Σοφὸς ἀνὴρ* is not an expression which a Christian would normally have used when speaking of Jesus for it contradicts the notion of Jesus' uniqueness. Certainly, an interpolator, aware that he was supposed to express a Jewish view, might have checked his habitual, more reverential, mode of speaking about Jesus, and might have employed a phrase he thought fit for a Jew to use. Nevertheless, the expression sounds doubtful in the mouth of a Christian. The phrase agrees with Josephus's own manner of writing,⁹ and the case for its authenticity is strengthened when it is compared with the words immediately following, *εἶγε ἀνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρῆ*, with which we shall deal later on.

In the sentence containing the words, 'upon an indictment (or accusation) brought by the principal men from our midst, Pilate condemned him to be crucified,' a distinction is made between the part played by Pilate and the part played by Jewish notables in Jesus' trial. While implying that charges were laid against Jesus by some Jewish nobles, these words state that it was the Roman prefect who pronounced a death sentence on him. None of the evangelists states the fact quite unambiguously.¹⁰ The distinction between the functions of Jewish priests and Roman governor betrays some awareness of what legal proceedings in Judaea were like in the time of Jesus. Further, this distinction between the Roman and the Jewish role in Jesus' trial conflicts with all notions held by Christians of the second and the third century. From the time of the writers of the Acts of the Apostles and of the Fourth Gospel¹¹ onward, it was being claimed by Christian preachers, apologetes and historians, that the Jews acted, not only as accusers of Jesus, but also as his judges and executioners. The array of charges against them on this count is impressive.¹² It is hard to believe that a Christian forger, bent as he would have been on extolling

9. *Ant.* viii 2, 7 (53) (of King Solomon); x 11, 2 (237) (of Daniel).

10. Mk. 15:5, Mt. 27:26, Lk. 23:24, Jn. 19:16; cf. Winter, *Trial*, p. 56.

11. Acts 2:22, 36, 3:15, 4:10, 5:30, 7:52, 10:39; Jn. 19:16b-18.

12. See Winter, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-61, 179-83.

the status of Jesus and lowering that of the Jews, might have been the author of the words in question.

To some critics of the passage in *Ant.* xviii 3, 3 (64) the words οἱ πρῶτοι ἄνδρες παρ' ἡμῖν appear suspicious for two reasons. They argue that it would accord with Josephus's habit to have inserted παρ' ἡμῖν between the words πρῶτοι and ἄνδρες. They argue further that Josephus, wishing to appear an objective historian who wrote 'from a neutral point of view', would have been careful to avoid using 'we', ἡμεῖς, and would rather have written οἱ πρῶτοι τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἄνδρες. The first objection is not really weighty. As to the second, it has to be admitted that Josephus, in *Bellum*, avoided speaking of himself or the Jewish people in the first person, singular or plural, but he abandoned this attitude when he wrote the *Antiquities*, a work undertaken with the explicit purpose of presenting the case for the Jews. He identified himself and his nation, on several occasions.

In the final sentence of our passage we read of τῶν Χριστιανῶν . . . τὸ φύλον, the *tribe of Christians*. There are scholars who see in this phrase proof of Josephus's own hand and explain it as a derisive reference to Christianity. No Christian, it is argued, would have called Christians a 'tribe'. Yet though the word may have a pejorative connotation to modern ears, this was not so for first-century Jews. Steeped in the OT, Josephus would have found it natural to refer to divisions within the body politic of the Jewish people by the word 'tribe'. He even called the Jewish nation as a whole 'the tribe of the Jews'¹³ or mentioned a speech, by the Jewish king of Chalcis, who addressed the inhabitants of Jerusalem with the words 'your tribe'.¹⁴ While indeed it would be strange for a Christian to speak of the ἐξ ἔθνῶν λαός (Acts 15:14) as being a 'tribe', the phrase sounds plausible coming from Josephus.

Having made out, as we think, a *prima facie* case for the ascription to Josephus of certain turns of speech, however fragmentary, we shall in the next stage of this examination call attention to those parts of the testimonium that could not have been written by Josephus, but are clearly either Christian interpolations, or present an adulterated text.

Ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν. This is a declaration of faith, of the Christian faith. Josephus was not a Christian. In fact, these words seem to have been lifted from Lk. 23:35, or Jn. 7:26, or perhaps from Acts 9:22, where the Apostle Paul confounded the Jews at Damascus, proving ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός. There is little reason to assume that Josephus had read the NT, even if it were definitely settled that the three of its

13. *B. J.* iii 8, 3 (354) τὸ Ἰουδαίων φύλον (Josephus's own utterance), vii 8, 6 (327) τὸ φύλον [τῶ θεῶ] φύλον Ἰουδαίων (in the speech of Eleazar, the defender of Masada).

14. *B. J.* ii 16, 4 (397) πᾶν ὑμῶν τὸ φύλον (in Agrippa II's speech).

books quoted had been in existence at the time when he was completing his *Antiquities* (towards A.D. 93/4). Josephus could quite well refer to Jesus with the words ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός to distinguish him from other persons named Jesus, in which case λεγόμενος prefacing the appellation 'Christ' makes it clear that he was following current custom and not expressing his own personal view. The definite assertion, 'He was the Christ', is, however, inconceivable in the mouth of anyone but a Christian. There are writers who think that a copyist found in his manuscript of Josephus a derogatory or malevolent reference to Jesus, crossed it out, and wrote on the margin the indignant exclamation: 'This was the Christ!' Later copyists, it is thought, inserted the marginal annotation in the text, where we now find it in all the manuscripts. It is not necessary to go to such lengths to explain the unexpected appearance of these four words. Rather, it seems that Josephus did use the word Χριστός, qualifying it in some way or other, perhaps as in *Ant.* xx 9, 1 (200), for otherwise the reference to the tribe of Χριστιανοί, 'so called after him', would be incomprehensible. What the qualification was which Josephus used, we cannot say. It may have been strong enough to irritate a copyist, who therefore left it out and replaced it by the definite assertion which we now read in our texts.¹⁵

Josephus nowhere informs his pagan readers what is meant by the expression, 'Christ', or 'Messiah'. It would have been necessary to elucidate the term to them. Already Bretschneider, who defended the authenticity of the testimonium, had to admit: *Bene enim tenendum est, Iosephum scripsisse non Iudaeis sed Graecis, ignorantibus sensum vocis χριστός dogmaticum apud Iudaeos notissimum.*¹⁶ Without explanation, the four words now in the text would have been incomprehensible to Josephus's readers. A Christian interpolator quite sure of what he himself meant by the word χριστός would not have felt an explanation necessary. His readers would be Christians, as he was.

The words, 'if indeed one might call him a man', following on the description of Jesus as a wise man, seem to presuppose belief in the divinity of Jesus. That would not accord with what Josephus believed. If, however, these words have been added by a Christian interpolator, they considerably strengthen the case for the authenticity of Josephus's

15. In regard to the original text, T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (1962), p. 19, argued that the statements of Origen (cf. above n. 8) together with Jerome's variant reading 'credebatur', *de vir. illustr.* (Teubner, 1879), p. 19, suggest that Josephus wrote ἐνομιζέτο and that some pious Christian made what appeared to him the obvious and necessary correction. His conjecture, however, is tenable only if 'credebatur esse Christus' is not taken as a straight assertion, 'he was believed to be the Christ', but as a remark with ironic overtones: 'he was reputedly the Messiah'.

16. Bretschneider, *Capita theologiae Iudaeorum dogmaticae e Flavii Iosephi scriptis collecta* (1812), p. 63.

characterization of Jesus as a σοφὸς ἀνὴρ. The interpolator may have thought it an inadequate description of Jesus' person to call him merely a wise man, and though in this instance he took no offence at the expression, he would have thought it necessary to note down his reservations.

'A teacher of people who accept the truth with pleasure (ἡδονῆ)' is a puzzling reading. Ἠδονῆ normally denotes sensual pleasure. On the one hand it is doubtful that Josephus would have said of people who embraced Christianity that they had accepted the truth; on the other, it would be most unusual for a Christian to refer to the acceptance of the Eternal Word by the turn of speech, ἡδονῆ δέχεσθαι. In juxtaposition to the παράδοξα ἔργα mentioned in the same sentence a few words earlier, the phrase has a slightly ironical undertone. Both expressions, παράδοξα ἔργα,¹⁷ as well as ἡδονῆ δέχεσθαι,¹⁸ occur in Josephus elsewhere, but ἡδονῆ δέχεσθαι τὴν ἀλήθειαν or τὰ ἀληθῆ sounds extraordinary. To write, or speak, πρὸς ἡδονῆν, carries for Josephus the connotation of 'vain flattery'.¹⁹

As long ago as in 1749 the suggestion was made, and has since been repeated, that Josephus actually wrote ΤΑΑΗΘΗ, and not ΤΑΑΗΘΗ.²⁰ With no interval between the words, and majuscule writing, the letter Α could have easily been mistaken for a Λ. If we accept τὰ ἀληθῆ, the unusual, slightly freakish, ἡδονῆ fits the sense perfectly and agrees with the description of Jesus as a worker of παράδοξα ἔργα. The emendation has much in its favour, but it remains conjectural.

17. *Ant.* ix 8, 6 (182), xii 2, 8 (63).

18. *Ant.* xvii 12, 1 (329); xviii 1, 1 (6), 3, 1 (59), 3, 4 (70), 6, 10 (236), 9, 4 (333); xix 1, 16 (127), 2, 2 (185).

19. *Ant.* ii 5, 5 (80); cf. viii 15, 6 (418).

20. Nathaniel Forster seems to have been the first to suggest this emendation in an anonymously published treatise, *A Dissertation upon the Account supposed to have been given of Jesus Christ by Josephus, being an attempt to shew that this celebrated Passage, some slight corruptions only excepted, may reasonably be esteemed genuine* (1749), p. 27. Apparently the same suggestion was also advanced by Jacob Serenius in a book published in Stockholm in 1752, and by Franz Anton Knittel in *Neue Kritiken über das weltberühmte Zeugnis des alten Juden Flavius Josephus von Iesus Christus* (1779).

Acknowledging that this emendation was not his own, Friedrich Adolf Heinichen repeated it in *Eusebii Scripta Historica III, Meletemata Eusebiana* (1870), pp. 623-54, on p. 647. Heinichen observed: παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητῆς quamvis Iesus a Iosepho dici potuerit; idem tamen διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῆ τὰληθῆ δεχομένων dici minime potuit (p. 642).

The conjecture has been accepted by Théodore Reinach, 'Josèphe sur Jésus', *REJ* 35 (1897), pp. 1-18, Robert Eisler, *ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΣ. Die messianische Unabhängigkeitsbewegung vom Auftreten Johannes des Täufers bis zum Untergang Jakob des Gerechten* (1928-30), English version [abridged]: *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist* (1931), and by Walther Bienert, *Der älteste nichtchristliche Jesusbericht. Josephus über Jesus* (1936).

The words, 'He appeared to them on the third day . . . as the holy prophets had foretold this and myriads of other marvels', do not come from Josephus.²¹

So far, we have dealt with one set of sentences, or phrases, with the appearance of being non-Christian, and another set of sentences or phrases expressing Christian sentiments. We are left with a third set of expressions that are neutral. They may have been written by the Jew Josephus, or may have come from a Christian interpolator of his *Antiquities*. Josephus could have described Jesus as a performer of astonishing feats, and he is more likely to have done so than a Christian copyist. The sentence, 'He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks', could also have been written by Josephus, not as a testimony of Jesus' achievements in the course of his life, but as a description of affairs known to Josephus from his own experience. Living in Rome, he was aware that many of the local Christians were of 'Greek', i.e. Gentile, descent. The same applies to the remaining sentence, 'those who had come to love him from the very first (viz. in his life) did not cease to be attached to him (after his death)'; it may well have come from Josephus's hand.

The few sentences, or phrases, described above as being compatible with Josephus's outlook, are disconnected fragments. Even including parts considered 'neutral', the passage is disconcertingly colourless. The non-Christian and the neutral sentences together would give the following text:

(63) At about this time lived Jesus, a wise man . . . He performed astonishing feats (and was a teacher of such people as are eager for novelties?). He attracted many Jews and many of the Greeks . . . (64) . . . Upon an indictment brought by leading members of our society, Pilate sentenced him to the cross, but those who had loved him from the very first did not cease to be attached to him. . . . The brotherhood of the Christians, named after him, is still in existence.

This statement is amazingly brief in what it says about Jesus.

Once it is recognized that an interpolator altered what Josephus had written, and that he added something of his own, we should not suppose that the interpolator merely *expanded* the original wording, but consider the possibility that he also *omitted* part of what he found in his copy of Josephus. On reading the above excerpt one is led to the conclusion

21. Adolf Harnack, 'Der jüdische Geschichtsschreiber Josephus und Jesus Christus', *Internationale Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik* 7 (1913), cols. 1037-68, found difficulty in reconciling these words with his assumption of the authenticity of the testimonium. André Pelletier, 'L'originalité du témoignage de Flavius Josephus sur Jésus', *RSR* 52 (1964), pp. 177-203, in spite of admitting that there are interpolations in the text of Josephus, strangely thinks this sentence to have come from Josephus himself.

that Josephus wrote more than what has survived. Something is now missing from the context, and has been replaced by a few not very illuminating sentences inserted by an interpolator. 'It is possible that Christian omissions as well as Christian interpolations should be allowed for; Christian writers, adding material in praise of Jesus, may quite well have omitted what they thought derogatory to his person.'²² We cannot reliably guess what Josephus may have written and what our censorious copyist thought best to displace in favour of his own contribution.²³ It is possible, even probable, that Josephus wrote something about Jesus' deeds, as he did about the activity of John the Baptist. The mention of miracles, or astonishing feats, would scarcely fill this lacuna. It is also probable that Josephus recorded the reason why leading members of the Jewish community accused Jesus before Pilate, and that he revealed the grounds for the governor's decision to award him with the cross. As (65) in Book xviii 3, 4 of the *Antiquities*, immediately following on our passage, begins with the words, 'Some other dreadful event (ἕτερον τι δεινόν) provoked agitation (ἐθορύβει) among the Jews', it may be that Josephus's own report, set between (62) and (65), mentioned a θόρυβος, an uproar or disturbance. If so, that report is now missing:

The entire section in the *Antiquities* dealing with Pilate's term of office is uneven. Apparently, Josephus used some sort of a chronicle, or annals, as a source for his report on Palestinian events,²⁴ and inserted in it two episodes for which he utilized a Roman source. *Ant.* xviii 3, 1 (55-9) contains a concise report on the tumult caused by the episode of the standards,²⁵ and is followed in xviii 3, 2 (60-2) by the account of the tumult in Jerusalem ensuing from Pilate's appropriation of money from the Temple treasury to finance the construction of an aqueduct.²⁶ Then comes our testimonium. The story about the affair between Decius Mundus and the noble but gullible Paulina, told by Josephus at length and with relish, *Ant.* xviii 3, 4 (65-80), interrupts the chronicler's report of Pilate's governorship in Judaea. The next section, *Ant.* xviii 3, 5 (81-4), also has its setting in Rome, but has at

22. C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background. Selected Documents*, p. 198.

23. 'Even though it may be possible to discover what Josephus did not say, it is impossible to discover what the Christian editor omitted, or even to say with any certainty at what point the omission took place', M. Goguel, *The Life of Jesus* (1933), p. 81.

24. Cf. G. Hölscher, *Die Quellen des Josephus für die Zeit vom Exil bis zum Jüdischen Krieg* (1904) and *Die Hohenpriesterliste bei Josephus und die evangelische Chronologie* (SAH, Phil.-hist. Klasse, 1939/40, Abh. 3).

25. See above, p. 384.

26. See above, p. 385.

least some Jewish point of interest.²⁷ In *Ant.* xviii 4, 1 (85-7) we are back in Palestine; Josephus writes again of what happened under Pilate's rule in that country and mentions the governor's recall. The general unevenness of chapter 3 in the eighteenth book of the *Antiquities* is due to two different reasons; first, the fact that Josephus interspersed his Palestinian source with materials derived from a Roman source (65-84), and second, the disjunction caused in our text by a Christian insertion into, and omission from, what Josephus actually wrote between (62) and (65).

When the sections based on a source of information of Roman provenance are eliminated—as they should be, because Josephus was mistaken in assigning them to the time of Pilate's term of office—we are left with an account of three riots in Palestine, with the testimonium set between them: the riot resulting from the introduction of military standards (55-9); the riot caused by the profane use of Qorban money (60-2); the Testimonium (63-4); and the final upheaval which occurred in Samaria during Pilate's governorship (85-7). This strange context of the passage about Jesus also lends support to the surmise that a reference now missing (63-4)—missing after this passage had been dealt with by a Christian copyist—was concerned with a riot in Jerusalem.²⁸ Strong as these indications are, the argument is still based

27. Josephus must have found a report of the events he mentioned in *Ant.* xviii 3, 4 (65-80), 3, 5 (81-4) in some Roman source which dealt with the reign of Tiberius. Knowing that Pilate had been appointed prefect of Judaea by Tiberius, he inserted the report of the proscription of Egyptian and Jewish rites in Rome and Italy in this place. He was mistaken in his chronology as the events he reports occurred already in the year A.D. 19, well before Pilate became governor of Judaea. Compare Tacitus, *Annales* ii 85, and Suetonius, *Tiberius* 36.

28. That some rioting, or even an abortive rebellion, occurred in Jerusalem shortly before the arrest of Jesus, is suggested by the cryptic reference to ἡ στάσις in Mk. 15:7. The text of Mark has not escaped remoulding; the parallel passage in Mt. 27:16, brief as it is, was apparently based on an older Marcan text, as it does not connect Barabbas with any στασιασταί (see Winter, *op. cit.*, pp. 95 ff.). However, we ought not to jump to the conclusion that Jesus took any part in the στάσις. We lack the evidence for such a hypothesis.

The point is often missed, but it should be noticed that in the speech which the author of Acts attributes to Gamaliel—this speech is a Christian composition: the author of the Acts makes Gamaliel proclaim the supernatural origin of the Christian faith—the movement inaugurated by Jesus of Nazareth is paralleled by the movements connected with Judah, the Galilean or Gaulanite founder of Zealotism, and with the pseudo-prophet Theudas who had promised to liberate the Jews from the Romans (Acts 5:36, 37); see below, § 19, p. 456. When the Apostle Paul was arrested, he was mistaken for another leader of a seditious gathering (Acts 21:38); see below, § 19, pp. 463-4.

We cannot say from what sources Celsus, in his *True Treatise*, drew his information about Jesus, but we do know that he referred to him as a 'rebel leader', a λήσταιρος or τῆς στάσεως ἀρχηγέτης (Origen, *Contra Celsum* II 12 and VIII 14, respectively). The expression λήσται occurs in the Gospel account of Jesus'

only on surmise. We have no means of restoring what Josephus wrote and what has been excised from his text by some copyist.

Various authors have tried to 'reconstruct' Josephus's own text by complementing the genuine Josephus passages in the Testimonium with the Old Russian (often called 'Slavonic') text of *Bellum Judaicum*. Such a procedure does not commend itself. In the Greek text of *Bellum* we have two consecutive accounts of disturbances: *B.J.* ii 9, 2-3 (169-74) concerns the riot caused by the introduction of Roman standards into Jerusalem; ii 9, 4 (175-7) deals with the riot provoked by the use of money from the Temple to build a new aqueduct; there is no mention of Jesus. The *Antiquities*, xviii 3, 1 (55-9) and 3, 2 (60-2), record the same events in the same sequence. The Testimonium Flavianum follows in 3, 3 (63-4). The Old Russian text of *Bellum* inserts *between* the two reports of *θόρυβοι* its own report on Jesus' appearance. But the riot occasioned in Jerusalem because of Pilate's use of money from the Temple (*B.J.* ii 9, 4 (175-7) or *Ant.* xviii 3, 3 (60-2)), is called in the Old Russian text 'the second riot'—and this numeration corresponds exactly to the sequence given in the Greek text of *War* and *Antiquities*, but not in the Slavonic work itself. There it would be the third riot. The discrepancy between the numbering and the actual contents in the Old Russian version of the Jewish War would suggest that what we read about Jesus in that version was not based on a more original text of Josephus, but is an addition composed even later than the time at which the testimonium in its present form came into existence.²⁹

To conclude our examination: Josephus mentioned Jesus. The present text of *Ant.* xviii (63-4) is only to some extent his own. Josephus wrote more about Jesus than we are able to extract from this text.

Although Josephus certainly did not call Jesus the Messiah, and did not assert that his resurrection on the third day had been announced by divine prophets, the impression gained from an intimate study of his report is that he was not on the whole unsympathetic towards Jesus. The words *ἕτερόν τι δεινὸν ἐθορύβει τοὺς Ἰουδαίους*, which introduce the paragraph following immediately on the Jesus passage, indicate that Josephus viewed the execution of Jesus as a 'dreadful

crucifixion as a description of the men who were crucified with him (Mk. 15:27 and par.). The charge that Jesus himself was a rebel was constantly repeated by ancient Greek and Roman authors up to the time of Constantine. The statements made by these authors are not sufficient to attribute to Jesus' rebellious intentions, but they are enough to prove that his activity was viewed in this light by the authorities of his day and by pagan writers of later days.

29. Nevertheless there are theories according to which the Old Russian translator used as his *Vorlage* a genuine Josephus text which is supposed to have come from *Bellum* (so R. Eisler in the work mentioned in n. 20 above) or from the *Antiquities* (so W. Bienert in his book, *ibidem*).

event' and that the Jews were disturbed by the outcome of the case.

Nothing that Josephus wrote lends any support to the theory that Jesus was caught up in revolutionary, Zealotic or quasi-Zealotic activities. The NT provides ample evidence that Jesus was tried and executed on political grounds. Josephus does not round off what remains unsaid in the NT of Jesus' own thoughts and aims. The relatively friendly attitude of Josephus towards Jesus contrasts with his severe stricture of the Zealots and kindred activist groups among the Jews responsible for encouraging the people to defy Roman rule. Of such groups Josephus spoke with undisguised scorn and summarily labelled them, *γόητες καὶ ληστρικοί*.³⁰ Whereas Josephus called Judah, the founder of Zealotism, and his grandson Menahem, the actual leader of the Zealot faction during the great revolt, *σοφισταί*,³¹ he referred to Jesus as a *σοφὸς ἀνὴρ*. And this indicates that Jews belonging to the circle to which Josephus belonged—a Pharisaic group, no doubt—had not at that time given Jesus a bad name as a heretic, or denounced him as a rebel. That various Pharisaic circles entertained friendly relations with Jewish Christians for a long time after the crucifixion is attested, not only by the report on the resentment caused by the stoning of Jesus' brother at the order of a Sadducean High Priest, but also by the significant fact that certain communal Christian traditions of Palestinian provenance (part of the so-called 'Special Source' of Luke) depict various Pharisees or other Jews not members of Jesus' own companionship as harbouring feelings and intentions of friendship for Jesus and maintaining social contact with him (e.g. Lk. 7:16 f., 23:17, 31, 14:1, 17:20 f., 19:38, 48, 26:38, 23:27, 48).³²

30. *B.J.* ii 8, 1 (118) and 13, 6 (264), respectively.

31. *B.J.* ii 17, 8 (433).

32. S. Pines, *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and its Implications* (1971) draws attention to a citation of the Testimonium by a 10th century Arabic Christian writer, Agapius: 'At this 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 had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders'. No historical value may safely be attributed to this text, though it is correct to point out that it contains 'none of the suspicious phraseology of the "vulgate recension" that has led many modern scholars to reject the entire passage as a Christian interpolation.' Cf. S. P. Brock, *JThSt* 23 (1972), p. 491.