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Josephus on Jesus: Evidence from the First Millennium

The question of whether a Christian interpolated or altered the *Testimonium Flavianum*, a brief passage about Jesus in Book 18 of Josephus' *Antiquitates*, has been fiercely debated since the sixteenth century.¹ Scholars have almost always approached the question *a priori*, drawing on their assumptions about what a first century Jew outside the church would have said about Jesus. In contrast, I shall focus on the evidence of sources, transmission, manuscripts, and context. I shall show that a few well-entrenched arguments for interpolation are not well-supported by this evidence.

One such argument is that the *Testimonium* is not alluded to before Origen, and that it would have been used in patristic debate with Jews if it had existed.² I shall show, however, that there is no evidence that Christians before Origen were familiar with Josephus' passage on Jesus, or even with the later books of *Antiquitates*, or that they thought that Josephus' works would be useful in Christian-Jewish debate.

The first indisputable Christian use of Josephus dates from the late second century. Theophilus of Antioch draws from his anti-pagan apology *Contra Apionem* to prove Judaism's great antiquity in his own anti-pagan apology *Ad Autolycum*. A similar use of *Contra Apionem* appears in Tertullian's anti-pagan *Apologeticus*. Octavius, the anti-pagan apology of Minucius Felix, cites Josephus to prove that the Jews were defeated in the war because of disobedience to God. (Oct.10.4; 33.2–5) However, it is not clear whether Minucius had actually read *Bellum* or whether he was merely aware that this was its main thesis.

Irenaeus may have used the first part of *Antiquitates*. In a fragment which appears to derive from an exegetical passage on Numbers, Josephus is cited to prove that Moses married an Ethiopian princess. (PG 7:1245–48; Ant 2.238–

¹ The literature on this topic is enormous. For a bibliography of some recent contributions see L. Feldman, *Josephus and modern scholarship 1937–1980*, Berlin 1984, 679–703.

² L. Feldman, *The *Testimonium Flavianum*: The state of the question*, in: *Christological Perspectives*, FS H. McArthur, New York 1982, 181–185.

255) However, it is impossible to verify the fragment's attribution to Irenaeus because of its small size. In any case, Irenaeus cannot have been familiar with *Antiquitates* 18 since he erroneously places Pilate's rule in the reign of Claudius, while *Ant* 18.89 indicates that Pilate was deposed before Tiberius' death. (Dem. apost. praed. 74)

Aiming to prove that the Hebrews were older than the Greeks Clement of Alexandria writes: "Flavius Josephus the Jew, who composed the history of the Jews, calculating the periods, 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 Bell 6.435, the former number is not found in extant manuscripts of Josephus' works. The simplest explanation is that Clement took 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 have been responsible for 585 rather than 588, a hypothesis which is not improbable given that *Stromateis* exists in only one independent manuscript known to contain other numerical errors.³

The use of *Antiquitates* in Julius Africanus' *Chronographia* is often assumed⁴ but impossible to ascertain because so little of the work has survived. In the extant fragments, which mainly derive from works by Eusebius of Caesarea and Georgius Syncellus, Josephus is not named as an authority despite the fact that quite a few other historians are so named. Two fragments (Syncellus Chron. 526, 581) do indeed share some details with parts of *Antiquitates* 12, 14 and 15. However, these books are not Josephus' original composition: they are largely dependent on Nicolaus of Damascus and other sources which could have been used by Africanus. In addition, Photius says that *Chronographia* covered the period from creation to the advent of Christ in detail, but the period from Christ to Macrinus briefly. (Bibl. 34) This focus on the period before Christ is borne out by the extant fragments. Africanus' letters to Origen and Aristides also indicate that he was more concerned with the Old Testament than with Christian history *per se*. So even if Africanus used *Antiquitates* 12–15, it does not follow that he was therefore familiar with *Antiquitates* 18.

Indeed, because Africanus knows traditions different from Josephus' traditions, it has been argued that he used the chronicle written by Josephus' rival, Justus of Tiberias.⁵ The theory of another chronicle is strengthened by the fact

³ J. Ferguson, Clement of Alexandria: *Stromateis*, Washington DC 1992, 15; 132.

⁴ A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and the Greek chronographic tradition*, Lewisburg 1979, 141.

⁵ H. Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die Byzantinische Chronographie*, Leipzig 1898, 265.

that Africanus' information is juxtaposed against Josephus' information by Eusebius and Syncellus, as if they did not consider Africanus dependent on Josephus. This is also suggested by the fact that in his *Chronicon*, Eusebius criticizes Africanus' Hebrew chronology as erroneous, but has no such harsh words for Josephus' chronology. (Chron. I, *Hebraeorum*) Without more evidence at best we can only conclude that Africanus may have used part of *Antiquitates*, he may have used an epitome of it, he may have directly used some of Josephus' own sources, or he may have used a different chronicle.

An extended passage about Jewish sects in Hippolytus' *Refutatio omnium haeresium* closely parallels Bell 2.119–166, although it never credits Josephus or any other source. (Ref. 9.18–31) Because Hippolytus' passage contains additional material not found in *Bellum*, most recent scholars have convincingly argued that Hippolytus and Josephus used a common source, Josephus having abbreviated more than Hippolytus.⁶ I would only add one point: scholars continue to neglect the possibility that Hippolytus or Josephus drew their accounts directly from Nicolaus of Damascus.⁷ For Ant 13.171–173 explicitly dates the sects to the time of the Hasmonean dynasty and Josephus is largely dependent on Nicolaus for this period. There is at least one indication that Hippolytus used a source older than Bell 2.116–166: he reports that the Essenes will withstand torture rather than break the law, without making Josephus' additional observation that they were particularly heroic in withstanding the tortures inflicted on them in the “recent” war with the Romans. (Bell 2.152)

In conclusion, before Origen Christians typically cite Josephus as an authority on things Jewish in works directed at pagans or heretics whose views were considered too close to paganism or Hellenistic philosophy. In this period, *Bellum* and *Contra Apionem* are mainly cited. There is no case of extensive familiarity with *Antiquitates*. There is no case of Josephus being used in works directed at Jews or Jewish Christians. Josephus is also rarely cited in works exclusively addressed to Christians such as sermons or biblical commentaries: the only possible example of this is the fragment attributed to Irenaeus. In this period Christians do not cite Josephus for anything in the New Testament: not only do they not cite Josephus on Jesus, they do not cite him on James the brother of Jesus or John the Baptist, or the several parallels between his works and Luke-Acts. Perhaps most surprising, they do not even name Josephus as an authority on King Herod, a figure who dominates three books of *Antiquitates*.

⁶ M. Black, The account of the Essenes in Hippolytus and Josephus, in: The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, FS C. H. Dodd, Cambridge 1956, 172–75; A. Baumgarten, Josephus and Hippolytus on the Pharisees, *HUCA* 55 (1984) 1–25.

⁷ This is briefly discussed by B. Wacholder, Nicolaus of Damascus, Berkeley 1962, 71–72.

Why was Christian use of Josephus in this early period so limited? We must remember that although Christians transmitted his works, Josephus originally wrote for educated pagans. Thus his reputation at first was probably greater among the latter than the former. His questionable role in the Roman-Jewish war probably gave him a bad reputation among Jews. This would explain why writings from this period directed at Jews do not cite Josephus. In this period Josephus' reputation seems to have rested more on *Bellum* and *Contra Apionem* than on *Antiquitates*. Because both are apologetical works refuting contemporary Greek and Roman misconceptions about Jews and the war (Bell 1.1–16; Ap 1.1–5) both probably circulated outside libraries, as apologies commonly did in the ancient world. It is less probable that the voluminous *Antiquitates* circulated so widely. Given its large size, it is possible that no Christian or pagan had gotten through the entire work even by the end of the second century. Suggestive of this is that possible citations of *Antiquitates* by Irenaeus or Clement are from the treatment of the Old Testament in the first half of the work. This part would have been read first simply because it came first, and as scriptural exegesis, it may have been more attractive to church fathers than the historical latter half. The earliest known pagan reaction to *Antiquitates*, alluded to in Ap 1.2, also focused on the early part of the work because it dealt with a popular apologetic topic: the question of the relative antiquity of οἱ βάρβαροι. Josephus was probably not cited as a relevant authority for anything in the New Testament because Christians paid relatively little attention to their own history in the second and third centuries: there were evidently no church histories in the period after *Acts* and before Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*.⁸

Origen is the first writer known to have cited Josephus as an authority on New Testament figures. Clearly he was more acquainted with Josephus' works than earlier Christians: he shows familiarity with *Contra Apionem*, *Bellum*, and both the first and second halves of *Antiquitates* whereas earlier individuals rarely cite from more than one work. It is in his *Contra Celsum* and *Commentarii in Matthaeum* that we find passages which appear to contradict the *textus receptus* *Testimonium* by alluding to Josephus' disbelief in Jesus as Messiah. Those who believe that the *Testimonium* was entirely forged have not addressed the question why the Christian interests responsible did not also alter these particular passages of the already controversial Origen.⁹ According to Eusebius, both of these works were written near the end of Origen's life, which suggests that he may not have noticed Josephus' two references to Jesus earlier. (H.E. 6.36.2) Of

⁸ H. J. Lawlor, *Eusebiana*, Oxford 1912, 1–4.

⁹ C. Martin even suggests that Origen was responsible for Christianizing the *Testimonium*. If true, why did he draw attention to Josephus' disbelief in the first place? *Le Testimonium Flavianum: Vers une solution définitive*, RBPH 20 (1941) 458–465.

the two, the reference to the Testimonium in *Contra Celsum* is more important because it is made in a public apology directed to pagans who would have been able to check an uninterpolated copy of *Antiquitates*, which was kept in the Roman public library. (H.E. 3.9)

«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* he testifies that John was a baptist, who promised purification to those who were baptized. The same author, although not believing in Jesus as the Christ (ἀπιστῶν τῷ Ἰησοῦν ως Χριστῷ), 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...» (Cels. 1.47)

First, as with earlier Christians it is evident that Origen does not cite Josephus to impress Jews. *Contra Celsum* as a whole is directed at pagans and lapsed Christians (Cels. Praef. 6), and this particular passage is directed at Celsus as a representative of educated heathendom. However, it is 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 (πως) accepting John as a baptist who baptized Jesus...” seems to imply that Celsus had expressed some sort of doubts about John.

Second, it has long been argued that Origen's certainty that Josephus did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah must derive from some version of the Testimonium. It cannot derive from Josephus' only other reference to Jesus (Ant 20.200) since this is neutral about Jesus' Messiahship. Another indication that Origen knew a Testimonium, hitherto unremarked, is his statement that “the Jews do not connect John with Jesus, nor the punishment of John with that of Jesus.” (Cels. 1.48) It is precisely *Antiquitates* 18 that mentions both the execution of Jesus and of John without in any way connecting the two events or figures.

Third, it has also been argued that Origen cannot have known the *textus receptus* Testimonium, with its reference to Jesus' miracles because otherwise Origen would have used this against Celsus.¹⁰ However, it should be noted that Celsus did, in fact, accept that Jesus performed miracles, while arguing that he used magic to accomplish them. (Cels. 1.39; 1.68) That Jesus was a magician evidently was a stock charge of pagans. Like Origen, Eusebius would make a concerted effort to answer it. Unlike Origen, he does use the Testimonium in this effort, but it is significant that does not use the Testimonium's characterization of Jesus as παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής, as we shall see.

¹⁰ L. Feldman, (n. 2) 183.

In contrast to *Contra Celsum*, Origen's *Comm.* in *Mt.* 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 one. For nothing in the laconic *Testimonium* would necessarily have been adequate to the purpose of this 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. (*Mt* 13,57) Origen is motivated to cite Josephus, as well as *Galatians*, the epistle of *Jude*, and even the non-canonical *Gospel of Peter* and *Protevangelium of James* because they all provide extra-gospel information about Jesus' brothers.

«And this James was so celebrated with the people for his righteousness that Flavius Josephus, who wrote *Jewish Antiquites* 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 (*τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἡμῶν οὐ καταδεξάμενος εἰς τὸν Χριστόν*), he testified to the great righteousness in James.» (*Comm.* in *Mt*.10.17)

First, it should be noted that the manner in which he introduces Josephus, including the name “Flavius” and the information that he wrote a work called *Jewish Antiquities* in twenty books, suggests that Origen is citing him for the first time in this work, and that his Christian readers may not have been familiar with him.¹¹ Second, we cannot conclude from the fact that Origen cites Josephus' favorable opinion of James and not Josephus' opinion of Jesus, that the latter was necessarily hostile. It does not seem likely that Josephus would have had both a sympathetic opinion of James and a hostile opinion of Jesus, although his portrayal of the latter would have been completely inadequate from a Christian point of view, since he did not consider him Messiah, let alone son of God.

As for the much-discussed question of why Origen attributes an opinion to Josephus that he does not actually express, namely that the destruction of Jerusalem was brought about because of the execution of James, the most plausible explanation is 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. (*H.E.* 2.23.20; *Vir. Ill.* 2; 13) The tradition is at least as old as Hegesippus, who wrote that after the death of James “immediately Vespasian began to besiege them.” (*H.E.* 2.23.18) Origen may not have read Hegesippus for he does not cite his traditions about Jesus' brothers in *Comm.* in *Mt.* But he could have known the tradition about James from his mentor Clement of Alexandria,

¹¹ Compare to *Cels.* 1.16 and 1.47 where the name «Flavius» is included in the first citation of Josephus' works.

who recorded a version of James' death that was itself evidently based on Hegesippus. (H.E. 2.1.5) The tendency to attribute Christian tradition about James to Josephus was aided by the position of the James passage within *Antiquitates* (Ant 20.200), as Z. Baras has pointed out. Immediately after the passage on James, Josephus begins to discuss the troubles that led 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 went steadily from bad to worse." (Ant 200.210, 214) Baras argues quite plausibly that this simply reinforced Origen's prior assumption that the relationship between James' death and the war was a case of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*.¹²

The works of Eusebius are the culmination of Christian use of Josephus. Eusebius cites Josephus much more than any earlier or later patristic writer and is the first Christian to have really used Josephus as an historian of the New Testament period. Eusebius is also the first Christian to quote the *Testimonium*. If the text is entirely an interpolation or has been wholly rewritten, Eusebius must be considered the prime suspect since he is the first to have produced it. Moreover, modern stylometric studies have shown that the text's language is quite close to that of Josephus.¹³ 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. Finally, if the *Testimonium* was indeed forged or rewritten, then Eusebius' works are the only evidence that will indicate why it was forged or rewritten in the first place. Those who consider the entire *Testimonium* a forgery have simply assumed that they know why it was forged. They have completely 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 their assumptions about why the *Testimonium* was forged are not supported by Eusebius' use of the text, as we shall see.

In Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* the *Testimonium* appears at the end of a long section in which Josephus is cited several times to corroborate the general chronology and historical setting of the gospels and Acts. Eusebius notes such common points between Luke-Acts and Josephus as the Quirinius census and Theudas rebellion, while ignoring the contradictions in the two sources about their dating. The citation of the *Testimonium* later in *Historia Ecclesiastica* is motivated by this concern "to establish the truth of the date" (H.E.1.6.11), and the following passage reveals why Eusebius is so eager to use Josephus for dating:

«In the eighteenth book of the *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

¹² Z. Baras, *Testimonium Flavianum: The state of recent research*, in: *Society and religion in the Second Temple period*, Jerusalem 1977, 303–313.

¹³ Most recently see J. Meier, *A marginal Jew*, New York 1991, 80–84.

remained in office, almost until the death of Tiberius. So that there is clear proof of the forgery of those who recently or formerly have issued a series of 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.» (H.E. 1.9.2–4)

The “forged reports” in this passage are those which the Emperor Maximin had made required reading for school children during his persecution of Christians. (H.E. 9.5.1) These pagan *Acta Pilati* apparently erred in dating Jesus’ death in 21 AD, whereas according to Josephus, Pilate was only first appointed to Judea in 26 AD. Eusebius then points out that Lk 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.

Next Eusebius notes that the gospels and Josephus agree on several points about John the Baptist. He writes: “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 and immediately afterwards he writes: “having gone through these things about John (ταῦτα περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου διελθόντι), he records the following about our Savior.” The *Testimonium* is then quoted. 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?” (H.E. 1.11)

Thus Eusebius draws on Josephus again to convict of inaccuracy the pagan *Acta Pilati*, in which John the Baptist apparently figured along with Jesus and Pilate. 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 also hinting at graver misrepresentations: it is possible that he pointed out Josephus’ positive views of John and quoted the *Testimonium* because the *Acta* cast John and Jesus in a bad light. What is clear, and what has been ignored by so many later scholars, is that in *Historia Ecclesiastica* Eusebius never remarks on the specific content of the *Testimonium*. Thus there is no warrant to claim, as has one recent commentator on the *Testimonium*, that “Eusebius sees Josephus’ Jewishness as proof of the Christian claims for Jesus’ Messiahship.”¹⁴ In fact, Eusebius never remarks on the *Testimonium*’s statement about Jesus’ Messiahship, either in *Historia Ecclesiastica* or in his other works. While

¹⁴ M. Hardwick, *Josephus as an historical source in patristic literature through Eusebius*, Atlanta 1989, 86. While I disagree with some of Hardwick’s conclusions, his study has been invaluable for my own.

Eusebius does draw from the passage about John that Josephus thought John 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’s rule, which is important because elsewhere *Antiquitates* indicates that Pilate held office well after the period alleged by the contemporary pagan *Acta Pilati* whose chronology Eusebius wants to refute. Thus from *Historia Ecclesiastica* alone the only thing that we can conclude about the *Testimonium* known to Eusebius is that it must have appeared in the section of *Antiquitates* dealing with Pilate’s governorship, as indeed the *textus receptus* *Testimonium* does. Otherwise it would not have been useful against the pagan *Acta Pilati*’s chronological errors.

Of course, it is ironic that Eusebius uses Josephus’ testimonies on John and Jesus to convict the anti-Christian *Acta Pilati* of chronological inaccuracy, since Josephus’ chronology concerning John is so ambiguous. From *Antiquitates* alone, readers could not know that John had died under 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 Aretas. 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 that the latter appears after the former. This sort of mistake, like the discrepancies between *Luke-Acts* and *Antiquitates* regarding the date of the Quirinius census and Theudas’ rebellion, casts some doubt on the notion that Eusebius simply created the *Testimonium ex nihilo*. If Eusebius had no compunction about tampering with texts in a major way, one wonders why he did not rearrange *Antiquitates* to better reflect New Testament chronology and thereby to better refute the chronology of the pagan *Acta Pilati*.

In *Demonstratio Evangelica* the *Testimonium* appears in a context very different from that in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, allowing us to learn more about Eusebius’ motivation in using the text.¹⁵ *Demonstratio* is mainly concerned to show that portions of the Old Testament do indeed refer to Christ. Thus much of the work is directed at Jews, as Eusebius himself intimates. (D.E. 1.1) It is therefore all the more remarkable 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 believers. Unbelievers in the prophetic writings I must meet with special arguments. So that I must now argue about Christ as about an ordinary man.” (D.E. 3.2.102) Clearly,

¹⁵ *Theophania*, extant only in Syriac, also contains a *Testimonium*, but since its context is exactly the same as *Demonstratio* it will not be separately examined.

the unbelievers referred to cannot 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." As we shall see, his concern to refute this conception of Christ prompts the citation of the Testimonium. After briefly reviewing some of the miracles attributed to Jesus in the gospels, Eusebius resolves to argue "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." (D.E. 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 would have simply fabricated the miracles of a deceiver; or whether they would have even risked death and persecution at the hands of fellow Jews for someone they knew to have been a fraud. Such self sacrifice, Eusebius argues, "is all quite foreign to the nature of scoundrels." (D.E. 3.2.112) Eusebius asks why those who reject the accounts of Jesus' miracles do not also reject the accounts of the Passion, arguing that it is not consistent to "reject the glorious and more dignified parts, and yet to believe in these as truth itself." (D.E. 3.5.123) Here Eusebius apparently refers to what was probably a commonplace of contemporary anti-Christian polemic. Certainly we learn that Celsus argued that Jesus' miracles were performed by wizardry, while he largely accepted the account of the Passion, since this allowed him to argue that Jesus was a disgraced man who feared his own death and was unable to escape the agony of the cross, as God's son should have done.

It is in this context that Eusebius introduces the Testimonium, after which he concludes: "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 (*θαυμαστοῖς καὶ παραδόξοις ἔργοις*) and unheard-of teaching?" Then Eusebius hastens to add that according to Acts there were "myriads of Jews who believed him to be the Christ of God foretold by the prophets. And history also assures us that there was a very important 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." (D.E. 3.5.124) Then he 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 (*παραδόξων ἔργων*) that he performed." (D.E. 3.5.125)

It is noteworthy that the only part of the Testimonium to which Eusebius explicitly draws attention is Josephus' statement that "he attracted many Jews and many Greeks." Despite the fact that it is so pertinent to his topic, Eusebius does not explicitly draw attention to the Testimonium's statement that Jesus was a "παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής," although he seems to allude to it by using the words παραδόξα ἔργα several times in D.E. 3.5.108–125 and in his conclusion that many were brought to Christ through the παραδόξων ἔργων he performed.¹⁶ Rather it is from the Testimonium's statement that Jesus managed to attract both many Jews and many Greeks that Eusebius argues that Jesus must have had extraordinary powers beyond wizardry. For the mere statement that Jesus was a performer of παραδόξα was apparently inadequate since so many detractors already accepted that he performed them, while insisting it was by wizardry. And it is worth noting that the term παραδόξα is not the preferred term for Jesus' miracles in the New Testament. It is used only once, and in a context which does not preclude the connotation of magic. (Lk 5,26)

Now it has recently been pointed out that the statement about Jesus' "many Jewish and many Greek" followers is problematic as the composition of the late third or early fourth century Christian supposed to have forged the entire Testimonium.¹⁷ For it neither reflects the gospel accounts of Jesus' almost exclusively Jewish following during his life, nor does it reflect the third or fourth century church, which included few Jews indeed. In fact, the only period about 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 its church to become entirely Gentile. Since Josephus, who was certainly aware of the Jerusalem church (Ant 20.200), was writing during this unusual period, it has been plausibly suggested that he projected the church of 93 AD back onto Jesus' own ministry, an anachronism, which, it is worth noting, his contemporary, Luke, did not commit when he wrote both an account of Jesus' ministry and a history of the early church.

Eusebius seems to have sensed that contemporary readers would have trouble believing the Testimonium's statement about Jesus' "many Jewish and Greek" followers. Why else does he think it necessary to assure them that they can find in Acts a record of "myriads" of Jewish believers, and that the Judean church,

¹⁶ The fact that the words παραδόξα ἔργα are used several times in D.E. 3.5.108–12 illustrates the problem with S. Zeitlin's assertion that the Testimonium must be forged by Eusebius because he uses the Testimonium's term φῦλον to describe Christians in H.E. 3.33.2: we cannot know that a term went from Josephus' works to Eusebius by way of influence rather than from Eusebius to Josephus' works by way of forgery, The Christ passage in Josephus, *JQR* 18 (1927–28) 231–53.

¹⁷ J. Meier, (n.13) 64–65.

including bishops, was entirely Jewish up until Hadrian? Conversely, Eusebius can point to no source supporting the Testimonium's statement about Jesus' "many" Greek followers during his own life. Of course this is relevant to the question of the authenticity of the entire Testimonium. It is not clear why Eusebius would have composed a statement that was problematic both with respect to contemporary perceptions of the followers of Jesus, and with respect to the gospels' portrait of Jesus' ministry. Eusebius himself states that during Jesus' life his following was Jewish, while only after the resurrection was there a mission to the Gentiles. (Theoph. 4.16)

In conclusion, Eusebius was motivated to cite the Testimonium by certain kinds of contemporary writings hostile to the church: a pagan *Acta Pilati* satirizing the gospels and pagan polemicists who charged that Jesus had not performed miracles, or had performed them only through wizardry. As with the case of earlier Christians using Josephus, Eusebius did not use the Testimonium to impress Jews. Contrary to widespread assumption, there is no evidence that he cited the Testimonium either to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, or even to show that Josephus thought Jesus was the Messiah. 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 have thought that the Testimonium would be useful for controversies with Jews, or who have assumed that the Testimonium was created for that very purpose. Eusebius saw that the Hebrew Bible would have mattered far more to most Jews of antiquity than anything Josephus said, particularly as Josephus' reputation among Jews was likely to have been tarnished by his role in the war.

Since Eusebius draws explicit attention to so little of the Testimonium the question arises whether copyists did not later bring his Testimonia into conformity with the *textus receptus* Testimonium. 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 has sometimes been suggested, the product of several different glosses that have crept into the manuscripts over the centuries.¹⁸ 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 *Historia Ecclesiastica* into Latin around 402 AD contains a Testimonium which is basically the same as that in both the Syriac *Historia Ecclesiastica* and *Theophania*, including the prob-

¹⁸ J. Meier, (n. 13) 87–88 n. 62.

lematic statement “he was the Messiah.”¹⁹ Since Syriac and Latin writers did not 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 late fourth century. However, when we examine Jerome and later Semitic sources, we will see that there is evidence for a Greek copy of *Historia Ecclesiastica* containing a *Testimonium* reading something like “he was supposed to be the Messiah.”

One of the most significant versions of the *Testimonium* comes from *De Excidio Hierosolymitano*, a work which is not, contrary to widespread belief, either a *pseudepigraphon* or a free Latin translation of *Bellum*. Its author does not attempt to impersonate Josephus nor does he claim to be translating. Rather, he considers himself an historian, and openly acknowledges Josephus as his major source. In medieval Europe its author was known as *Hegesippus*. To distinguish him from the second century Greek Jewish Christian by that name, I shall call him *Pseudo-Hegesippus*. His work was written around 370 AD, first quoted around 430 AD, and the oldest manuscript containing the *Testimonium* dates from the sixth century.²⁰

Pseudo-Hegesippus’ *Testimonium* is significant because it is the only version which cannot have been influenced by Eusebius. Nothing in his work suggests that *Pseudo-Hegesippus* knew Eusebius’ works, which were not available in Latin when he wrote. Other than Josephus, his sources are all Latin or, like the Bible, available in Latin translation.²¹ Nevertheless, his *Testimonium* is often ignored because he paraphrases it loosely, giving its separate parts in an order different from the *textus receptus* and adding editorial asides. While a paraphrase generally is less trustworthy than a quotation, for our inquiry a paraphrase actually has one advantage: that it is more difficult to bring into conformity with a *textus receptus* than a quotation. Because of its importance as an early *Testimonium* independent of Eusebius, I will cite the entire paraphrase (*De Excidio* 2.12):

«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,

¹⁹ Manuscripts and dating are discussed in H. von Gressman, *Die Theophanie*. Leipzig 1904, 12; W. Wright and N. McLean, *The ecclesiastical history of Eusebius in Syriac*, Cambridge 1898, 5–7; E. Schwartz and T. Mommsen, *Die Kirchengeschichte. Die lateinische Übersetzung des Rufinus*, Leipzig 1909, 251–268.

²⁰ V. Ussani, *Hegesippi qui dicitur historiae libri v*, CSEL 66, Vienna 1932.

²¹ For example, it used the Latin rather than Greek version of 1 Maccabees. A. Bell, *An historiographical analysis of the De excidio Hierosolymitano of Pseudo-Hegesippus*, PhD Thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1977. *Pseudo-Hegesippus’* dependence on Latin sources raises the question whether he used the Latin *Bellum* rather than the Greek.

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, 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 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 shown forth so that even the leaders of the synagogue who arrested him to be delivered up to death acknowledged him to be God.

Next Pseudo-Hegesippus gives Josephus' testimony on John the Baptist, following the order of *Antiquitates* rather than *Historia Ecclesiastica*, i.e. the account of John the Baptist follows the account of Jesus. That Pseudo-Hegesippus used *Antiquitates* 18 directly rather than through *Historia Ecclesiastica* is also shown by his including the Paulina incident, which had been ignored by earlier Christian commentators and which immediately follows the *Testimonium* in *Antiquitates*. (De Excidio 2.4; Ant 18.65–80)

First, we should note that Pseudo-Hegesippus deserves the dubious credit of being the first Christian who thought that the *Testimonium* might be useful in anti-Jewish polemic. That the author was among those ancient Christians most insensitive to Jews suggests that Pseudo-Hegesippus could well have been mistaken in his assumption that Jews "esteem Josephus a very great man." Earlier Christians were probably more perceptive in not assuming that Jews would be impressed by Josephus.

Second, we should note that, despite paraphrasing, Pseudo-Hegesippus alludes to every part of the *Testimonium* except "this was the Christ" and the statement that Pilate sentenced Jesus. Since he is eager to place most of the blame for Jesus' death on Jews it is hardly surprising that he omitted the latter. Conversely, it is hard to believe that Pseudo-Hegesippus would have omitted an open statement of Jesus' Messiahship if it had stood in his text of *Antiquitates*, since he is inclined to exaggerate the meaning of *Testimonium*, most blatantly in his claim that it shows that even the leaders of the synagogue acknowledged Jesus to be God. Moreover, if it had stood in his text, one wonders why Pseudo-Hegesippus is so adamant that Josephus still did not believe. His unambiguous designation of Josephus as an unbeliever indicates that he probably knew Origin's version of the *Testimonium*. Also, his statement "plerique tamen Iudeorum, gentilium plurimi crediderunt in eum" strongly resembles the part of Jerome's *Testimonium* reading "plurimos quoque tamen de Iudeis quam de gentilibus sui habuit sectatores et credebatur esse Christus." (Vir. Ill.13) This suggests

that Pseudo-Hegesippus' Testimonium also read "he was believed to be the Christ" rather than "he was the Christ."

One other aspect of Pseudo-Hegesippus' Testimonium is noteworthy for the history of its early variation. A.-M. Dubarle has suggested that the Testimonium's statement that Jesus was a teacher of those who receive τ' ἀληθῆ with pleasure could easily have been mistaken for a teacher of those who receive τ' ἀλλ' ἥθη with pleasure.²² Now Pseudo-Hegesippus' formulation "cum praecip-*tis moralibus*" actually corresponds more closely to the hypothetical reading τ' ἀλλ' ἥθη. Eusebius may also allude to τ' ἀλλ' ἥθη in *Demonstratio* when he asks how Jesus could have attracted both many Jews and many Greeks, except by "παραδόξοις ἔργοις" and "ξενιζούσῃ... διδασκαλίᾳ" (D.E. 3.5.124). For the expression "unheard-of teaching" (ξενιζούσῃ διδασκαλία certainly 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. The use of the expression τ' ἀλλ' ἥθη could have been inspired by Josephus' impression that the followers of Jesus "received with pleasure a *derekh akheret*." However, since the word "truth" is independently transmitted into the *Testimonia* of Jerome, Rufinus and the Syriac translations of Eusebius' works, any alleged alteration of τ' ἀλλ' ἥθη must derive from the fourth century Greek copyists of Eusebius' works.

It is well known that Jerome's Testimonium says that Jesus was "believed to be the Christ" rather than "he was the Christ." This Testimonium appears in *De Viris Illustribus*, a catalog of Christian and Jewish writers addressed to anti-Christian pagans "who think that the church has had no philosophers or orators or men of learning" that they may "cease to accuse us of such rustic simplicity." (Vir. Ill. Praef.) Thus Jerome follows his patristic predecessors in assuming that Josephus' authority will impress educated pagans rather than Jews. Now Jerome's Testimonium is no late variant for two manuscripts of *De Viris* date from the sixth or seventh century. Moreover, the already noted resemblance between Jerome's and Pseudo-Hegesippus' *Testimonia* further indicates that Jerome did not create his variant *ex nihilo*. Rather it suggests that both Latin writers knew a Testimonium reading "he was believed to the Christ."²³ Because the variant reading of Jerome's Testimonium is so important, the question of its provenance must be addressed. The fact that *De Viris* is largely dependent on Eusebius'

²² A.-M. Dubarle, *Le témoignage de Josèphe sur Jésus d'après des publications récentes*, RB 84 (1977) 52.

²³ 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. (Mt 27,18 // Mk 15,10)

Historia Ecclesiastica for its information would suggest that Jerome merely copied its *Testimonium* rather than checking *Antiquitates* independently. Indeed, this sort of indirect citation of Josephus is practiced elsewhere by Jerome.²⁴

One version of the *Testimonium* that has hitherto been completely overlooked is that in the Latin translation of *Antiquitates* made by Cassiodorus. According to him, there had long been extant a Latin translation of *Bellum*, variously ascribed to Ambrose, Rufinus or Jerome. (Inst. 1.17) In Renaissance Europe the Latin *Bellum* was still being ascribed to Rufinus. However, passages parallel to the excerpts from *Bellum* in Rufinus' translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* are not the same translation as the Latin *Bellum*. Its ascription to Rufinus, therefore, is surely incorrect.

The comparison of other excerpts from Josephus' works in Rufinus' translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica* reveals a significant and heretofore unremarked fact, namely that the translations of both the *Testimonium* and the John the Baptist passage in the Latin *Historia Ecclesiastica* are the same as those in the Latin *Antiquitates*. Now it is clear why Cassiodorus' group would have transmitted Rufinus' *Testimonium* into the Latin *Antiquitates* rather than Josephus' own more skeptical version. But there was no ulterior reason for them to have preferred Rufinus' translation of the John passage over retranslation directly from *Antiquitates*. The fact that the John passage and the *Testimonium* appear right next to each other in *Historia Ecclesiastica* suggests that Cassiodorus' group might have drawn on Rufinus for both passages out of laziness rather than duplicity. After all, no other passage in the Latin *Antiquitates* follows the Latin *Historia Ecclesiastica*, including the passage on James the brother of Jesus, which, significantly, unlike the John passage, does not appear in the same location in *Historia Ecclesiastica* as the *Testimonium*.

Given the large number and wide geographical dispersion of manuscripts of the Latin *Antiquitates*, the possibility that the two *Testimonia* were harmonized by a later scribe rather than Cassiodorus' group seems remote. The oldest manuscripts of the Latin *Antiquitates* and Latin *Historia Ecclesiastica* that contain the *Testimonium* date from the eighth century, so such harmonization would have had to have occurred quite soon after Cassiodorus.²⁵ Whoever made the decision to use Rufinus' *Testimonium* in the Latin *Antiquitates* and whatever their reason, it had the practical effect of limiting the variants of the *Testimonium* known in

²⁴ H. Schreckenberg, *Die Flavius Josephus Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter*, Leiden 1972, 92.

²⁵ The lack of critical editions of the Latin Josephus is unfortunate. I discovered that the two Latin *Testimonia* were the same from Renaissance books. On manuscripts see F. Blatt, *The Latin Josephus*, *Acta Jutlandica* 44; Aarhus 1958, 9–116.

the medieval West to only three, that of the Latin Josephus, that of Jerome and that of Pseudo-Hegesippus.

In the East, in contrast, there apparently remained after the time of Eusebius *Testimonia* which had not yet been brought into conformity with the *textus receptus*. Or so one would gather from Theodoret, who states that although Josephus did not accept the Christian message (τὸ μὲν Χριστιανικὸν οὐ δεξάμενος *κήρυγμα*), nevertheless he did not “hide the truth,” namely that Daniel had predicted the destruction of the temple by Romans. (Dan.10 on Dan 12,14) Theodoret’s word choice “οὐ δεξάμενος” is reminiscent of the statement in Origen’s *Comm. in Mt.* that Josephus “τὸν Ιησοῦν ἡμῶν οὐ καταδεξάμενος εἶναι Χριστόν.” Both appear to allude by way of contrast to the *Testimonium*’s use of “δέχομαι” for followers of Jesus. In any case, it is clear that Theodoret himself used *Antiquitates* 10 and 12 in his *Comm. in Dan.*: he did not know *Antiquitates* only through Eusebius. Yet Theodoret must have been somewhat familiar with the contents of Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* since he wrote a church history to succeed it. In addition, Theodoret used *Demonstratio Evangelica* in his *Comm. in Dan.* for he quotes Ant 20.247 and Ant 18.33–34 to make the very same point. (Dan. 9 on Dan 9,25; D.E. 8.2.398–399)²⁶ His confidence that Josephus did not accept the Christian *κήρυγμα* and his acquaintance with *Demonstratio*, *Historia Ecclesiastica* and *Antiquitates* suggest that Theodoret knew copies of the Eusebian works, as well as perhaps of *Antiquitates*, which contained *Testimonia* reading “he was believed to be the Christ.”

The hypothesis of a Greek copy of *Historia Ecclesiastica* with this reading may also explain why the medieval chronicles of Pseudo-Simon Magister and Cedrenus differ from the *textus receptus* *Testimonium* in emphasizing that it was Jesus’ followers who considered him Christ. They read: “πολλοὺς γὰρ καὶ ἀπὸ Ἑλλήνων ἤγαγετο Χριστός.” A.-M. Dubarle has already shown that Cedrenus and Pseudo-Simon are dependent on *Historia Ecclesiastica* rather than *Antiquitates*.²⁷

In the 1970’s S. Pines caused a stir by drawing scholarly attention to the *Testimonia* in the Arabic chronicle *Kitab al-Unwan* of Agapius of Hierapolis (942 AD) and the Syriac chronicle of Michael the Syrian (1195 AD), which independently qualify the statement about Jesus’ Messiahship, the former reading “he was perhaps the Messiah” and the latter “he was thought to be the Mess-

²⁶ He even follows D.E. 8.2.398–99 in quoting Ant 20.247 as reading that the high priests were not of noble descent but only «ἐξ Ἐβραίων.» In contrast, the extant manuscripts of Ant 20.247 read «ἐξ Ἰερουσαλήμ.»

²⁷ A.-M. Dubarle, *Le témoignage de Josèphe sur Jésus d’après la tradition indirecte*, RB 80 (1973) 490.

iah.”²⁸ Unfortunately, scholars were misled by Pines’ study into placing more weight on Agapius’ Testimonium than Michael’s Testimonium. Since the former is only a paraphrase whereas the latter is a literal rendition of a Testimonium, evidently taken from Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the latter is much more important. Why did scholars prefer Agapius’ Testimonium? Because it is less laudatory than Michael’s and thus closer to what they assumed that Josephus must have said.²⁹ They ignored the crucial question of sources and transmission in favor of a priori assumptions about what Josephus’ attitude towards Jesus must have been.

A comparison of their chronicles clearly reveals that Michael followed the same Syriac source as Agapius to the point where the latter breaks off in the late eighth century. Thus neither Michael nor Agapius pulled his Testimonium independently out of copies of *Antiquitates* or *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Rather they both followed an earlier Syrian Christian who did. From Agapius we learn that he abridged a chronicle by Theophilus of Edessa, who died in 785 AD, while from Michael we learn that he used a chronicle by Jacob of Edessa, who died around 708 AD. (Agapius 2.2.[240]; Michael 10.20 [377]) Therefore, Theophilus of Edessa, used by Agapius, must have himself used Jacob of Edessa, continuing from the point where Jacob’s chronicle ended. Although Michael says that he followed the chronicle of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre for material after Jacob, in the preface to Dionysius’ chronicle, which Michael transcribes, Dionysius admits that he also used Theophilus of Edessa.³⁰ (Michael 10.20 [378])

So the Testimonia of Agapius and Michael ultimately derive from Jacob’s chronicle, which for the period until Constantine is largely drawn from Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* and *Chronicon*. From Michael we learn that Jacob translated Eusebius’ *Chronicon* into Syriac, adding information and continuing it from Constantine to his own day. (Michael 7.2 [127–28]) The sources for the latter included the histories of Socrates, Theodoret, as well as Syriac writers. (Michael 8.6 [180]) Jacob may have read the Greek sources in the original for he apparently knew Greek well (Michael 11.15 [445–46]), which raises the question whether he could have taken his Testimonium directly from *Antiquitates*. For

²⁸ S. Pines, An Arabic version of the *Testimonium Flavianum* and its implications, Jerusalem 1971. J. B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, Paris 1899; 1901; 1905; Reprint Brussels, 1963; A. Vasiliev, *Kitab al-Unwan (Histoire universelle)* PO 5; 7; 8; 11, Paris 1910; 1912; 1913; 1915.

²⁹ L. Feldman (n.1) 702–703.

³⁰ The dependence of Michael and Agapius on Theophilus of Edessa is also noticed by L. Conrad, but he does not notice that for pre-Islamic history both are also clearly dependent on the same earlier source, namely Jacob of Edessa, The Conquest of Arwad, in: *Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, Princeton 1992, 322–338.

there is no evidence that *Antiquitates* was translated into Syriac, although we know that *Bellum* was.³¹

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 or rearranged to follow biblical chronology more closely than Josephus. (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, an incorrect allusion to Ant 1.93–95, which may derive from Eusebius' *Preparatio Evangelica* 9.11. (Michael 2.1 [7]; Agapius 1.1[38]) 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 garbled reference to Ap 1.227–302, where the name is Χαιρόνιον not Zamaris. Michael's source also identified Josephus as the author of 4 Maccabees, a misattribution derived from Eusebius. (Michael 5.7 [82], 5.4 [74]; H.E. 3.10.6) All other citations and allusions to *Antiquitates* appear to derive from Eusebius' *Chronicon* or *Historia Ecclesiastica*. So Michael's source, Jacob of Edessa, most likely knew Josephus only through Eusebius, and perhaps some patristic commentary on Genesis that drew from the first book of *Antiquitates* and *Contra Apionem*. Although Jacob may have used a Syriac rather than Greek *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ultimately its *Testimonium* must go back to a Greek original, since it is scarcely credible that both Jerome and a Syrian Christian would have independently modified the *Testimonium* in precisely the same way.

The cumulative evidence of Origen, Jerome, Theodoret, the Semitic sources, Cedrenus and Pseudo-Simon Magister, and above all Pseudo-Hegesippus points in one direction. There must have been a fourth century version of the *Testimonium* in *Antiquitates*, independently used by Pseudo-Hegesippus and by Eusebius in *Historia Ecclesiastica* and possibly *Demonstratio* as well, reading something like “he was believed to be the Messiah” after the *Testimonium*'s statement, and indeed as logical connection to the statement, that Jesus had many Jewish and Greek followers. The statement about their belief in Christ must have been in the past tense since this is independently transmitted by Jerome (“credebatur”), Pseudo-Hegesippus (“crediderunt”), and Michael the Syrian (“mistavra”). Here I disagree with those who have argued that “he was the Christ” must be entirely an interpolation because it does not fit its immediate context.³² It is precisely because it seems to be out of place that it is unlikely to have been added rather

³¹ H. Schreckenberg, *Rezeptionsgeschichtliche und textkritische Untersuchung zu Flavius Josephus*, Leiden 1977, 6–8.

³² J. Meier, (n.13) 60.

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 definitely characterize Josephus as an unbeliever. In addition, the use of the past tense would explain why the *textus receptus* makes the strange statement “δ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν.” For a fourth century copyist of Eusebius’ works would more likely have changed a past tense ‘believed’ to a past tense ‘was’ than have independently created “ἦν.” He would more likely have said, if he were interpolating *ex nihilo* rather than altering, that Jesus is the Messiah. The New Testament, after all, does not use the past tense.³³

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 them is strong since Pseudo-Hegesippus transmits them. In any case, we do not know what Josephus could have meant by the possibly ironical remark εἴγε ἀνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χοή, and the genitive construction τῶν θείων προφητῶν...εἰρηκότων has many connotations: it does not necessarily mean that Josephus himself believed that the prophets had foretold about Jesus. Also, the use of αὐτοῖς can be seen as giving the entire sentence a subjective cast. While there is very strong evidence that the *Testimonium* originally read “he was believed to be the Messiah,” and some weak evidence that τ’ ἀληθῆ was mistaken for τ’ ἀλλ’ ἦθη, it is quite beyond the extant evidence to insist *a priori* that “if one must call him a man” and “the prophets having foretold these things...” or that the entire *Testimonium* itself must be interpolations.

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³³ A point made in Feldman, (n. 2) 192.