

An Arabic Version of the
Testimonium Flavianum
and its Implications

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by

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FEW HISTORICAL TEXTS, or none, have been more often quoted, more passionately rejected and denounced as literary forgeries, more devotedly defended, more carefully edited and more variously emended than the so-called 'Testimonium Flavianum', a short passage in Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae*, XVIII, 63–64,¹ dealing with Jesus. If genuine, it contains perhaps the earliest evidence concerning Jesus written down by a man who was not a Christian. It is therefore surprising that a recension of the Testimonium that is significantly different from the vulgate text has not been given any attention by the numerous scholars who studied this text of Josephus. This neglect may even appear inexplicable if we consider the bibliographical data: the recension occurs in *Kitāb al-'Unwān*,² an Arabic historical work of the tenth century by Agapius,³ which has been edited twice: (1) by L. Cheikho, under the title *Agapius Episcopus Mabbugensis: Historia Universalis*;⁴ and (2) by

1 The Testimonium also occurs sometimes, in an amplified form, in certain MSS of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*, having been taken over, without doubt, from his *Antiquitates*. In the present paper I cannot go into the problems posed by the account of Jesus found in the old Russian translation of *Bellum Judaicum*.

2 The full title is *Kitāb al-'Unwān al-mukallal bi-faḍā'il al-ḥikma al-mutawwaj bi-anwā' al-falsafa al-mamdūḥ bi-ḥaqā'iq al-ma'rifa*.

3 In Arabic Aghābiyūs; also called Maḥbūb Qusṭanṭīn al-Manbijī. He was the Melkite bishop of Manbij (Hierapolis).

4 See bibliography on p. 83.

A. Vasiliev, under the title *Kitāb al-'Unwān / Histoire Universelle, écrite par Agapius (Maḥboub) de Menbidj*. Vasiliev also translated it into French.⁵

Agapius' chronicle deals with the history of the world from the beginning till the tenth century. He and his contemporary Eutychius Ibn Sa'id are the earliest Christian Arabic authors to have written universal histories. Eutychius' chronicle seems to antedate Agapius', as the latter mentions in one passage that he is writing in the eighth month of the year 330 H., which corresponds to the year 942 of the Christian era; Eutychius died in 940.

The passage in which the Testimonium is included may be rendered as follows:⁶

- 5 See bibliography on p. 83. The bibliography relating to Agapius may be found in G. Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen arabischen Literatur*, II, Città del Vaticano 1947, p. 39. Agapius seems to have used Syriac rather than Arabic sources; one of these sources can perhaps be identified. I refer to the lost historical work of Theophilus of Edessa, a Syriac author who died in 785; cf. C. H. Becker, 'Eine neue Christliche Quelle zur Geschichte des Islam', *Der Islam*, III (1912), pp. 295–296; A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, Bonn 1912, pp. 341–342. An article of A. Baumstark, entitled 'Die Lehre des römischen Presbyters Florinus', *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XIII (1912), pp. 306–319, deals with Agapius' account of the doctrines of this heretic. It shows, *inter alia*, that this account, which describes otherwise unknown points of Florinus' doctrines, cannot be derived from Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which, as Baumstark recognizes, was a main source for Agapius' accounts of other Christian heresies. He points out, however, that in these accounts also information is given that is not found in Eusebius' work. He is inclined to believe that Agapius may have used a text written in Syriac. As far as Florinus is concerned, this text may have been — but Baumstark makes it clear that he is not at all sure of the correctness of this hypothesis — a Syriac translation of a letter of Irenaeus to Pope Victor, which may have included an account of Florinus' opinions.
- 6 See ed. Cheikho, pp. 239–240; ed. Vasiliev, pp. 471–473. Vasiliev's French translation is on the whole correct, but, in view of the importance of the exact wording, at least with regard to the Testimonium

[*Al-Manbijī*]⁷ has said: We have found in many books of the philosophers that they refer to the day of crucifixion of Christ [al-masih], and that they marvel thereat. The first of them is the philosopher *Iflāṭūn*,⁸ who says in the thirteenth chapter of the book he has written on the kings:⁹ ‘In the reign of [Tiberius] Caesar, the sun was darkened and there was night for¹⁰ nine

itself, I shall attempt to give a literal translation. Both editions of this part of Agapius are based on one single Florentine MS. However, many passages of Agapius, including the one with which we are concerned, are quoted by the thirteenth-century Christian Coptic historian Jūrjis al-Makīn Ibn al-‘Amūd in his *Universal History* (of which only the second part, treating of Islamic history, has been published). These passages have been collected by Cheikho (who consulted MS Paris Ar. 1294) in the volume containing the edition of Agapius. A second MS of al-Makīn (Paris 294, foll. 162v–163r) has been used by me for the purposes of the present paper. The quotation of al-Makīn is of great help in establishing the text of Agapius’ passage.

- 7 The words in parentheses, which are missing in Agapius’ work, are taken from al-Makīn’s text (quoted in Cheikho’s edition, pp. 390–391). *Al-Manbijī* refers to Agapius (see above, n. 3).
- 8 *Iflāṭūn* is the usual Arabic form of Plato. Here Phlego (Phlegon) of Tralles appears to be meant; cf. below p. 52. We may suppose that a scribe has confused some form of the rare name Phlegon with *Iflāṭūn*, which was familiar.
- 9 Like Agapius, Eusebius states in his *Chronicon* that the passage in question occurred in the thirteenth book of Phlego’s work. Eusebius’ *Chronicon* is preserved in: (1) an Armenian translation; cf. *Eusebius’ Werke, V: Die Chronik des Eusebius aus dem Armenischen übersetzt*, translated by J. Karst (*Die griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte = GCS*), Leipzig 1911, p. 213; and (2) in St. Jerome’s Latin version; cf. *Eusebius’ Werke, VII: Hieronymi Chronicon*, ed. R. Helm, *GCS*, Berlin 1956, pp. 174–175. Origen is not quite certain whether this passage was found in the thirteenth or in the fourteenth book; see *Contra Celsum*, II, 33.
- 10 *Fī tis’ sā’āt*; literally: *in nine hours*. The use of the proposition *fī* in this context is awkward. According to Eusebius’ *Chronicon* (Armenian version, *loc. cit.*; St. Jerome’s version, *loc. cit.*) Phlegon states that there was night in the sixth hour. According to a passage from Julius Africanus quoted by Syncellus (cf. P. de Labriolle, *La réaction patenne*, Paris 1950, pp. 209–210), the eclipse, which was supposed to account

hours; and the stars appeared. And there was a great and violent earthquake in Nicea and in all the towns that surround it. And strange things happened.'

Ūr.s.y.w.s.,¹¹ the philosopher, says in the fifth chapter of the book he has written concerning the ways and life of the kings as [follows]: 'A great calamity and prolonged anguish have befallen us. The sun was darkened and the earth [al-arḍ] quaked, and many terrifying things are stated to have happened in the country [arḍ] of the Hebrews¹² [al-'ibrāniyyīn]. We learnt the cause of this from letters, written by Pilate [F.lāṭ.s.], the judge,¹³ from Palestine to Tiberius Caesar. [For] he said in them that all these things happened at the death of a man whom the Jews have crucified. When Caesar¹⁴ heard this, he sent [an order] dismissing Pilate from judgeship over the Jews for having obeyed them. And he threatened and menaced the Jews who had crucified him.'

Similarly Josephus [Yūsifūs], the Hebrew. For he says in the treatises that he has written on the governance [?]¹⁵ of the Jews:

for the darkness that covered the earth at the time of the crucifixion, lasted from the sixth to the ninth hour.

11 Or: Ūr.s.n.w.s.; or Ūr.s.b.s.; see below, pp. 52–53.

12 Al-Makīn's quotation from Agapius omits the words *and many terrifying things are stated to have happened in the country*. His text may be rendered: *and the country of the Hebrews trembled*. The omission is probably due to a scribal error occasioned by the repetition of the word *arḍ*.

13 *Al-qāḍī*.

14 Tiberius.

15 The MS of Agapius, as read both by Cheikho and by Vasiliev, has *fī sharr al-Yahūd* – *On the Evil of the Jews*, which is certainly incorrect. Al-Makīn, in his quotation from Agapius published by Cheikho (p. 391), merely says: *in the treatises that he has written about the Jews* – *'alā'l-Yahūd*; Vasiliev (p. 471) has no note on *sharr*, but translates *dans ses ouvrages qu'il a écrits sur les guerres des Juifs*. This means that he emended *sharr* into *ḥurūb*, which is not very difficult, as far as the Arabic script is concerned. Another possible emendation is *harb* – *war*, in the singular, which may call to mind *Bellum Judaicum*. It is not wholly impossible, but in my opinion very improbable, that one of

'At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus.¹⁶ His conduct was good,¹⁷ and [he] was known to be virtuous.¹⁸ And many people from among the Jews and the other nations¹⁹ became his disciples. Pilate²⁰ condemned him to be crucified and

these forms is the correct emendation. I have chosen to emend *sharr* into *tadbīr* – *governance*, which seems to be likewise admissible from the point of view of the Arabic script. The word *tadbīr* (as well as the word *hurūb*) occurs in Agapius (ed. Cheikho, p. 255) in the following sentence: *And he [Josephus] then composed twenty books concerning the governance [tadbīr] of the Jews, their migration [or tradition, or transmitters of tradition; see below], their high priests and the wars [hurūb] of the Romans and their capture of Jerusalem.* The passage continues: *And sixty-two letters of Agrippa were in existence in which he praised Josephus' works, great knowledge and excellent execution.* The second sentence corresponds to a passage in Josephus' *Vita*, 364, which appears to refer to *Bellum Judaicum*. But this passage is quoted in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 10:11, and may have been quoted by Agapius from the latter source. The fact that Agrippa's letters refer to *Bellum Judaicum* is not very conspicuous in Eusebius' text. In the first sentence of Agapius quoted in this footnote the work concerning the governance (*tadbīr*) of the Jews can be identified as Josephus' *Antiquitates*, which has twenty books, the number mentioned by Agapius.

My preference for *tadbīr* in the passage in Agapius introducing the Testimonium arises in part (other reasons are given elsewhere in this paper) from the comparison of this passage with a text of the Syriac *Chronicle* of Michael; as we shall see below, the two passages are definitely connected, though in a somewhat curious way. The Syriac text, which likewise introduces the Testimonium (in a version whose divergencies from the vulgate text are less considerable than those found in Agapius' recension, but nevertheless very significant), refers in the following words to the work of Josephus in which this Testimonium occurs: *bemā de-ʿal dūbhārā de-yūdāyē – in what relates to the governance of the Jews.* The word *dūbhārā*, which is derived from the same root as *tadbīr*, could have been considered as an equivalent of the Arabic word. A translator wishing to render *dūbhārā* into Arabic would probably choose *tadbīr*.

It may be noted that (1) Chabot translated the word *dūbhārā* in the above phrase as *histoire*, which is inaccurate; (2) the word might also be read in the plural, *dūbhārē*, which might mean *usages*. But this would not materially affect the bearing of the phrase on the text of Agapius

to die.²¹ But²² those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship.²³ They reported²⁴ that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive; accordingly²⁵ he was perhaps the Messiah,²⁶ concerning whom the prophets have recounted²⁷ wonders.²⁸

with which we are concerned. The fact that in a related Syriac text the work of Josephus containing the Testimonium is described as treating of the *dūbhāra* of the Jews seems to render it very probable that Agapius in his introduction to the Testimonium mentioned that the work of Josephus dealt with the *tadbir* of the Jews; see also below, pp. 44 ff.

16 *Isū*, a Syriac form of the name. Al-Makīn has *Ishū*.

17 Or: *way of life* – *sira*.

18 Or: *outstanding*. For *wa-ʿulima annahu fāḍil* al-Makīn has *wa-kāna lahu sira ḥasana wa-ʿilm faḍil* (Cheikho, p. 391) – *his conduct was good and his learning [or: knowledge] outstanding*. In Al-Makīn's text *annahu* is omitted. This may be due to a scribal error.

19 *Sā'ir al-shu ūb*.

20 *Filāt.s*

21 *Qaḍḍā ʿalayh bi l-ṣalḅ wa l-mawt*.

22 Literally: *and*.

23 *Lam yatrūkū talmadhatahu*. This is the variant found in al-Makīn's quotation from Agapius (Cheikho, p. 239). For reasons that will be stated below, this variant seems, on the whole, to be preferable to the one occurring in the MS of Agapius used by Cheikho and Vasiliev: *yad'ū talmadihatahu*, which may mean *preached the doctrine*; *talmadha* may render the Syriac *tūlmādhā* – *doctrine*.

24 *Dhakarū*.

25 I follow the MS of Agapius, which has *fa-la'allahu*. Al-Makīn's quotation has *wa-la'alla hādhā* – *and perhaps this [man]*.

26 Or: *Christ*.

27 Literally: *said*.

28 *Fa-la'allahu ḥuwa al-masiḥ allādhī qālat ʿanhu al-anbiyāʾ al-ʿajāʾib*. The way in which this sentence follows the one concluding with *wa-innahu ʿāsha* – *and he was alive* seems to suggest — if one considers Arabic syntactic usage — that the opinion according to which Jesus was, perhaps, the Messiah is attributed to the disciples and is not a personal reflection of Josephus. This is also the view of Vasiliev, expressed by the placing of the inverted commas in his translation of al-Makīn. *Prima facie*, there are these two ways of interpreting this sentence — the opinion that Jesus was perhaps the Messiah is either

This is what is said by Josephus and his companions²⁹ of our Lord the Messiah, may he be glorified. And he also says³⁰ that all the public activity³¹ of our Lord Christ, may he be glorified, [all] that he did³² occurred under the high priesthood³³ of Ḥannān³⁴ and Qayāfā.³⁵ For [the two] were high priests³⁶ in those years; I mean [to say that his public activity occurred] from the high priesthood of Ḥannān till the beginning of the high priesthood of Qayāfā. The time between these two [dates] does not amount to four years. For when Herod had charge of them, he burnt the genealogies of their tribes, in order that it should not be known that he [was descended] from undistinguished people. He [also] took the priestly vestment and put it under his seal. And he did not allow anyone of the high priests³⁷ to officiate as such for

a personal reflection of Josephus, or it is attributed to Jesus' disciples. The first interpretation seems to be indicated if the text is considered as a piece of ordinary Arabic prose, but this is not quite certain; in any case, no decisive ruling can be made on this point on syntactic or other grounds, especially as the sentence is translated from another language. On a Syriac rendering of this sentence or of a similar one, see below, pp. 22, 26, 46.

- 29 *wa-aṣḥābihi*. Vasiliev translates *et de ses coreligionnaires*, which is a possible interpretation, but not the only one.
- 30 The Arabic text has *yaqūlu*. From the grammatical point of view the subject of this verb should have been Josephus, but this is certainly not the case. The following passage is in certain respects similar to, though by no means identical with, a text of Eusebius. Possibly this church father is the subject of *yaqūlu*; on this hypothesis and its implications and difficulties see below, pp. 54 ff.
- 31 Public activity renders *tadbīr*, a word which has been translated above by *governance*.
- 32 *Taqallubuhu*.
- 33 *Ri'āsa*; literally: *domination*, or: *leadership*.
- 34 I. e. Annas.
- 35 I. e. Caiaphas; cf. Luke iii : 2.
- 36 *Ra'isā'l-kahana*.
- 37 The MS has *li-ra'isā'l-kahana*, i.e. a dual form – *the two high priests*. Cheikho emends *li-ru'asā'l-kahana*, a plural form. This emendation is plausible, but not necessarily correct.

more than one year.³⁸ For this [reason] there came up four high [priests] in the [interval of time] between the high priesthood³⁹ of Ḥannān and that of Qayāfā. For after the dismissal of Ḥannān, Ismā'il the son of Yaḥyā⁴⁰ took his place. When he⁴¹ had finished his year and quitted⁴² his [office], Eliezer,⁴³ the son of Ḥannān the high priest, replaced him. After he⁴⁴ had terminated his year, Simon,⁴⁵ son of Qamihūd,⁴⁶ succeeded him. Then came

38 Literally: *except for one year only*.

39 *Ri'āsa*; literally: *domination*, or *leadership*.

40 This is doubtless the error of a scribe who substituted the familiar name Yaḥyā for Phabī, which is incidentally found in the Syriac version of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 8 : 4; see *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius in Syriac*, ed. Wright & McLean, p. 45. The particularities of the Arabic script render this substitution possible, though on the face of it one would not consider it a very likely emendation.

41 *Ismā'il*.

42 Literally: *and had gone out – kharaja*.

43 The name is written *Y.l. 'āz.r.* The Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* has *'Lī'z.r.*

44 Eliezer.

45 *Sham'ūn*.

46 The name of Simon, the high-priest's father, is given by Josephus (*Antiquitates*, XVIII, 34) as *Kamithou*, in the genitive, which suggests the nominative *Kamithes*. The MSS of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 10 : 5 give various forms for the genitive: *Kamithou*, *Kamiphou* and *Kathimou*, the nominatives being probably *Kamithos*, *Kamiphos* and *Kathimos*. Eusebius' *Demonstratio*, VIII, 2 : 99 has in the genitive the form *Kathimou*. The Syriac translation of the passage of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* quoted above has the form *Qamihūd*.

It may be noted that Josephus' *τοῦ Καμίθου*, which seems to refer to the high priest's father, is, in fact, according to the evidence, a Greek transposition of the name of his mother. The high priest שמעון בן קמחיה is mentioned in the Talmudical literature; cf., for instance, *TB Yoma* 47a; see the article קמחיה in: J. Levy, *Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim*, IV, Berlin 1924, pp. 324–325. In the Hebrew translation of *Antiquitates* (קדמוניות היהודים), III, Jerusalem 1963, p. 284) A. Schalit has correctly given the high priest's name as שמעון בן קמחיה

after him [and in his place] Qayāfā, on whose order⁴⁷ and under whose high priesthood⁴⁸ our Lord, the Messiah, may he be glorified, was crucified. Thus the time between Ḥannān and Qayāfā does not [amount] to less [? aqall] than four years.⁴⁹

We have come to a point where it seems advisable to compare in detail Agapius' Arabic version of the Testimonium with the traditional Greek text, as given in Josephus' *Antiquitates* and in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* and his *Demonstratio*. Variants, found in al-Makīn's History, will be used in establishing the Arabic text, and versions of the Testimonium found in Byzantine chronicles will be quoted in the critical apparatus of the Greek text.⁵⁰

47 'Ahd; this seems to be the meaning of the word in this context. 'Ahd also means *time*.

48 *Ri'āsa*; see above, n. 39.

49 This sentence is certainly corrupt, since it seems to contradict a sentence in the same passage referring to the interval of time between the high priesthood of Ḥannān and the beginning of the high priesthood of Qayāfā. As rendered above, this sentence signifies: *The time between these two [dates] does not amount to four years*. It is very unlikely that the sentence we are discussing now refers to the end of Qayāfā's high priesthood rather than to its beginning. There may have been a scribal error. One should perhaps emend *aqall* to *akthar* and translate: *Thus the time between Ḥannān and Qayāfā does not [amount] to more than four years*.

50 Michael's Syriac and St. Jerome's Latin versions will be quoted and discussed later on. In the critical apparatus of the Greek text, some of the data given by Eisler in his edition of the Testimonium (I, pp. 85–86) have been used. Other data mentioned by Eisler and other scholars did not seem relevant in the context of the present paper and have been omitted.

Agapius' Arabic Text

وكذلك يوسيفوس العبراني فانه قال في
ميامره⁵¹ التي كتبها على تدبير اليهود:⁵²
انه كان في هذا الزمان رجل حكيم يقال
له يسوع وكانت له سيرة حسنة وعلم انه
فاضل⁵³ وانه تتلمذ⁵⁴ له كثير⁵⁵ من الناس
من اليهود وسائر⁵⁶ الشعوب وكان فيلاطس
قضى عليه بالصلب والموت والذين تتلمذوا
له لم يتركوا تلمذته⁵⁷ وذكروا انه ظهر
لهم بعد ثلاثة ايام من صلبه وانه عاش
فلعله هو⁵⁸ المسيح الذي قالت عنه الانبياء
الاعاجيب.⁵⁹

The Vulgate Greek Text

Γίνεται⁶⁰ δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν
χρόνον Ἰησοῦς σοφὸς ἀνὴρ,⁶¹
εἶπε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρη⁶².
ἦν γὰρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιη-
τῆς, διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν
ἡδονῆ τάληθῆ δεχομένων⁶³ καὶ
πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους,⁶⁴ πολ-
λοὺς δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ ἐπ-
ηγάγετο. ὁ χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν.⁶⁵
καὶ αὐτὸν ἐνδείξει τῶν πρώ-
των ἀνδρῶν παρ' ἡμῖν σταυρῶ
ἐπιτετιμηκότος Πιλάτου οὐκ
ἐπαύσαντο⁶⁶ οἱ τὸ πρῶτον ἀγα-
πήσαντες. ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς
τρίτην ἔχων⁶⁷ ἡμέραν πάλιν
ζῶν τῶν θεῶν προφητῶν ταῦτά
τε καὶ ἄλλα μυρία περὶ αὐτοῦ
θαυμάσια⁶⁸ εἰρηκότων. εἰς ἔτι
τε νῦν⁶⁹ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ
τοῦδε ὀνομασμένον οὐκ ἐπέλιπε
τὸ φῦλον (*Antiquitates*, XVIII,
63-64).

- 51 Al-Makīn, ed. Cheikho, p. 391: قال يوسيفوس العبراني في منامره (ميامره)
52 Agapius' MS: وعلى شر اليهود; al-Makīn, *loc. cit.*: الذي كتبها على اليهود:
53 Al-Makīn, *loc. cit.*: وعلم فاضل
54 Al-Makīn's text reads وتلمذ
55 Al-Makīn's text reads كثيرا
56 Al-Makīn's text reads ومن سائر
57 57 Al-Makīn's text reads لم يتركوا تلمذته is the variant given in al-Makīn's quotation. The MS of Agapius, edited by Cheikho and Vasiliev, reads يدعوا تلمذته; see above, n. 23, and below, n. 75.
58 Al-Makīn's text reads ولعل هذا. The reading فلعله هذا is smoother than the one found in the Agapius' MS.

The following translations are meant to facilitate a first comparison between the two versions of the Testimonium with which for the moment we are concerned. The words written in Roman type in either of the two renderings have a counterpart of some sort in the other version.⁷⁰

H. Feldman's translation of the Greek vulgate recension of the Testimonium has been used; occasionally it has been slightly modified in order to render it more literal.

- 59 Al-Makīn's text reads الذي قالوا الانبياء عهه. In his version الاعاجيب is missing.
- 60 Cedrenus' version reads ἦν; see Eisler, p. 85, n. 8.
- 61 According to Malalas, Josephus describes Jesus as ἄνθρωπος ἀγαθός καὶ δίκαιος. However, there is some reason to believe that a passage other than the Testimonium may be referred to. The last part of Malalas' sentence (Ioannes Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. B. G. Niebuhr, Bonn 1831, pp. 247–248) may be rendered as follows: . . . *Just as Josephus the philosopher of the Hebrews has written this; he has also said that since the time when the Jews had crucified Jesus, who was a good and just man, if he is to be called a man and not a god, there had been no surcease of grief in the country of Judaea* (cf. also below, n. 220).
- 62 The words εἶγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λεγῆναι χροῖα have no equivalent in a Latin version of the Testimonium that occurs in a MS written before the eighth century; see Eisler, p. 85, n. 13.
- 63 Sozomenos, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. J. Bidez, Berlin 1960, Lib. I, Cap. 1, p. 7, reads διδάσκαλον λόγων ἀληθῶν.
- 64 Eusebius' *Demonstratio* reads τοῦ Ἰουδαίου; see Eisler, p. 85, n. 16.
- 65 This sentence is omitted by Cedrenus; see Eisler, p. 86, n. 1.
- 66 Cedrenus has ἐπαύσαντο κηρύσσοντες περὶ αὐτοῦ; see Eisler, p. 86, n. 5.
- 67 ἔχων is omitted in Eusebius' *Demonstratio*; see Eisler, p. 86, n. 8.
- 68 περὶ αὐτοῦ θαυμάσια is omitted in Eusebius' *Demonstratio*; see Eisler, p. 86, n. 10.
- 69 Other variants: εἰσέτι καὶ; εἰς ἔτι καὶ νῦν; εἰσέτι τὲ νῦν; σέτι (in one MS τε is written above the line); ὅθεν εἰσέτι (Eusebius' *Demonstratio*); εἰς τε νῦν (Suidas); εἰς δὲ τὸ νῦν, or, according to another version, ἰδὲ τοίνυν (Isidorus Pelusianus); οὐκέτι νῦν (*Sermo Macarii*, in: *Acta Sanctorum*); see Eisler, p. 80, n. 3; p. 86, n. 11.
- 70 Or in the variants quoted in the notes.

Rendering of the Arabic Text⁷¹

Similarly Josephus the Hebrew. For he says in the treatises that he has written on the governance⁷² of the Jews:

At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct⁷³ was good, and [he] was known to be virtuous.⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁵ They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly,⁷⁶ he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.⁷⁷

Rendering of the Greek Text

About this time there lived⁷⁸ Jesus, a wise man,⁷⁹ if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love [him] did not cease.⁸⁰ On the third day he appeared to them restored to life. For the prophets of God had prophesied these and myriads of other marvellous [things] about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still up to now, not disappeared.

71 This rendering is somewhat more literal than the one given above.

72 See above, n. 15, and below, pp. 46 ff.

73 Or: *way of life*.

74 Or, according to al-Makīn: *his conduct was good and his learning outstanding*.

75 Al-Makīn's text. The MS of Agapius reads *preached his doctrine*. The same word, namely, *talmadha*, is translated in the rendering of al-Makīn's text as *discipleship*, and in the rendering of the MS of Agapius as *doctrine*.

It seems to me that both the divergencies and the similarities of the two versions are instructive. However, *prima facie*, a number of divergent conclusions could be drawn from these data. It will be our task to assess their probability.

We shall start with the points of similarity. Some of these are obvious and preclude any doubt as to the close relation between the Greek and the Arabic version. This relation is very much in evidence, if one considers the opening reference to Jesus, and the statements concerning his winning disciples, his being the Messiah, his being sentenced by Pilate, the fidelity of his disciples, who survived his death, and his having appeared to them on the third day.⁸¹

A detailed examination of the text leads to the less obvious discovery that in some points the Arabic version agrees with certain variants of the Greek version that do not appear in the predominant textual tradition.

Thus, at the beginning of the text the Arabic *kāna* appears to

76 Or, according to al-Makīn's quotation, *and*.

77 According to al-Makīn's quotation: *concerning whom the prophets have spoken*. The same verb, namely, *qālū*, occurs both in the MS of Agapius, in which context it has been rendered *related*, and in al-Makīn's quotation, in which context it has been rendered *spoken*.

78 Literally: *became*; variant: *was* (Cedrenus), which agrees with Agapius' text; cf. also below, St. Jerome's Latin version.

79 Malalas' text reads *a good and just man*; but his quotation may not be derived from the Testimonium; see above, n. 61.

80 Cedrenus has the variant *did not cease to preach concerning him*.

81 Some of these points of resemblance are brought out by the words in roman type. When similar statements are worded differently in the two versions, or when one of the versions offers a statement that has no parallel in the second version, the words are printed in italics. To cite an example for difference of wording, the Arabic text reads *became his disciples*, whereas the Greek may be rendered *he won over*. As we shall see, this may be due to an early divergence of two recensions, and not merely to a translators's licence.

agree with ἦν, which occurs in Cedrenus,⁸² rather than with γίνεται.⁸³

The following parallel is more complicated, and perhaps also more striking:

As has been stated above, al-Makīn's quotation reads *lam yatrukū talmadhatahu* – *did not abandon his doctrine*. *Lam yatrukū* appears to correspond to the Greek οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο⁸⁴ – *did not cease*, and has for this reason been preferred to the variant of Agapius' MS *yad'ū talmadhatahu* – *preached his doctrine*.

A neat solution of this textual problem would, however, have to account for the existence of the latter variant. Cedrenus' version suggests such a solution. It reads: οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο κηρύσσοντες περὶ αὐτοῦ – *they did not cease to preach concerning him*. The last two words have no counterpart in the MS of Agapius, as in al-Makīn's version. However, the interesting point about the sentence in Cedrenus' version is the two verbs, the first of which, οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο – *did not cease*, corresponds to *lam yatrukū* in al-Makīn's quotation, whereas the second, κηρύσσοντες – *to preach*, agrees with *yad'ū* in the MS of Agapius. This suggests that the equivalents of both verbs occurring in Cedrenus' version may have originally appeared

82 Parallels to this ἦν may be found in Latin and Syriac versions of the Testimonium; these versions will be discussed both with regard to this and other points.

83 It could, however, be argued that it is not out of the question for γίνεται to have been rendered by *kāna*. With regard to the immediately following sentence in the Arabic version, it could perhaps be suspected that the words *his conduct was good and he was known to be virtuous* (this is the text of the MS of Agapius, which differs from that of al-Makīn's quotation) might have some relation to Malalas' ἄνθρωπον ἀγαθὸν καὶ δίκαιον. But this seems to me to be doubtful (see above, n. 61). *His conduct was good* may, as we shall see later, be related to an expression differing from Malalas', which occurs in Syriac versions of the Testimonium. Furthermore, *fāḍil* – *virtuous* is by no means equivalent to δίκαιος.

84 A certain awkwardness attaches to these words in the predominant

in the Arabic version. The fact that only the first of them remained in al-Makīn's quotation and only the second in the MS of Agapius may be due to scribal errors. There are thus some grounds for believing that on some points a part of Cedrenus' version — though perhaps not a well-defined branch of the Greek manuscript tradition of the Testimonium — comes close to Agapius' Arabic version.

At this point the divergencies between this version and the Greek text have to be discussed. Some of these divergencies are clearly significant:

1. Agapius does not question Jesus' being a man.
2. Agapius does not refer to Jesus' working miracles; instead he describes him as being of good conduct and virtuous.⁸⁵
3. The role played by Jewish notables in Jesus' condemnation is not mentioned.
4. In the Greek text Jesus' appearance to his disciples after his crucifixion is treated as a fact recounted by the author; in Agapius' version this appearance is said to have been reported by his disciples. The circumstance that this story is based on hearsay evidence stands out very clearly.
5. In the middle of the Greek text of the Testimonium occurs the uncompromising statement *He was the Messiah*. The parallel statement in Agapius' version occurs at the end of the Testimonium, and it is dubitative: *he was perhaps the Messiah*.⁸⁶ It can be asserted with a show of truth that it is the Christian

MSS tradition, because they seem to require a complement, which in this tradition is lacking.

85 Or, if we follow al-Makīn: *exceedingly learned*.

86 As has been stated above, there is a possibility, but only a slight one, that in Agapius' version this dubitative position was attributed to Jesus' disciples. As we shall see below, a Syriac version of the Testimonium legitimates the hypothesis that the original form of the dubitative statement concerning the Messiahhood of Jesus was slightly different and was modified in the translation into Arabic. Like Agapius' phrase, this hypothetical original wording contained no assertion supposedly made by Josephus as to Jesus' being the Messiah.

tendency in the presentation of four or, perhaps, three of these differences (in this context point 3 is irrelevant, and point 2 may perhaps appear to be much less important than the remaining three) that is in the main responsible for the position taken up by those scholars (they are probably the majority) who deny the authenticity of the Testimonium and regard it, or parts of it, as Christian interpolation. They reason that if Josephus tended to think that Jesus was superhuman, if he spoke of his working miracles,⁸⁷ if he proclaimed him to be the Messiah, and if he related as a fact his appearance to his disciples after his death — he must have been a Christian, or have come close to being one, a conclusion that appears to run counter to what we know of him from his works. It also runs counter to Origen's assertion⁸⁸ that Josephus did not believe in Jesus.

Accordingly, three main schools of opinion can be distinguished:

1. Those who maintain, in spite of all arguments to the contrary, the genuineness of the Testimonium.⁸⁹
2. Those who consider that all of it is a Christian fabrication.⁹⁰

87 Taken by itself, the reference to Jesus' miracles does not, of course, constitute a proof of Josephus' commitment to Christianity, but, in conjunction with the other relevant points enumerated in the text, it strengthens the general impression that if he was the author of the vulgate recension, he must have had, or have come close to, such a commitment.

88 See below, p. 65.

89 This was the position of, among others, F. C. Burkitt and A. G. Harnack. A recent example of this attitude is provided by an article of F. Dornseiff, 'Zum Testamentum Flavianum', *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XLVI (1956), pp. 245-250. A bibliographical survey of recent publications on this question (up to 1962) may be found in the booklet by L. H. Feldman, *Recent Scholarship on Philo and Josephus (1937-1962)*, New York 1964.

90 Eisler (pp. 19 ff.) sets forth some of the arguments put forward by the scholars who maintained this opinion, which seems to have been formulated in 1534 by Hubert van Giffen (Giphanius). It was held, among others, by E. Norden and E. Meyer. I may add that all the

3. Those who believe that Josephus' *Antiquitates* contained a passage concerning Jesus, but that it was not the one known to us as the Greek *Testimonium Flavianum*. According to this view, the *Testimonium* is the result of the adaptations and alterations to which the original text of Josephus was subjected by zealous Christians. This opinion led to several attempts being made to reconstruct the hypothetical original text. Some of them were very elaborate, and the modifications proposed were numerous and incisive. Eisler's⁹¹ reconstruction does not have many traits in common with the *textus receptus* of the *Testimonium*. In another reconstruction, the alterations and emendations were kept down to what was regarded as a minimum.⁹² The discouraging fact about all these attempts is that the scholars who made them were guided in the main (though not in all cases exclusively; some of them used various secondary sources to good purpose) by their personal subjective view of the probable position of Josephus with regard to Jesus and of the way in which he was most likely to have set forth this position. In other words, the reconstructions had, by and large, only a subjective validity.

From this point of view the evidential status of Agapius' version of the *Testimonium* is wholly different for the following reasons: This version has not been reconstructed and tailored to suit the ideas of modern scholars as to what is probable and what is not. It is quoted by a Christian author to whom it certainly would not have occurred to omit or water down references to, and descriptions of, Jesus, which, because of their agreement with

authors who consider that Jesus was a mythical rather than a historical person regard the *Testimonium* as a Christian forgery.

91 *Op. cit.*, pp. 87–88.

92 C. Martin's article, 'Le *Testimonium Flavianum* — Vers une solution définitive', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, XX (1941), pp. 409–465, may be cited as an example of this approach to the *Testimonium*. Many other scholars could be quoted.

the Christian faith, might be considered as not very likely to have been made by Josephus.⁹³

We may also suppose that earlier Christian authors (from whom, according to certain — not quite conclusive — indications, Agapius took over his version) tampered no more than he did with the text. On the other hand, there are no grounds whatever for supposing that this version was at some time or other manipulated and adapted by Jews or by Pagans for their anti-Christian purposes. The decisive argument against this supposition is that this version is in no way hostile to Jesus or to Christianity.

On the other hand, the objection that has been effectively brought to bear against the authenticity of the Testimonium does not apply to Agapius' version. The latter does not express any doubt as to the propriety of designating Jesus as a man. His appearance after death is referred to as something reported by the disciples; it is not stated that this appearance was a fact. The sentence that mentions the possibility that he was the Messiah foretold by the prophets contains the dubitative adverb *perhaps* — *la'alla*, which may have been, as we shall see, the not quite adequate rendering of a Syriac word.

In its original form the sentence may have read: *He was thought to be the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have related wonders*. All these traits appear to indicate that the author of this version need not have been a Christian.⁹⁴ Indeed, it is hardly conceivable that a Christian, even if he set out to compose a piece of writing that was to be passed off as Josephus', would have consistently referred to Jesus with the lukewarm admiration

93 A tampering with the vulgate text of the Testimonium in order to lessen — admittedly only in a slight measure — the improbability of its having been written by Josephus has been ascribed by some scholars to St. Jerome (cf. below, p. 43). In his case, too, this suggestion seems to be most unlikely.

94 Though it may have been tampered with by a Christian.

and the lack of superlatives⁹⁵ characteristic of Agapius' version and would have taken care (as the author of this version evidently has done) to avoid any statement in which the appearance of Jesus after his death and his Messiahship are unequivocally referred to as facts.⁹⁶ In other words, the main, or the philologically most valid, objection to the authenticity of the Testimonium does not apply to Agapius' version. Agapius' Arabic text of the Testimonium is in all probability translated from a Syriac version of the Greek original.⁹⁷ It is highly probable that in the course of these translations, and also as a result of scribal errors, some alterations, not due to a deliberate attempt at distortion, were introduced into the text. Reference has already been made to a Syriac version of the Testimonium, which seems to provide some pointers to the existence of such alterations in Agapius' text. This version occurs in Michael the Syrian's chronicle.⁹⁸ This author was born in 1126 and was Patriarch of Antioch from 1166 to 1199; he thus lived more than three centuries after Agapius. Because of the points of similarity as well as divergency it seems necessary to compare his version of the Testimonium with the one found in the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

95 Except, perhaps, in praise of Jesus' learning; see above, n. 74.

96 This does not, of course, mean that a Christian may not have altered this version, which in its original form may have been less favourable to Jesus than is the text known to us; see below, p. 69.

97 This Syriac version may have occurred in the historical work of the Syriac author Theophilus, who may have been Agapius' main source; see above, n. 5.

98 The Syriac text of the Testimonium occurs in J. B. Chabot's publication in facsimile and translation, Vol. IV, Paris 1910, p. 91; the French translation may be found in Vol. I, Paris 1899, pp. 144-145.

is fitting to call him a man [אנשא probably means ἀνθρώπος]. For he was a worker of marvellous deeds and a teacher of men— [that is] of those who in truth accept grace [or: pleasure; the text should probably be emended; Gressmann in his German translation (see below) replaces this sentence by the parallel sentence of the Greek vulgate recension, giving a rendering of the Syriac phrase in a footnote] — and he gathered together many of the Jews and many of the Pagans. And he was the Messiah. When, according to the example [Gressmann again substitutes, for the Syriac phrase which he translates in a footnote, the phrase of the Greek vulgate; he believes probably correctly that the divergence of the Syriac text from the Greek is due to a mistranslation of ἐνδείξει] of our chief [and] principal [men], Pilate crucified him, those who had previously loved him were not silent. For he appeared to them on the third day alive; the divine prophets having said about him this and many other [things]. From then till now the sect of the Christians has not been wanting.

H. Gressmann's translation of the Syriac *Theophania* has been published in the series *Die griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte: Eusebius' Werke*, Vol. III, Part 2, Leipzig 1904. Comparing the Syriac translation of the *Theophania* with that of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Gressmann notes that the former, in contrast to the latter, slavishly follows the Greek text. The Testimonium occurs in his translation on p. 250*. He renders כד סם ברישה פילטום זקיפא — *Als Pilatus ihn ... zu kreuzigen sich in den Kopf gesetzt hatte*. In my opinion the original meaning of the phrase, which is probably somewhat corrupt, may be ascertained from a comparison with the parallel and similar phrase occurring in the Syriac version of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and in that of Michael: יהבה פילטום למסם ברישא דצליבא. This parallel seems to indicate that the phrase occurring in the *Theophania* version originally meant *When Pilate crucified him*; this corresponds, by and large, to the signification of the Syriac words, which mean literally *When Pilate put a cross in his head*.

Rendering of Michael's Text

The writer Josephus also says in his work on the institutions of the Jews: In these times there was a wise man named Jesus, if it is fitting for us to call him a man. For he was a worker of glorious¹⁰⁷ deeds and a teacher of truth.¹⁰⁸ Many from among the Jews and the nations became his disciples. He was thought to be the Messiah.¹⁰⁹ But not¹¹⁰ according to the testimony of the principal [men] of [our] nation. Because of this, Pilate condemned him to the cross, and he died. For those who had loved him did not cease to love him. He appeared to them alive after three days. For the prophets of God had spoken with regard to him of such marvellous things [as these¹¹¹]. And the people of the Christians, named after him, has not disappeared till [this] day.

107 Or: *praiseworthy*; or: *fine*.

108 One is tempted to believe that the original wording corresponded to that of Eusebius' version: *a teacher of men [i.e.] of those who receive truth with desire*. On this supposition Michael's phrase as given in the

Rendering of the Syriac Translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica*

For he [Josephus] also speaks thus in the book of his History¹¹² about our Saviour: In that time there was one wise man named Jesus — if [indeed] it is fitting to call him a man. For he was a worker of glorious¹¹³ deeds and a teacher of men: [that is] of those who accept truth with desire. And he turned many of the Jews and likewise many from among the other nations into his disciples. For he was the Messiah. [But] upon the testimony¹¹⁴ of the principal men of our nation, Pilate condemned him to the cross. Those who had loved him did not cease to love him. For he appeared to them alive again after three days. For the prophets of God had spoken with regard to him of this and myriads of other marvellous things of this [kind]. And the people of the Christians, named after him, has not disappeared till our day.

In a comparison of the two Syriac versions with which we are more particularly concerned, that of Michael and that of the Syriac translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica* (a third one being the recension that occurs in the Syriac version of Eusebius' *Theophania*¹¹⁵), one fact stands out very clearly: as far as the greater part of the text is concerned, these versions are very similar and reflect the same translation. This is indicated not only by the use of the same wording in sentences that render literally the Greek vulgate recension, but also by the use of the

MS could, perhaps, have been due to the probably accidental omission of a few words.

- 109 The sentence may also be translated *Perhaps he was the Messiah*.
- 110 *law*. This seems to have been the reading in the text known to Michael. It is also found in one of the MSS of the Syriac translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, instead of *leh*, which perhaps is the correct reading. See the translation of the Testimonium according to the Syriac text of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*.
- 111 Probably Michael had before him the Syriac text of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* as quoted above. The omission of the words הלין ורבו from the MS of Michael is probably due to scribal negligence.
- 112 Literally: *in the book of his narrative* – כתבא דתשעיתה. In the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* Josephus' *Antiquitates* are referred to by this name or are simply designated as תשעיתה; for the latter designation, see: *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius in Syriac*, p. 43, l. 5, which corresponds to the quotation in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 9:2. כתבא דתשעיתה occurs on p. 45, l. 7, which parallels the quotation in the Greek *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 9:4. *Bellum Judaicum* is referred to in *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius in Syriac*, p. 27, l. 20 (corresponding to the quotation in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 5:6) as תשעיתה דקרבא דיהודיא. On p. 40, l. 11 (corresponding to *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 8:9), *Bellum Judaicum* is possibly referred to as תשעיתה אחרניתא. On p. 27, ll. 2–3, the words סליוס יוסיפוס גברא ידיעא מן מכתבונא דתשעיתה דהות בית עברא render $\delta \tau\omega\nu \pi\alpha\rho'$ 'Εβραίοις ἐπιστημύτατος ἱστοροκῶν (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 5:3).
- 113 Or: *praiseworthy*; or: *fine*.
- 114 See n. 110 to the corresponding phrase in Michael's version.
- 115 See above, n. 106.

same expression in three cases in which the rendering is not quite literal and, an even stronger argument, by the fact that in one sentence both versions deviate in exactly the same manner from this vulgate recension.

The instances of a not quite literal translation occur in:

1. The third sentence of the Testimonium, in which both Syriac versions translate ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ – מן עממא – *from the nations*.

2. The fifth sentence, in which the Syriac versions translate παρ' ἡμῶν – דעמא, or דעמן – *of the nation, or of our nation*.

3. The last sentence, in which εἰς ἔτι τε νῦν is rendered עד מא ליומנא, or עד מא ליומא – *till our day, or till [this] day*.

It may, of course, be argued that in the first and second case a literal translation might have been slightly awkward, and that in the third literalness is almost preserved. However, we shall see later that two of these slight divergencies from the Greek vulgate may carry some significance.

A substantive deviation from the Greek vulgate found in the two Syriac versions occurs in the sentence והגון דין ¹¹⁶ דאחכוהי – לא שליו מן חובה – *For* ¹¹⁷ *those who had loved him did not cease to love him*. As far as I know, the words מן חובה (translated above *to love him*) or their equivalent occur in no other version of the Testimonium.

As against this, three points of divergence between the two Syriac versions should be mentioned:¹¹⁸

1. In the second sentence of the Testimonium, Michael's text reads ומלפנא דשררא – *a teacher of truth*, whereas Eusebius' text reads ומלפנא דבני אנשא הגון דברגתא מקבלין לה לשררא – *a teacher of men, [i.e.] of those who accept truth with desire*. As has been indicated above, this divergence may be due to the omission by

116 This word appears only in Michael's version,

117 This word occurs only in Michael's version.

118 Other points of divergence between the two versions are too slight and unimportant to be listed in connection with our enquiry.

a scribe of a number of words, but since it is paralleled in a Greek Byzantine version, it may also indicate a different tradition.

Even in the latter case, the divergence does not seem to be due to a different view of the historical facts or to doctrinal differences. The two other points of divergence to which we shall refer are of greater significance.

2. The fourth sentence of the Testimonium as given by Michael reads מסתברא דמשיחא איתו הוא – *He was thought (or: He seemed) to be the Messiah*. In the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* the sentence reads משיחא דין איתוהי הנא – *For he was the Messiah*. Michael's version mentions that some people thought that Jesus was the Christ, but does not commit the author. No pronouncement is made as to the truth of this belief. In Eusebius' version, on the other hand, Jesus' Messiahship is asserted to be a fact.

3. In Michael's version the last part of the fifth sentence reads: ומית¹¹⁹ דצליבא ברישא למסם – *Pilate condemned him to the cross and he died*. Eusebius' version does not have the word ומית – *and he died*; it agrees on this point with the Greek vulgate. Both the statement that Jesus died on the cross and the failure to make such a statement may quite evidently be due to theological reasons and have theological implications.

Various hypotheses may be brought forward in order to account for the existence of the divergences 2 and 3. One may suppose that the Syriac translation of Eusebius' version of the Testimonium as it is known to us has at some time been brought into line with the Greek text of Eusebius, having been originally different, and that Michael's version reflects the original text. One may mention in this connection A. Merx's view that *the Greek original of the Syriac version was the earliest recension [of the Historia Ecclesiastica], afterwards to some extent modified and*

119 The reading ברישא למסם is made quite certain by a comparison with the Syriac *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

so brought into the form which is now preserved in the Greek manuscripts.¹²⁰ Or one may suppose — and this may, *prima facie*, be a more plausible hypothesis — that Michael's version, which mostly agrees with, and appears to be derived from, the recension of the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, has been contaminated by some other recension, which occurred in another source.

One can also envisage a third — in my opinion, a very unlikely — hypothesis, according to which divergencies 2 and 3 between Michael's version and that of the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* are due to the former text's having been tampered with for doctrinal reasons, or in order to lend colour to the claim that Josephus is the author of the Testimonium. To my mind it is very improbable that a Syriac author of the period extending from the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century (when Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* was translated into Syriac) to the twelfth century (when Michael lived) should for vague, presumably doctrinal, reasons have inserted into the Testimonium the word *ומית* — *and he died*. It is perhaps even more unlikely that this hypothetical Syriac author should have modified the uncompromising assertion of Jesus' Messiahship found in the vulgate of the Testimonium, because this assertion might not be in keeping with the fact that Josephus was a Jew, and might therefore lead to a doubt concerning Josephus' authorship of the Testimonium. As far as we know, Josephus' authorship of this document was not questioned in the Syriac milieu during this period; there was accordingly no reason to buttress his claim by modifying the text. A philological, and therefore perhaps a more telling, argument may also be drawn from St. Jerome's Latin version (see below, p. 40).

120 Given in his 'Notes on the Armenian version', published in the edition of the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* by Wright and McLean, p. xvii.

Before we go into this, we shall compare, in part, Michael's Syriac version of the Testimonium with Agapius' Arabic recension. We have referred above to two points (divergencies 2 and 3) on which there seem to be significant differences between Michael's text and the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. On both these points, the Syriac text of which Agapius' version is a translation appears (though perhaps not at the first glance) to have been similar to, or identical with, Michael's text.¹²¹

1. Michael's text reads **מסתברא דמשיחא איתו הוא** – *He was thought to be the Messiah*; there is another possible translation: *It seemed that he was the Messiah*, for **מסתברא** may mean *it seemed*.¹²²

Agapius' text reads *fa-la'alla huwa al-masīḥ* – *Accordingly*¹²³ *he was perhaps the Messiah*.¹²⁴ The meaning of this sentence approximates closely to that of the Syriac sentence if the second rendering is adopted.

There is, in my opinion, a distinct possibility that whoever translated the Testimonium from the Syriac into Arabic, be it Agapius himself or somebody else, found in the Syriac text a phrase identical with, or very close to, Michael's phrase quoted above, and that he rendered **מסתברא** by *la'alla* – *perhaps*.

2. Michael's text reads: **יהבה פילטוס למסם ברישא דצליבא ומית** – *Pilate condemned him to the cross and he died*.

Agapius' parallel sentence reads: **وكان فيلاطس قضى عليه بالصلب والموت** – *Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die*.

121 It is similar both to Michael's version and to that of the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* in having in the third sentence of the Testimonium *from . . . the other nations* as compared with *τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ* of the vulgate recension.

122 See R. Payne-Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, s.v.

123 Or: *and*.

124 The reference to Jesus' Messiahship is placed in Agapius' version at the end of the Testimonium, whereas it occurs in all the other versions, including Michael's, in the middle of the text; on this point, see below, n. 145.

Thus, both Syriac and Arabic recensions contain, contrary to other versions,¹²⁵ an explicit reference to Jesus' death. The difference between them may be due to a mistranslation of the Syriac text reflected in Agapius' phrase.

There can be no certainty, but the following conjecture seems to be rather probable and to involve only a minimal alteration of the text. We may suppose that the Arabic translator read, presumably because of a scribal error, **יהבה פילטוס למסם ברישא** (instead of **מית**); this could be rendered *Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die*,¹²⁶ which is the sentence found in Agapius.

This reconstitution is based on Michael's text, as the statement in Agapius' version, according to which Jesus was condemned both to be crucified and to die, seems not only to run counter to all the traditional formulations of the sentence pronounced by Pilate, but also to be redundant.

Michael's text, on the other hand, mentions a circumstance that is essential to the understanding of the story, but is only alluded to by implication in the Greek vulgate, for *ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς . . . πάλιν ζῶν* – . . . *he appeared to them restored to life* certainly implies that Jesus had died; but, as far as I know, Agapius' recension is the only one in which the fact is stated explicitly.¹²⁷

I repeat that this reconstruction is by no means certain, never-

125 Except the recension of the so-called Egesippus' Latin version, which, however, refers to it in a sentence that occurs in the Testimonium after the one with which we are dealing.

126 The fact that the form **מות** is of rare occurrence (the usual form being **מותא**) would not, of course, be a reason for a translator, who thought that he encountered it in a text, to forgo rendering it in Arabic.

127 There is a reference to it (which does not amount to a direct statement) in the so-called Egesippus' Latin version (see above, n. 125, and below, n. 156). An explicit statement that Jesus died may have been included in the original Testimonium (whatever the latter's origin and exact wording may have been), for without it the reference to his appearing restored to life is so abrupt as to be almost unintelligible.

theless it seems worthwhile translating Agapius' recension modified in the light of Michael's version:¹²⁸ *Similarly Josephus the Hebrew. For he says in the treatises that he has written on the governance of the Jews: At this time there was a man who was called Jesus. His conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous.*¹²⁹ *And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified, and he died.*¹³⁰ *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 thought*¹³¹ *to be the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have related wonders.*

Despite the noteworthy points of resemblance between Michael's Syriac version of the Testimonium and Agapius' Arabic recension, the two cannot be regarded as being two specimens of the same recension. Not all of the differences between the two can be regarded as scribal errors or minor variations, habitually produced by transposition from one language to another or by other causes; some of these differences are very significant indeed. I shall note four divergencies of varying degrees of importance.

1. In the first sentence of the Testimonium, Agapius omits the words found in Michael's version in the Greek vulgate and in other recensions *if it is fitting to call him a man*. This may be an omission due to scribal negligence, but this is by no means certain. *Pace* Eisler,¹³² the words in question certainly suggest

128 Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that this rendering aims at reconstructing some passages of the Syriac text translated by Agapius into Arabic. See also the notes to our first translation of Agapius' text.

129 Or: *His conduct was good and his learning was outstanding.*

130 The translation has been modified in accordance with Michael's version.

131 Or: *It seemed that he was the Messiah.* The translation conforms to Michael's version, which may have been in agreement on this point with Agapius' Syriac source.

132 *Op. cit.*, pp. 55 ff.

that the author of the phrase tended to believe that Jesus transcended ordinary humanity, whereas the author of Agapius' recension gives no indication in any passage of the Testimonium that he personally was inclined to favour such a view.

2. In the second sentence there is the following difference:

Agapius' Text

And his conduct was good and he was known to be virtuous.

Or, according to al-Makin's quotation:

And his conduct was good and his learning was outstanding.

Michael's Version

For he was a worker of glorious deeds and a teacher of truth

which may be¹³³ a somewhat abridged version of that of the Syriac text of Eusebius.

The words *and his conduct was good* – *wa-kānat lahu sīra ḥasana* might be interpreted — though perhaps not very convincingly — as not being essentially very different from the Syriac words *איתוהי הוא גיר סעורא דעבדא שביחא*, which may be translated not as above, but *for he was a worker of fine deeds*.¹³⁴ Indeed, it might be argued (though the contention does not seem to be very probable) that the Arabic words in question are a free paraphrase of the Syriac text. There can, however, be no doubt that whereas the words *איתוהי הוא גיר סעורא דעבדא שביחא*, like the parallel Greek ¹³⁵ *παράδοξων* ¹³⁶ *ἔργων ποιήτης*, possibly refer to

133 This is not certain.

134 The rendering of the phrase in the Syriac version of the Testimonium occurring in the *Theophania* is — in contradistinction to the versions of the Syriac translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica* and of Michael — quite unequivocal. It has *הוא גיר עבוד דסוערנה דתדמורתא* – *for he was a doer of marvellous deeds*.

135 The Syriac words do not render with any accuracy the connotation of the Greek text.

136 Cf. H. G. Liddell & R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford 1961, s.v.; Eisler, pp. 61 ff. In Luke v:2, *παράδοξα* appears to denote a miracle. It is an interesting fact that Celsus, quoted by Origen (*Contra*

extraordinary deeds performed by Jesus, the Arabic words quoted above cannot have this meaning. They do not in any way connote marvellous or even unusual conduct or deeds. The last words in Agapius' version of the second sentence have even greater significance if they are compared with the parallel words in Michael's version.

Michael's text reads: *and he was . . . a teacher of truth* – ומלפנא דשררא. In other words, the author of the Testimonium recognized, according to this recension, the teaching of Jesus as the truth.¹³⁷ As against this, the parallel words in Agapius' version do not imply in any way an acceptance of the Christian position — indeed, there is no passage in this version that expresses a sentiment of solidarity on the part of the author with the Christian point of view. The words in question merely add another particular to the low-key characteristic of Jesus' praiseworthy qualities, the first part of which we have already discussed: *and he was known to be virtuous* – *wa-'ulima annahu fādil*.¹³⁸

3. Contrary to Michael's version and to most, or all, others, Agapius' recension does not refer in its fourth sentence (or anywhere else) to the part played by the principal men among the Jews in Pilate's condemnation of Jesus. This is perhaps an omission due to scribal negligence, but it might also be a trait that characterized this recension from the beginning.

Celsum, I, 6: 17–18), asserts that Jesus *was able to work by magic the παράδοξα that he seemed to perform* – ὡς γοητεία δυναθέντος ἃ ἔδοξε παράδοξα πεποιημένα. The expression παράδοξα πεποιημένα applied to Jesus is reminiscent of the words παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής in the vulgate recension of the Testimonium.

137 This is also presupposed in the Syriac version of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which reads *he was . . . a teacher of men who accept truth with desire*, as well as in the Greek vulgate recension διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τὰληθῆ δεχομένων.

138 Or, as in al-Makīns' variant, *his learning was outstanding* – *wa-'ilm fādil*.

4. The fifth sentence of Agapius' recension of the Testimonium reads: *They [the disciples] reported that he appeared to them three days after the crucifixion – dhakarū annahu zahara lahum ba'da thalāthat ayyām min ṣalbihi.*

Thus, in contradistinction to Michael's version and to all others,¹³⁹ Jesus' appearance after the crucifixion is referred to in Agapius' recension as a matter of report and not as an indubitable fact. In this case, too, the author of this recension does not commit himself and state his own opinion as to the truth of the matter.

Another much less significant detail pertaining to this sentence should also be mentioned. In referring to the date of Jesus' appearance to his disciples, Michael and the Syriac recension of *Historia Ecclesiastica* employ the words *after three days*.¹⁴⁰ Agapius' text reads: *three days after his crucifixion*. This wording is much clearer, and the divergency may have resulted from an attempt by whoever translated the sentence from the Syriac into Arabic to avoid vagueness. However, this is not certain, and it may be relevant to observe that Egesippus uses a somewhat similar phrase (see below, n. 156).

5. It has been suggested above that the last sentence of Agapius' recension has a point of similarity with the parallel sentence in Michael's version, and that its translation should be modified in one particular because of the pointer provided by the latter version as to the original Syriac text of Agapius' Arabic sentence. Nevertheless, the divergency between this sentence and the one

139 Except some of those that have been proposed by modern scholars, who have altered the text of the Testimonium according to their own idea of what was probable. Müller, for instance, remarks: *Die logische Disposition macht es wahrscheinlich, dass Josephus schrieb: sie blieben ihm treu, denn sie gaben vor, Jesus sei ihnen am dritten Tag aufs neue lebend erschienen, wie die Propheten es vorhergesagt*; see G. A. Müller, *Christus bei Josephus Flavius*, Innsbruck 1895, p. 142 (quoted by Eisler, p. 78).

140 The Greek vulgate version reads *τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν*.

that corresponds to it in Michael's Syriac version¹⁴¹ is of considerable interest.

Agapius' sentence reads: *accordingly*¹⁴² *he was perhaps* [or: *he was thought to be*¹⁴³] *the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders – fa-la'allahu al-masih allādhī qālat 'anhu al-anbiyā' al-'aja'ib*. This one sentence at the end of Agapius' recension corresponds to two sentences, one in the middle and one near the end, in Michael's and other recensions (that of the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the Greek vulgate, and so on).

These two sentences are:

1. *He was thought to be the Messiah* (the fourth sentence in Michael's and St. Jerome's versions); or: *He was the Messiah* (the fourth sentence in other versions).

2. *For the prophets of God had spoken with regard to him of such marvellous things [as these]* (ninth sentence in Michael's version); or: *For the prophets of God had prophesied these and myriads of other marvellous [things] about him* (seventh sentence in the Greek vulgate and other recensions).

This one-to-two correspondence obviously calls for an explanation. As far as I can see, two alternative solutions may be envisaged:

a. The last sentence in Agapius' recension is the result of the amalgamation at some period of the two sentences quoted above, which correspond to it.

b. The sentence in Agapius' recension (or a sentence that in essentials was similar to it) was part of the original, or at least

141 The sentence in question in Michael's version has the word מִסְתַּבְּרָא, rendered above as [*he was*] *thought*. With regard to other particulars, which will now be discussed, it is close to, though not quite identical with, the Syriac text of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the Greek vulgate and other recensions.

142 Or: *And*.

143 As stated above (p. 31), this change in the translation, which probably would have been validated by the lost Syriac text of this recension, has been made in the light of Michael's version.

of an early, text of the Testimonium,¹⁴⁴ that is, a text that antedated the Greek vulgate recension. Either deliberately or by some accident the sentence was dismembered, and one of its parts shifted towards the middle of the Testimonium.

On purely textual grounds, the second explanation seems to be the more probable one. There is no difficulty in imagining a way in which Agapius' sentences could have been divided into two phrases, one of which was displaced. On the other hand, the first explanation supposes that two wholly separate sentences occurring in different parts of the Testimonium were smoothly and meaningfully amalgamated so as to produce the lucid and syntactically unexceptionable sentence that concludes Agapius' recension. I find it very difficult to conceive that this was what happened.¹⁴⁵ However, no final answer can be given.

144 The question whether Josephus was the author of the Testimonium is not involved. An original text of the Testimonium may be supposed to have existed, even if we are dealing with a literary forgery.

145 Another line of reasoning, suggested by D. Flusser, which appears to lead likewise to the second conclusion outlined above, is predicated upon the assumption that Agapius' recension of the Testimonium originally had a last sentence corresponding to that of most other versions. As we know, the sentence in question in Michael's vulgate text may be rendered: *And the people of the Christians, named after him, has not disappeared till [this] day.* This assumption seems to me to be very probable. The supposition that this sentence was, by accident or for some unknown reason, omitted in Agapius' recension presents no difficulties. On the other hand, if the lack of this sentence in Agapius' recension is regarded as going back to the original text of the Testimonium, this means that at least in this particular case this recension is considered as having preserved the original text, free from a later interpolation. On this hypothesis the sentence in question must be regarded as having been added deliberately, in order to lend an air of authenticity to the Testimonium.

Let us assume that the sentence in question belongs to the original text, and add it at the end of Agapius' recension. In that case the last two sentences of this recension would read: *Accordingly he was perhaps [or: he was thought to be] the Messiah [χριστός], concerning whom the prophets have related wonders. And the people of the Christians, named*

Incidentally, it may be noted that the last sentence in Agapius' recension refers to the prophets speaking about the Messiah. It does not explicitly assert that they spoke about Jesus, but merely states in this context that Jesus was *perhaps* (or as we conjectured: *was thought to be*) the Messiah. The corresponding sentence in the other recensions contains the unequivocal statement that the prophets prophesied about Jesus.

The various points with which we have been dealing — i.e. the points of difference and of resemblance between Agapius' recension and that of Michael, and notably the fact that the former takes up a non-committal position both with regard to Jesus' Messiahship and to his having appeared after the crucifixion to his disciples, whereas the latter takes up such a position only with regard to the first of these points — seem¹⁴⁶ to fit in with one of the hypotheses mentioned above, namely, that which postulates the existence in Syriac of at least three very different recensions of the Testimonium:

1. The Syriac recension of Eusebius' *Theophania*, which does not seem to have a direct relation to the other Syriac versions under discussion.
2. The Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which, in spite of its divergence from the version of the *Theophania*, represents, by and large, like the latter, the Greek vulgate recension.
3. The Syriac original of the version of Agapius.

after him, has not disappeared till [this] day. In this reconstructed text, the explanation of the name of the Christians follows immediately upon the reference to Christ. In the other recensions they are separated by several sentences, as the term *χριστός* is mentioned in the middle of the Testimonium. This, of course, is an argument in favour of the reconstructed text. In consequence, it strengthens the case for what was called above the second explanation.

146 Especially if one takes into account the close relation between Michael's recension and that of the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

According to this hypothesis Michael's version is the result of a contamination of the former by the latter.

As far as I can see, this hypothesis has fewer obvious flaws than any of the others concerned with the same facts. However, it may perhaps be questioned in the light of St. Jerome's Latin version of the Testimonium. This version, which occurs in *De Viris Illustribus*, XIII,¹⁴⁷ reads as follows: *Scrispsit*¹⁴⁸ *autem de domino in hunc modum: 'Eodem tempore fuit Jesus vir sapiens, si tamen virum oportet eum dicere. Erat enim mirabilium patrator operum et doctor eorum qui libenter vera suscipiunt. Plurimos quoque tamen de Judaeis quam de gentibus sui habuit sectatores et credebatur esse Christus. Cumque invidia nostrorum principum cruci eum Pilatus addixisset, nihilominus qui eum primum dilexerant, perseveraverunt in fide.*¹⁴⁹ *Apparuit enim eis tertia die vivens, haec et multa alia mirabilia carminibus prophetarum de eo vaticinantibus. Et usque hodie Christianorum gens ab hoc sortita vocabulum non deficit.*

On some points this version comes closer to Michael's recension, and to a lesser degree to two other Eastern recensions we have been discussing — namely, that of the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* and that of Agapius — than to the Greek recension. The points of similarity are:

1. In the third sentence of his recension St. Jerome has *de gentibus*, whereas the Greek vulgate recension has *τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ*. The Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*,

147 The efficiency of the Christian censorship, which almost succeeded in getting rid of all the versions of the Testimonium that differed in a significant manner from the vulgate recension, is illustrated by the fact that the Greek translation of *De Viris Illustribus* contains this vulgate recension; none of the traits in which St. Jerome diverges from it have been retained; see O. von Gebhardt, 'Hieronymus — De Viris Industrius in griechischer Übersetzung', *Texte und Untersuchungen*, XIV, Leipzig 1896.

148 Josephus.

149 *In fide* is not found in all the MSS.

Michael and Agapius use expressions that mean *from the nations*, or *from the other nations*, i.e. correspond to *de gentibus*.¹⁵⁰ But this resemblance may possibly be due to the awkwardness of a literal translation of τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ into Syriac or into Latin.¹⁵¹ However, the recension of the Syriac *Theophania* shows that another translation was possible, namely, מן הנפא – *from the pagans*. In the period with which we are dealing, Ἕλληνες, Ἑλληνικόν and so on usually denoted pagans.

2. In the same sentence St. Jerome has *sui habuit sectatores*, which corresponds to the vulgate Greek ἐπηγάγετο. The meaning of the two expressions does not differ appreciably, and St. Jerome may have merely given a free rendering of the Greek verb. However, his wording gains a certain significance in view of the fact that the parallel expression in the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* is almost equivalent to the one he uses: תלמד הוא – *he turned into his disciples*. Michael apparently has the passive form תלמדו – *became his disciples*; *tatalmadha lahu*, used by Agapius, has the same meaning. The Syriac *Theophania* has כנש. In contradistinction to the other translation quoted here, this seems to be an attempt (albeit a not very successfully one) accurately to render the Greek ἐπηγάγετο.

3. Likewise, in the third sentence of his recension St. Jerome has *credebatur esse Christus*, whereas the Greek vulgate recension has ὁ χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν. *Credebatur* corresponds to מסתברא in Michael's text; as we have seen, *la'alla* in Agapius is in all probability a not very felicitous translation of the somewhat ambiguous Syriac word.

150 The text of the so-called Egesippus (II, 12) reads *gentilium plurimi*.

151 To quote but one example, St. Jerome, in *De Viris Illustribus*, XXIX, translates the title of Tatian's work πρὸς Ἕλληνας (usually known as *Oratio ad Graecos*) as *Contra Gentes*.

4. In the last sentence of his recension St. Jerome has *usque hodie*, whereas the Greek vulgate recension has *εἰς ἔτι τε νῦν*.¹⁵² The Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* and Michael¹⁵³ have *till our day* or *till this day*, which corresponds to *usque hodie*. Both in Latin and in Syriac it is possible to translate the Greek expression without referring to *this day* or to *our day*. As far as Syriac is concerned, this may be illustrated by the rendering of this sentence in the *Theophania*.

Of these four points only the third is intrinsically significant. But the three taken in conjunction tend to suggest that Michael's recension, attested in the twelfth century, forms a sort of counterpart to what has been described as St. Jerome's 'sceptical'¹⁵⁴ version.

As St. Jerome's Latin version could not have influenced Michael's text, this resemblance¹⁵⁵ might indicate that both, in spite of their differences, are, in the last analysis, derived from the same Greek (or, less probably, Aramaic) recension.¹⁵⁶ This supposition would, of course, be, *inter alia*,

152 There are several variants, but none of them comes close to the expression used in St. Jerome's recension.

153 In Agapius' recension the corresponding sentence is missing.

154 The adjective is not quite appropriate. As has been pointed out, the position of this version with regard to Jesus' Messiahship is non-committal.

155 One should not, however, lose sight of the differences between the two recensions; cf., for instance, St. Jerome's phrase *Cumque invidia nostrorum principum cruci eum Pilatus addixisset* with the corresponding passage in Michael's recension.

156 It is a curious fact that another relatively early Latin version of the Testimonium — that of the so-called Egesippus — has points of resemblance to Michael's and Agapius' recensions. We have seen that the first of these recensions indubitably states that Jesus died, and that Agapius' recension should probably be emended so as to include this statement, which is missing in other recensions. Egesippus' recension does not contain an express statement on this point, but it does refer explicitly to Jesus' death: *qui apparuerit discipulis suis post triduum mortis vivens iterum* (II, 12). The form of the expression *post triduum*

tantamount to a rejection of the notion put forward by Tannéguay Lefèvre, H. K. A. Eichstadt, E. Norden, A. Goethals and H. S. J. Thackeray,¹⁵⁷ that the verb *credebatur* in the phrase *credebatur esse Christus* was added by St. Jerome himself with a view to rendering somewhat less improbable Josephus' proclaimed authorship¹⁵⁸ of the Testimonium as found in the Greek vulgate recension; to this extent St. Jerome's version would be rehabilitated.

As we have seen, the hypothesis that Michael's recension is, by and large, the result of a contamination of the vulgate recension of the Testimonium with Agapius' recension has much to recommend it. It cannot, however (or at least not without some elaboration), account for the fact, pointed out above, that St. Jerome's version is closer to Michael's than to Agapius'. Can we accordingly draw the conclusion that Michael's version reflects more accurately than Agapius' the hypothetical original text of the recension in question? In the context of our discussion the most significant differences between the two are found in the first two sentences of the Testimonium and in the sentence concerning the appearance after the crucifixion: as we have seen, Agapius' text states that they (i.e. the disciples) reported that he had appeared, i.e. the author does not affirm that this appearance really did happen; the text is non-committal. In Michael's recension the word *reported* – *dhakarū* does not occur.

As there is a close connection between Agapius' version and Michael's, the resemblance between the latter and St. Jerome's text might, if one tried out all possible solutions, lead to the

mortis is reminiscent of the corresponding phrase in Agapius' recension: *Ba'da thalāthat ayyām min ṣalbihi* – *three days after his crucifixion* (literally: *after three days from his crucifixion*). The Greek vulgate recension reads *τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν*; the Syriac translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica* and Michael read *מן בתר תלתא יומין* – *after three days*.

157 See Eisler, p. 68, n. 2.

158 Which the above-mentioned scholars do not believe in.

conclusion that the distinctive traits of Agapius' version might have been produced in the Syriac or Arabic period. However, during this period the Testimonium was being transmitted by Christian historiographers. Agapius and also, as far as we can judge, his sources accept in a very devout spirit all the legendary stories concerning the life of Jesus. To me it is inconceivable that he or they could of their own accord have added the sceptical or non-committal note represented by the word *reported*, or weakened the references to Jesus' extraordinary qualities and actions occurring in the first two sentences of the vulgate recension. They must have found the distinctive characteristics of Agapius' recension in the text of the Testimonium handed down to them.

Possibly, both St. Jerome's and Michael's recensions are the result of the contamination in varying degrees of the vulgate text of the Testimonium with the non-committal text represented by Agapius' version. There might also be other, even more complicated, solutions. But all this is mere guesswork. One point is, however, certain. As far as the enquiry concerning the original text of the Testimonium is concerned, the importance of what used to be regarded as St. Jerome's freak recension and of the Oriental recensions, that of Agapius and that of Michael, is enhanced by their points of resemblance.¹⁵⁹

From what work of Josephus is the Testimonium as quoted by Agapius supposed to be extracted and what were the intermediate links, if any, in the chain of transmission? The first question has been touched upon in a note above, but certain of its aspects have not yet been examined. As we know, the vulgate Greek text occurs in Josephus' *Antiquitates*, XVIII, 63-64; it also appears in some MSS of *Bellum Judaicum*. In theory, at least, the possibility that it was found in other lost or

159 It has already been noted that there can be no question of St. Jerome's Latin text having influenced these Oriental recensions.

apocryphal works of Josephus cannot be rejected out of hand.

We have seen that according to the MS of Agapius the Testimonium is extracted from a work of Josephus referred to as his treatises, written about *the evil of the Jews—sharr al-Yahūd*. *Sharr – evil* is clearly corrupt and should be emended. Vasiliev translates¹⁶⁰ *les guerres des Juifs*; apparently he emended *sharr* to *hurūb*. If accepted, this might mean that the Testimonium is said by Agapius to be extracted from Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*. However, this emendation is, to my mind, unacceptable for two reasons, one of which carries much less weight than the other. This subsidiary argument depends on the fact that Josephus' historical work *Bellum Judaicum* does not seem to be known to Agapius under this name. He refers to it¹⁶¹ as *the book that he [Josephus] wrote about the destruction of Jerusalem – 'alā kharāb Ūrshalīm*.¹⁶² The main argument, part of which has been already set forth above, is more complex and seems to me to show very clearly that on the balance of possibilities the corrupt title of a work of Josephus mentioned

160 *Op. cit.*, p. 471; see above, n. 15.

161 See ed. Cheikho, p. 254.

162 This name is to some extent reminiscent of the titles: τῆς Ἰουδαϊκῆς ἀλώσεως—*Of Jewish Captivity*; περὶ ἀλώσεως Ἰουδαίας καὶ τῆς μεγάλης πόλεως—*About the Captivity of Judah and of the Great City*; Ἰουδαϊκῆς ἱστορίας περὶ ἀλώσεως—*Of Jewish History about the Captivity*; see Niese's edition of *Bellum Judaicum*, pp. xiv–xv, xvii. It is even more reminiscent of the Latin superscription, *Judaicae Historiae de Destructione*, found in a MS bearing the Greek title mentioned last (see Niese, *op. cit.*, p. xiv).

The title mentioned by Agapius is, by and large, identical with that of the so-called Egesippus' Latin adaptation of Josephus' work, namely, *De Excidio Jerusalem (On the Destruction of Jerusalem)*; there are also minor variants of this Latin title. The title of the Old Russian translation of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* probably belongs to the same tradition as the Greek titles mentioned above; see N. A. Meščerskiy, *Istoriya Yudeyskoy Voyny v Drevnerusskom Perevode*, Moscow–Leningrad 1958, p. 36; p. 37, n. 45.

by Agapius in the introduction to the Testimonium refers to Josephus' *Antiquitates*. The argument is based on the following considerations:

1. In another passage of Agapius, which will be presently quoted and which unmistakably refers to Josephus' *Antiquitates*, the first two words of the title¹⁶³ of this work are *tadbīr al-Yahūd* – *governance of the Jews*.

2. The corruption of *tadbīr* to *sharr* (in the title *sharr al-Yahūd* in Agapius' introduction to the Testimonium) is graphically conceivable.

3. According to Michael's Syriac version of the Testimonium, which, as we have seen, has some sort of connection with Agapius' version, the quotation is said to be extracted from a work of Josephus entitled דוברא דיודיא (rendered above *Institution*, or *Institutions, of the Jews*). As has been noted, the word is very obviously derived from the same verbal root as the Arabic *tadbīr*. The latter word may very easily be supposed to have been used to translate דוברא. The conclusion to be drawn from the last two points is that *sharr al-Yahūd* in Agapius' MS should probably be emended to *tadbīr al-Yahūd*.

The passage of Agapius referred to in consideration (1) reads as follows: *When the Romans were [about to] conquer Jerusalem, Josephus exhorted his people before the destruction (kharāb) of Jerusalem, saying to them: 'Submit to the Romans and give obedience¹⁶⁴ to their kings. You will [then] praise your future state of [affairs].' [The Jews] despised and reviled him [so much] that they tried many times to strike him, and they cast stones at him. The Romans were informed with reference to him of these [happenings]. When they got hold of him, they gave him a post¹⁶⁵ at the king's gate. He then composed twenty books on the*

163 Or: description of the contents.

164 Literally: *enter into the obedience*.

165 The translation is not quite certain. The Arabic word is *alzamūhu*; literally: *attached*.

governance of the Jews [tadbīr al-Yahūd], their migration¹⁶⁶ and their high priests, and about the wars of the Romans and their capture [ghazw] of Jerusalem. Sixty-two letters of Agrippa [Gh.rifūs] were in existence; in these he praised Josephus' works, great knowledge and [excellent] execution. After his [Josephus'] death the Romans erected in his honour a statue in Rome.¹⁶⁷

The brief mention of the exhortations of Josephus and the reactions of the Jews to them in this passage corresponds to *Bellum Judaicum*, V, 114, 261, 361–420, 541–547; VI, 94–112, 118, 129, 365. However, Agapius makes a mistake: the remonstrances of Josephus were made after his surrender to the Romans, and Agapius places them, as we have seen, before Josephus' capture.

The last portion of the passage bears to some extent upon our enquiry. The reference to Agrippa's letters corresponds to Josephus' *Vita*, 364–367, and also to a passage in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 9. According to Eusebius, these letters are referred to at the end of the *Antiquitates*. In the same chapter Eusebius mentions the erection of a statue in Rome in honour of Josephus and also the fact that the *Antiquitates* are divided into twenty books.¹⁶⁸ In fact, this chapter of Eusebius might be regarded as by and large the only source of the last portion of Agapius, provided that the reference to the work '*Alā tadbīr al-Yahūd* is not taken into account. For convenience's sake it is repeated here: *He then composed twenty books on the governance of the Jews [tadbīr al-Yahūd], their migration¹⁶⁹ and their high priests and about the wars of the Romans and their capture [ghazw] of Jerusalem.* This may be compared with the brief reference in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 9, which

166 Or: *transmitters of traditions* – *n.q.la*. If the word is emended to *naql*, it might be rendered *tradition, narration*.

167 Agapius, ed. Cheikho, pp. 254–255. It has been partly translated above.

168 This fact could, of course, be ascertained by whoever had access to the full text of the work as we know it.

169 Or: *transmitter of tradition*; or: *tradition*.

reads in the Syriac translation¹⁷⁰ as follows: והו הנא כלה שרבא ותשעיתא דקרבא דרהומיא דהוא ביומתה קדמיא דיהודיא בעסרין ספרין סמה. ותשעיתא דקרבא דרהומיא דהוא ביומתה כשבעא – *He [Josephus] compiled the whole ancient history of the Jews in twenty books, and the story of the wars of the Romans, which occurred in his days, in seven.*

Another relevant passage occurs at the beginning of Josephus' *Antiquitates*, I, 2: Ταύτην δὲ τὴν ἐνειῶσαν ἐγκεχείρισμαι πραγμάτειαν νομίζων ἅπασι φανεῖσθαι τοῖς Ἑλλησιν ἀξίαν σπουδῆς μέλλει γὰρ περιέξειν ἅπασαν παρ' ἡμῖν ἀρχαιολογίαν καὶ διάταξιν τοῦ πολιτεύματος ἐκ τῶν Ἑβραϊκῶν μεθηρμηγευμένην γραμμάτων. ἤδη μὲν οὖν καὶ πρότερον διανοήθην, ὅτε τὸν πόλεμον συνέγραφον δημῶσαι τίνες ὄντες ἐξ ἀρχῆς Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ τίσι χρησάμενοι τυχαῖς, ὅφ' οἴω τὲ παιδευθέντες νομοθέτῃ τὰ πρὸς εὐσέβειαν καὶ τῇν ἄλλην ἀσκησιν ἀρετῆς, πόσους τε πολέμους ἐν μακροῖς πολεμήσαντες χρόνοις εἰς τὸν τελευταῖον ἄκοντες πρὸς Ῥωμαίους κατέστησαν. ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ μείζων ἦν ἢ τοῦδε τοῦ λόγου περιβολή, καθ' αὐτὸν ἐκεῖνον χωρίσας ταῖς ἰδίαις ἀρχαῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ τέλει τὴν γραφὴν συνεμέτρησα.— *And now I have undertaken this present work in the belief that all the Greeks will find it worthy of attention; for it will embrace our entire ancient history and political constitution translated from the Hebrew records. I had, indeed, ere now, when writing the history of the war, already contemplated describing the origin of the Hebrews, the fortunes that befell them, the great lawgiver under whom they were trained in piety and the exercise of the other virtues,¹⁷¹ and all those wars waged by them during lengthy periods before this last, in which they were involuntarily engaged against the Romans. However, since the compass of such a*

170 Which in this case is on the whole quite accurate. The Greek original reads: οὗτος δὴ πᾶσαν τὴν Ἰουδαϊκὴν ἀρχαιολογίαν ἐν ὅλοις εἰκοσι κατατίθειται συγγράμμασιν, τὴν δ' ἱστορίαν τοῦ κατ' αὐτὸν Ῥωμαικοῦ πολέμου ἐν ἑπτα.

171 The Greek has the singular.

*theme was excessive, I made the war into a separate work with its own beginning and end, thus duly proportioning my work.*¹⁷²

The mention by Agapius of the fact that the work on *tadbīr al-Yahūd* consists of twenty books does not leave much room for doubt that Josephus' *Antiquitates* is meant. The question as to the ultimate sources of Agapius' description of this work remains, however, unresolved. The account in this work of the wars of the Romans and the capture of Jerusalem might possibly be derived from the first sentence in the Greek passage of Josephus' *Antiquitates*, that has just been quoted. Some excerpter might have paid no attention to the fact that in the sentence that follows, Josephus makes it clear that he decided to deal with the subjects he had in mind in two works rather than one, and that the ancient history and constitution of the Jews would not be set forth in the volume describing the Roman War and the final capture of Jerusalem.¹⁷³

The fact that the passage of Agapius refers to data concerning high priests found in Josephus' *Antiquitates*, whereas neither Josephus nor Eusebius refer to these data in their portrayal of this work, does not of itself permit a far-reaching conclusion, but it does suggest that Agapius' description does not entirely derive from these characteristics.

The most significant features of this description are:

1. It contains no clear reference to Josephus' *Antiquitates*, the Ἰουδαϊκὴ ἀρχαιολογία¹⁷⁴ (or, as the Syriac recension of *Historia Ecclesiastica* reads: שרבא קדמיא דיהודיא), i.e. the subject after which the work was called in most known sources. It is true that the word *n.q.la.* in the passage of Agapius, if emended to *naql*

172 Except for slight modifications, I have followed Thackeray's translation.

173 It is, however, likewise possible that the words under discussion in Agapius' passage refer to various wars of the Romans — including the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey — dealt with in Josephus' *Antiquitates*.

174 Or: παρ' ἡμῖν ἀρχαιολογίαν.

and interpreted as meaning *tradition*, might be regarded, though rather doubtfully, as reflecting ἀρχαιολογία. But even if this rather dubious supposition is accepted, the most conspicuous fact about Agapius' description of the *Antiquitates* is — and this is the second point I wish to make — that it is headed by the words 'alā tadbīr al-Yahūd, which look as if they were the title of the work. This impression is of course confirmed by the fact that Michael the Syrian refers to the work in which the Testimonium occurs as דּוּבְרָא דִּיּוּדֵיָא. As has been indicated, the Arabic *tadbīr* corresponds in our context to דּוּבְרָא and is quite certainly a translation of this Syriac term. As we have seen, there are also good grounds for emending the words 'alā sharr al-Yahūd, found in Agapius' MS, as the title of the work of Josephus from which the Testimonium is extracted to 'alā tadbīr al-Yahūd.¹⁷⁵

We are thus faced with a tradition in which Josephus' *Antiquitates* was called *On the Institutions of the Jews* or *On the Governance of the Jews*.

In my opinion, the Syriac דּוּבְרָא and the Arabic *tadbīr*, which renders it, have not been chosen arbitrarily to characterize and name this work of Josephus; in their various connotations these terms correspond fairly accurately to διάταξις, which is mentioned by Josephus in the passage quoted above,¹⁷⁶ where he sets forth the main themes of his *Antiquitates*. In this passage διάταξις τοῦ πολιτεύματος¹⁷⁷ follows immediately upon ἀρχαιολογία.

The tradition with regard to the title of Josephus' *Antiquitates* that is followed by Agapius and Michael the Syrian can thus be explained, though not legitimated, by a reference to Josephus. Nevertheless it is a singular tradition; as far as I know, no

175 There can, of course, be no absolute certainty in this matter.

176 *Antiquitates*, I, 2.

177 A passage in Josephus' *Antiquitates* (I, 10) seems to imply that διάταξις τῆς πολιτείας was contained in the Pentateuch.

author except the two that have been mentioned refers to Josephus' *Antiquitates* by the title *On the Institutions of the Jews* or *On the Governance of the Jews*. Josephus¹⁷⁸ and Eusebius¹⁷⁹ certainly do not do so, nor does Origen.¹⁸⁰

As we know, this singularity is paralleled by another: Agapius and, to some extent, Michael the Syrian present recensions of the *Testimonium* which markedly differ from the vulgate version and are said to be culled¹⁸¹ from *On the Institutions of the Jews* or¹⁸² from *On the Governance of the Jews*. Thus, the unusual titles given to Josephus' work and these unusual recensions seem to go together; apparently they belong (in the case of Michael's recension this may apply only to its divergencies from the vulgate) to the same historiographical tradition. Now we know that this tradition does not derive from the known recensions of Josephus' works or of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, i.e. from the sources that account for much of the historical data concerning, loosely speaking, the period of the Second Temple, nor is it, as far as we know, attested in other extant texts. We may accordingly assume that an unknown source was used by Agapius. Possibly a study of the portion of his work concerned with the period in question may throw some light on the character of this source. In the present study, we must

178 In *Contra Apionem*, I, 1; I, 2, Josephus makes the following references to his *Antiquitates*: . . . διὰ τῆς περὶ τὴν ἀρχαιολογίαν συγγραφῆς . . . ; πεντακισχιλίων ἐτῶν ἀριθμὸν ἱστορίαν . . . συνεγραψάμην, . . . τοῖς περὶ τὴν ἀρχαιολογίαν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ γεγραμμένοις . . .

179 Cf., for instance, the references to Josephus' *Antiquitates* in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 10:4; I, 11:4; the first of these passages contains the words κατὰ αὐτὴν τῆς Ἀρχαιολογίας γραφήν, and the second the words ἐν ὀκτωκαιδεκάτῳ τῆς ἀρχαιολογίας.

180 Cf. *Contra Celsum*, I, 47, which contains the following reference to Josephus' *Antiquitates*: Ἐν γὰρ τῷ ὀκτωκαιδεκάτῳ τῆς Ἰουδαικῆς Ἀρχαιολογίας. This title is also generally used by later authors.

181 In the case of Michael.

182 If we accept the emendation of Agapius' text proposed above.

in the main confine ourselves to an examination of the passage in Agapius that immediately follows upon the Testimonium.

However, a few remarks on the passage immediately preceding the Testimonium seem to be called for. This passage, which has been quoted above, deals with the portents that were witnessed at the time of the crucifixion, and, upon Pilate's dismissal, were supposed to be a consequence of the crucifixion. Quite clearly this information does not derive either from Josephus or from Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. A reference to Phlegon, whose name is corrupted in this passage to *Iflātūn*, was, as we have seen,¹⁸³ found in Eusebius' *Chronicon*. However, this passage of Agapius also refers in this connection to the testimony of a 'philosopher' named *Ūr.s.y.w.s.*¹⁸⁴ No parallel

183 See above, n. 9.

184 The name, as given by Agapius, may also be read in various other ways; cf. above, n. 11, and Chabot's reading of the same name in Michael's text. Michael the Syrian also brackets together the testimonies of Phlegon and *Ūr.s.y.w.s.* Chabot's translation of the relevant passage reads as follows: *Phlégon, philosophe profane, écrit ainsi: le soleil s'est obscurci, et la terre a tremblé; les morts ont ressuscité, sont entrés à Jérusalem et ont maudit les Juifs. Dans l'ouvrage qu'il écrivit sur les temps des Olympiades, il dit dans le XIIIe livre: la quatrième année de la IIIe Olympiade, il y eut une obscurité à la sixième heure du jour, un vendredi, et les étoiles apparurent. Nicée et la région de Bithynie tout entière furent ébranlées, et beaucoup d'autres endroits furent renversés. Ursinus dit aussi dans le livre V: Nous fûmes dans une grande angoisse quand le soleil s'obscurcit et la terre trembla. On entendit des clameurs terribles dans les villes des Hébreux; nous l'apprenons maintenant et nous le voyons par la lettre que Pilate envoya de Palestine à l'empereur Tibère. Il dit: 'A la mort d'un homme que les Juifs on crucifié il survint des choses terrifiantes.' En apprenant cela César destitua Pilate pour avoir fait la volonté des Juifs, et il menaça ceux-ci* (Michel le Syrien, I, pp. 143-144). This passage is clearly connected with the parallel text of Agapius, but does not derive from it, as its quotation from Phlegon is much longer. The reference in Michael's quotation to Bithynia and Nicea, not found in the parallel passage in Agapius, is paralleled in the quotation from Phlegon contained in Eusebius' *Chronicon* (in the Armenian version, *loc. cit.*, as well as in that of St. Jerome, *loc. cit.*). Both

to this reference occurs in Eusebius' *Chronicon*. It may be noted that Syncellus, quoting Julius Africanus, refers, in speaking of the literary testimonies to the portents at the time of the crucifixion, not only to Phlegon, but also to Thallus.¹⁸⁵

However, even if one abstracts from the difference of the names, the statement attributed to Thallus has no characteristic traits in common with the quotation from *Ūr.s.y.w.s.*, which, *inter alia*, purports to give a passage from a letter sent by Pilate to Tiberius. One of the pseudepigraphical letters supposedly sent by Pilate to the Roman emperor contains a remark that also occurs in the passage of Agapius. In both texts Pilate states that Jesus was crucified by the Jews.¹⁸⁶

All this is inconclusive. As regards the ultimate source or sources¹⁸⁷ of the passage in Agapius that comes before the Testimonium, the insufficiency of the evidence renders it impossible not only to prove the correctness of a hypothesis, but even to form one.¹⁸⁸

Agapius' and Michael's quotation may derive from a common Syriac source, possibly Theophilus.

185 Cf. Labriolle, *op. cit.* (above, n. 10), pp. 209–210.

186 However, the letter in question is said to have been addressed by Pilate to Claudius and not to Tiberius. It is included in the Greek *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, edited by R. A. Lipsius & M. Bonnet, I: *Acta Petri et Pauli*, 40–42, ed. Lipsius, Darmstadt 1959, pp. 196–197; cf. W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der Neutestamentlichen Apokryphen*, Darmstadt 1967, p. 190.

187 The immediate source may have been Theophilus' Syriac chronicle.

188 The name *Ūr.s.y.w.s.* has a resemblance to that of Orosius, the Latin historian, whose work was translated into Arabic approximately at the time when Agapius wrote his work. His name is mostly altered in Arabic to *H.urūs. y.w.s.*, but at least in one text it is written *Urūs.y.w.s.*; see G. Levi Della Vida, 'La Tradizione araba delle storie di Orosio', *Miscellanea G. Galbiati*, III, Milano 1951 (*Fontes Ambrosiani*, XXVII), p. 188; p. 189, n. 4. Moreover, Agapius describes *Ūr.s.y.w.s.* as an historian. However, there are difficulties that seem to preclude this identification: (1) Agapius' work probably antedates the Arabic translation of Orosius (see Levi Della Vida, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–188), and

The position is somewhat different with regard to the passage, likewise quoted above, that follows immediately upon Agapius' version of the Testimonium. Quite clearly this passage has a curious relation to Josephus' *Antiquitates* and to Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. In this connection we may recall that it is in consequence of a comparison of texts of Agapius with these two works that we have assumed the existence of an unknown source, X.

As has been stated above, the passage in question begins with the words: *wa-yaqūlu aydan* – *And he also says*. As these words follow immediately upon a quotation from Josephus, namely the Testimonium,¹⁸⁹ the natural interpretation would be that they are meant to introduce another quotation from Josephus. However, as we shall presently see, the contents of the passage are not consistent with this supposition; the author of the text was quite obviously a Christian. Indeed, there are good reasons for thinking that the ultimate source of the passage may be the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Eusebius, who is explicitly quoted in a

Theophilus, whom, as regards the passage in question, we suppose to be the common source of Agapius and Michael the Syrian, antedates it to a much greater extent. (2) The passage quoted by Agapius and Michael occurs neither in the Latin original of Orosius' work nor in the Arabic version, which, moreover, contains many interpolations. It might, of course, be argued that there might have existed an earlier Arabic or Syriac translation of Orosius, which might have included the passage in question, but, in the absence of any confirmatory evidence, this would be a very far-fetched and unsatisfactory solution. There is also the possibility that both Agapius' and Michael's writing of the name *Ūr.s.y.w.s.*, or some variant of it, is wrong; according to this hypothesis the name of the historians whom these two authors quote might have been corrupted to *Ūr.s.y.w.s.* by someone who was familiar with the name of Orosius. This would parallel the corruption of Phlegon to *Iflātūn* (Plato) found in Agapius (see above, n. 8). On the evidence at our disposal there is no way of proving or disproving this hypothesis.

189 As we have seen, Agapius explicitly states that this text occurs in a work of Josephus.

text of Agapius dealing with Abgar,¹⁹⁰ which immediately follows upon the passage with which we are concerned. In fact, the latter passage — which in Agapius comes immediately after the Testimonium and is translated above — shows both a marked similarity to and significant divergencies from a text in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 10. A comparison of the two texts is instructive.

Agapius (ed. Cheikho), p. 239,
1. 16 to p. 240, l. 3¹⁹¹

And he also says that all the public activity of our Lord Christ, may he be glorified, . . . occurred under the high priesthood of Ḥannān and Qayāfā. For [the two] were high priests in those years; I mean [to say that his public activity occurred] from the high priesthood of Qayāfā. The time between

Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*,
I, 10 : 2-6¹⁹²

The divine Scripture says that he [Jesus] completed the whole time of his teaching while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, showing that the whole time of his teaching was bounded by the years which cover their administration. Since, then, he began in the high priesthood of Annas and continued to the reign of

190 This text (Agapius, ed. Cheikho, p. 240, l. 4, to p. 242, l. 4.) deals with the exchange of letters between Abgar, king of Edessa, and Jesus; and with Abgar's subsequent conversion, the letter he wrote to the Emperor Tiberius and Tiberius' answer. It is introduced by the words: *Eusebius [Ūsāb.yūs], the bishop of Caesarea, has said.* The text roughly corresponds to the tale of Abgar recounted in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 13. However, the divergencies are very considerable. The manner of telling the story is different in the two texts. Furthermore, the *Historia Ecclesiastica* does not refer to the exchange of letters between Abgar and Tiberius. In his letter to Jesus, Abgar, according to the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, addresses him as Ἰησοῦ σωτῆρι ἀγαθῷ ἀναφανέντι ἐν τόπῳ Ἱεροσολύμων. In Agapius' text the form of address is *to Jesus, practiser of medicine* [al-mutaṭabbib], *who has appeared in Jerusalem.* Many examples of such divergencies could be cited.

191 The text has been translated and annotated above.

192 Kirsopp Lake's translation.

these two [dates] does not amount to four years. For when Herod had charge of them, he burnt the genealogies of their tribes, in order that it should not be known that he [was descended] from undistinguished people. He [also] took the priestly vestment and put it under his seal. And he did not allow anyone of the high priests to officiate as such for more than one year. For this [reason] there came up four high [priests] in the [interval of time] between the high priesthood of Ḥannān and that of Qayāfā. For after the dismissal of Ḥannān, Ismā'īl, the son of Yahyā,¹⁹³ took his place. When he had finished his year and quitted his [office], Eliezer, the son of Ḥannān the high priest, replaced him. After he had terminated his year, Simon, the son of Qamīhūd,¹⁹⁴ succeeded him. Then came after him [and in his place] Qayāfā, on whose order and under whose high priesthood

Caiaphas, the intervening time does not extend to a full four years. For since the regulations were at that time already in process of destruction, the rule had been relaxed by which the duties of the service of God were held for life and by inherited succession, and the Roman governors entrusted the high priesthood at different times to different men, who did not hold this office for more than one year. Moreover, Josephus relates that four high priests intervened in succession between Annas and Caiaphas and speaks as follows in the text of the Antiquities [XVIII, 34–35]: 'Valerius Gratus, having deprived Ananus of the priesthood, appoints as high priest Ishmael, the son of Phabi. Him, too, he removes shortly and nominates as high priest Eliezer, the son of Ananus the high priest. But when a year had passed he removes him also and hands over the high priesthood to Simon, the son

193 This name is substituted for some form of Phabi; see above, n. 40.

194 For the correct form of the name see above, n. 46.

our Lord the Messiah, may he be glorified, was crucified. Thus the time between Hannān and Qayāfā does not [amount] to more¹⁹⁵ than four years.

of Camithus. But neither did his tenure of office last for more than a year, and Josephus, who is also [called] Caiaphas, was his successor.’ Thus the whole time of the teaching of our Saviour is shown to be not even a full four years; since from Annas to the appointment of Caiaphas in four years four high priests held the yearly office.

As this comparison shows, there is an evident connection between the two texts, for their central theme is one and the same. Both seek to prove, by referring to an identical list of four successive high priests,¹⁹⁶ each of whom is said to have been appointed for one year only, that Jesus’ public activity did not last full four years.

This connection can also be demonstrated by the fact that the first sentence in the passage from Eusebius solves the difficulty presented in the first sentence of the passage from Agapius. The meaning of the two sentences is substantially the same, except for one point: Eusebius introduces the sentence with the words *The divine Scripture says*, whereas Agapius begins the passage with the words *And he also says*, which, as noted above, do not make sense in the context. There can be no doubt, I think, that originally the sentence began, as in Eusebius’ text, with the words *The divine [or holy] Scripture says*,¹⁹⁷ and that at some stage in the transmission — owing to the error of a

195 As stated above, the MS has *aqall – less*, which is an obvious error.

196 Known to Eusebius from Josephus’ *Antiquitates*, to which he refers.

197 The Greek text has *φησὶν δὲ αὐτὸν ἢ θεὸς γραφῆς*. The Syriac translation of Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* reads *For the holy Scripture says* (p. 44).

compiler or a scribe — the words *The divine Scripture* were omitted. On this supposition also the word *ayḍan* was inserted in the phrase *wa-qāla ayḍan*, in order to give the mutilated phrase a semblance of meaning. In the light of Eusebius' text, Agapius' first sentence in the passage under discussion should read *The holy*¹⁹⁸ *Scripture says that all the public activity of our Lord Christ, may he be glorified, occurred under the high priesthood of Hannān and Qayāfā.*

Two pieces of information contained in this passage of Agapius do not appear in the corresponding text of Eusebius, but occur elsewhere in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, from where they were doubtless taken over either by Agapius, or, more probably, by the author of the Syriac *Chronicle* which he used. Thus, the fact that they are included in the Arabic passage under discussion cannot by any means serve as an argument against the view that the passage is essentially based upon the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. These two pieces of information are:

1. *Herod... burnt the genealogies of their tribes in order that it should not be known that he was descended from undistinguished people.* This incident is mentioned by Eusebius, who quotes Africanus; see *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 7:13.
2. *[Herod] took the priestly vestment and put it under his seal.* This action of Herod is likewise recounted by Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 6:10), who quotes Josephus.¹⁹⁹

On one point, and one only, Agapius refers, in the passage in question, to a fact that is not found either in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* or in Josephus. From Josephus' *Antiquitates*, XVIII, 33–35, it may be seen that the high priests appointed by the Roman procurator Gratus did not hold their office for more than a year. On the basis of this text Eusebius states in the passage of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* quoted above that *the*

198 Or: *divine*.

199 Cf. *Antiquitates*, XVIII, 92–93. It is clear that in this case Agapius (or his Syriac source) quotes Eusebius rather than Josephus directly.

Roman governors entrusted the high priesthood at different times to different men, who did not hold this office for more than one year. Neither Josephus nor the *Historia Ecclesiastica* in the recension known to us states that the practice to appoint high priests for one year only was already introduced by Herod,²⁰⁰ as is explicitly asserted by Agapius: *And he did not allow any-one of the high priests to officiate as such for more than one year.* We are accordingly faced with a conundrum, for some plausible explanation must be found for the fact that one single statement in the passage in Agapius does not ultimately derive from the *Historia Ecclesiastica* as it is known to us. But for the existence of this statement, this work of Eusebius could have been regarded as the obvious source of the whole passage.²⁰¹

200 Josephus, when speaking of Herod's policy with regard to the appointment of high priests, states that this policy was also followed by the Romans, but he does not refer in this text to the limitation of the high priests' tenure of office to one year. See *Antiquitates*, XX, 247-250: *Herod, when the kingdom was committed to him by the Romans, abandoned the practice of appointing those of Asamonaean lineage as high priests, and, with the exception of Aristobulus, alone assigned the office to some insignificant persons who were merely of priestly descent . . . After Aristobulus' death Herod ceased to entrust the high priesthood to the descendants of the sons of Asamoniaios. Herod's son Archelaus also followed a similar policy in the appointment of high priests, as did the Romans after him when they took over the government of the Jews. Now those who held the high priesthood from the times of Herod up to the day on which Titus captured and set fire to the temple and the city numbered twenty-eight in all, covering a period of one hundred and seven years* (transl. L. H. Feldman). The fact that new high priests were appointed every year is also referred to in the Talmudic literature; the passages are quoted and discussed in G. Alon, *מחקרים בתולדות ישראל* (*Studies in Jewish History*), I, Jerusalem 1957, pp. 48 ff. This fact also accounts for the references in the Gospel of John *to the high priest of that year*: ἀρχιερεὺς ὢν τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐκείνου (xi:49); ἀλλὰ ἀρχιερεὺς ὢν τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐκείνου (xi:51); δὲ ἦν ἀρχιερεὺς τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐκείνου (xviii:13).

201 The fact that the *Historia Ecclesiastica* was in all probability not the immediate source of the passage that may have been taken from the

It may be noted that a similar statement concerning Herod's policy occurs in Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle*.²⁰²

In J. B. Chabot's translation it reads: *Il y eut trois grands-prêtres après Hannan jusqu'à Caïphe: Ismaël, Eléazar et Siméon. Puis vint Josèphe qui est Caïphe. Hérode, en effet, ne laissait chacun d'eux en fonction que pendant un an.*

This statement seems to suggest that Herod was a contemporary of the three high priests who are named; this could be due either to confusion of Herod the Great with his namesake, who reigned at the time of Jesus' public activity, or to the chronicler's unthinkingly copying his sources without any effort to make some sense out of them.

The passage of Agapius is, I think, less confused, or, at least, the confusion is less evident. Nevertheless, but for one factor, it could easily be argued that the statement that Herod did not permit high priests to hold their office for more than one year should be imputed to a scribe's error or to a compiler's or translator's mistake and that, in the last analysis, it resulted from a corruption or misunderstanding of the relevant passages of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. The factor that does not permit this facile solution is a passage of another work of Eusebius, *Demonstratio*, VIII, 2:99. In this passage Eusebius explicitly states²⁰³ that Herod was the first — the Romans following his example — to appoint high priests,²⁰⁴ contrary to the Law, and to traffic in the office, giving it to common and undistinguished men and changing the incumbents every

Syriac chronicle used by Agapius hardly affects the difficulty mentioned above. Whoever in the first place compiled the passage appears to have derived all statements but one from the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

202 I, p. 143.

203 This interpretation presupposes that the sentence should be construed according to ordinary syntactic rules.

204 The text has *ἱερεῖς* — *priests*, but in the context only *high priests* makes sense.

year.²⁰⁵ A few lines further on Eusebius quotes the passage of Josephus' *Antiquitates*, XVIII, 34–35, also found in the text of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* cited above, concerning the appointments and dismissals of high priests by Valerius Gratus.

A case could be made out for the supposition that the statements in this passage concerning the policy, which are not found in our recension of Josephus' *Antiquitates*, are inferences from *Antiquitates*, XX, 247, where Josephus asserts that the Romans followed Herod's policy in the appointment of high priests, combined with *Antiquitates*, XVIII, 34–35, where Josephus describes Valerius Gratus' practices in this matter. It may, however, also be argued that the passage shows that, when writing this passage of the *Demonstratio*, Eusebius used some historical text²⁰⁶ unknown to us, where he found, *inter alia*, the explicit statement that Herod, like the Romans, appointed a high priest for one year only; a statement which, as we have

205 . . . πρώτος μὲν Ἡρώδης, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ Ῥωμαῖοι μετὰ τοῦτον ἀκριτως καὶ οὐ κατὰ τὸν νόμον τοὺς ἱερεῖς καθίσταν, οὗς ἐδόκει αὐτοῖς δημοτικοῖς τισι καὶ ἀσήμοις ἀνδράσι τὴν τιμὴν χαριζόμενοι, ἐπιπρασκον τὲ καὶ ἐκατήλεον τοῦνομα, ἄλλοτε ἄλλοις ἐνιασιαῖον τὸ ἀξίωμα δωρούμενοι.

Alon (*op. cit.*, n. 200, p. 58, n. 37) considers that Eusebius' opinion, as expressed in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* in regard to the time when high priests began to be appointed for one year only, is incorrect. He considers that Herod, rather than anyone else, must have been responsible for this innovation, and quotes, in order to corroborate his view, Agapius and Bar Hebraeus' *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* and *Chronicon Syriacum*. It seems to have escaped his notice that in his *Demonstratio* also Eusebius subscribes to this opinion. The trafficking in the high priest's office mentioned in this passage of the *Demonstratio* is also referred to in Talmudic literature; see Alon, *op. cit.*, pp. 48 ff. There is also an allusion to it in John Chrysostom, *In Inscriptioe Altaris* (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, LI, Col. 73), quoted by Alon, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

206 This could, of course, have been a slightly different text of Josephus' *Antiquitates*; or Eusebius might have drawn upon Julius Africanus, who, in his turn, may, as suggested by H. Gelzer (see below, n. 208), have occasionally made use of Justus of Tiberias.

seen, does not occur in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. But all this is, of course, mere speculation. The passage in Eusebius' *Demonstratio* does, however, lead to an indubitable conclusion: the statement of Agapius and Michael the Syrian ²⁰⁷ that Herod limited the tenure of the office of the high priests he appointed cannot be due to the mistake of an oriental compiler, translator or scribe, since this statement is already made by Eusebius; the suggestion mooted above is thus precluded. On the other hand, it is improbable that Agapius, Michael and the Syriac chroniclers they used took over the statement concerning Herod's appointment of high priests from Eusebius' *Demonstratio*, which is not a historiographical work; there are, I think, strong grounds for supposing that they took their information from historical works and not from theological treatises. Moreover, as we have seen, the passage in Agapius where the statement in question occurs derives in all other respects from the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. This might legitimate the hypothesis that the statement in question was also found in this work: it might have appeared in a lost recension of it. This hypothesis is clearly strengthened by the fact that a similar statement concerning Herod's policy with regard to the appointment of high priests was inserted by Eusebius into another work: the *Demonstratio*; the extant recension of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* is on this point inconsonant with the *Demonstratio*, but the hypothetical lost recension might have been in agreement with the latter.

This line of reasoning can be followed up: If there are strong arguments in favour of the surmise that an unknown recension of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* was the source of a piece of information concerning Herod found in Agapius and in Michael, it could also be argued that this recension might be source X whose existence was postulated above; it might be supposed that at some stage in its redaction the *Historia Ecclesiastica*

207 As also of Bar Hebraeus; see above, n. 205.

might have contained an unchristianized version of the Testimonium — or one less Christianized than that of the vulgate (popularized by Eusebius) — and that that version was used by Agapius, and to some extent by Michael the Syrian. This is, of course, only a glimmer of a possible solution — a very hypothetical one — to one of several problems posed by Agapius' version of the Testimonium.²⁰⁸

208 The fact that Agapius in his account of the period of the Second Temple used otherwise unknown material may be verified by an examination of the story of the killing of Herod's wife as related by him: *Herod died [while suffering] from great and bitter pain. And it is said that he killed his wife, while she was sleeping in a bed with him. In fact, a quarrel broke out between them. The exchange of angry words went on and on. Finally she started to rail at him. Thereupon he went out of his mind, took a cushion, put it upon her face, sat upon it, and did not stand up until she was dead. After that he killed his own son [I emend *ibnatohu* to *ib-nahu*] and some of his relatives* (ed. Cheikho, p. 140).

This story is followed by an account of Herod's last illness, which is clearly derived from Josephus' two accounts of this illness (*Bellum Judaicum*, I, 656; *Antiquitates*, XVII, 168–169), both of which are quoted in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 8: 5–9. Agapius also mentions in this connection Herod's attempt to kill himself recounted in *Bellum Judaicum*, I, 662, quoted by Eusebius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 8: 14, and his order to his sister Salome (*Shālūm*) to kill after his death the Jews assembled at the place where he lay dying. This is clearly derived from the story told in *Bellum Judaicum*, I, 660 (cf. *Antiquitates*, XVII, 174–177) and quoted by Eusebius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 8: 13.

The statement that Herod killed his own son seems to refer to the execution, recounted by Josephus (*Bellum Judaicum*, I, 663–664; *Antiquitates*, XVII, 187, 191), of Herod's son Antipater, ordered by Herod shortly before he died. In referring to this event, Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 8: 15) does not mention the name Antipater; he merely says that before his death Herod killed a legitimate son of his. This may be an indication that in the passage under discussion Agapius, or rather his Syriac source, used Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

Thus many elements in this passage of Agapius appear to be derived from Josephus, probably through the intermediary of Eusebius. However, the story concerning the killing of Herod's wife is not found

Another question is that of the relation, from the textual point of view, of this version to the earliest pre-Eusebian recension of the Testimonium, the one which may — it is a moot point — have been composed by Josephus himself.

In this connection, the relevant passages of Origen should be mentioned. In three passages Origen mentions²⁰⁹ Josephus' allusions to Jesus; all three refer to the description, found in *Antiquitates*, XX, 200, of James as *the brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ*²¹⁰ — τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ λεγομένου χριστοῦ, Ἰάκωβος ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. In these passages Origen also remarks that Josephus was wrong (though according to *Contra Celsum*, I, 47, *not far from the truth*) in supposing that the condemnation

in either of these authors. Josephus gives two accounts (*Bellum Judaicum*, 441–444; *Antiquitates*, XV, 218–239; cf. XV, 68–87) of the execution of Herod's wife Mariamne. These accounts differ from one another, but even more so from Agapius' story; in both, Mariamne is killed by Herod's order, but not by his own hand. Accordingly, this is another example of Agapius' utilization of an unknown, possibly early source within a passage that otherwise appears, in the last analysis, to stem from Josephus as quoted by Eusebius. It may be relevant to point out that similar problems are posed by the Byzantine historiographer Syncellus, whose account of the Hasmonean period contains material that is not derived from Josephus. Gelzer mentions the possibility that this material may have occurred in the historical work of Josephus' contemporary and opponent, Justus of Tiberias; according to this hypothesis, Syncellus' immediate source was Julius Africanus, who drew upon Justus, and was in turn used by Syncellus; see H. Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die Byzantinische Chronographie*, I, Leipzig 1880, pp. 256–265, esp. p. 265.

Similar conjectures can clearly be made concerning the sources of Agapius; possibly they could, at least to some extent, be corroborated or disproved, as the case may be, by means of a detailed comparison of Agapius' historiography with that of Syncellus and other Byzantine historians.

209 Commentary on Matthew i: 17; *Contra Celsum*, I, 47; II, 13. The passages are quoted in full by C. Martin, 'Le "Testimonium Flavianum"', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, XX (1941), pp. 419–420.

210 Or: *the Messiah*.

of James brought about the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple — an opinion that is also ascribed to Josephus by Eusebius,²¹¹ but which is not found in our text of the *Antiquitates*. According to Origen,²¹² Josephus should have put the blame for this national catastrophe on the Jewish attitude towards Jesus.

In two of these passages Origen also states that Josephus did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. According to Origen's commentary on Matthew i:17, *he did not accept our Jesus as the Messiah* — τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἡμῶν οὐ καταδέξάμενος εἶναι χριστόν.

In *Contra Celsum*, I, 47, he says, speaking of Josephus, . . . *though disbelieving in Jesus [regarded] as the Messiah* — καίτοι γε ἀπιστῶν τῷ Ἰησοῦ ὡς χριστῷ . . .

Do these statements concerning the disbelief of Josephus in Jesus' Messiahship indicate that Origen had knowledge of a *Testimonium Flavianum*, i.e. of a passage of Josephus referring to Jesus that was different from the vulgate text? — for, as we may recall, this text contains the uncompromising assertion that *He was the Messiah*.

Obviously the other possible hypothesis is that the historical works of Josephus, as known to Origen, contained no passage directly dealing with Jesus; it can be argued that Origen might have inferred from this hypothetical circumstance that Josephus was an unbeliever.²¹³

On the whole, the first supposition seems to me to be more probable; Origen's assertions concerning Josephus' unbelief are so positive that it is difficult to maintain that they are solely based on an *argumentum ex silentio*.

211 *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 23.

212 See *Contra Celsum*, I, 47; II, 13.

213 Because his silence could be taken as indicating a complete lack of interest in Jesus. The cursory reference in *Antiquitates*, XX, 200, to James' being *the brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ* — τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου χριστοῦ, can, if one is inclined that way, be easily brought into line with this view.

If we admit that Origen was acquainted with a recension of the Testimonium, it follows from his remarks, as has been partly indicated, that this recension must have differed from that of the vulgate in at least two interconnected particulars:

1. It did not contain the sentence *He was the Messiah*.
2. It contained either a sceptical or a negative reference to the claim to Messiahship made on Jesus' behalf.

In this context it may be recalled that the recensions of St. Jerome and Michael contained the sentence *He was believed²¹⁴ to be the Messiah*. This sentence (which probably also appeared in Agapius' Syriac source) strikes a mildly dubitative note and may accordingly fill the bill. It can be argued that it may have been the phrase to which Origen alluded.

It may, however, be maintained that Origen's remark appears to indicate a much more outspoken scepticism on the part of Josephus, even a downright denial of Jesus' Messiahship. If this contention is accepted, the sentence in the recensions of St. Jerome and Michael could be held to be a watered-down version of the phrase known to Origen.

It may be noted that the recension of the Testimonium with which, according to our surmise, Origen may have been acquainted does not seem to have contained derogatory remarks referring to Jesus; Origen would have pretty certainly animadverted upon them.

To sum up: The peculiar version of the Testimonium Flavianum found in the chronicle of the tenth-century Jacobite historian Agapius seems to be relevant to the discussion centred on this Josephine or pseudo-Josephine text. Its importance resides in the fact that it is so different from the vulgate version that hardly any of the arguments (or, perhaps, none) disproving the authenticity of the latter have any validity with regard to it. In the main, this authenticity has been questioned because of the pronounced Christian traits of the Testimonium; in Agapius'

214 Or: *thought*.

version these traits are conspicuous by their absence, a non-committal attitude being taken up.

This version refers to the report of the disciples concerning Jesus' appearance after the crucifixion, but, contrary to the vulgate recension, does not positively state that this appearance was a fact. Nor does it affirm the truth of the claim that Jesus was the Messiah; the relevant phrase — retranslated into Syriac — merely informs us that he was thought to be the Messiah. There is no derogatory reference to Jesus, and his human qualities are accorded praise. But this appreciation is comparable in kind to Josephus' evaluation of other personalities. Onias, for instance, is said to be *a righteous man and dear to God*.²¹⁵

In the recension of the twelfth-century Syriac *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian we also encounter the formulation that Jesus was thought to be the Messiah. Michael's recension has also some other traits in common with that of Agapius; however, in many respects it is close to the vulgate recension of the Testimonium found in the Syriac translation of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. It could be regarded as an amalgam of the two, but it is not certain that this is the solution.

St. Jerome's recension of the Testimonium, which is one of the earliest known to us, has a similar formulation: *He was believed to be the Messiah*.²¹⁶ This may be considered as a perhaps somewhat supererogatory indication that the parallel sentences in Agapius' and Michael's recensions have not been coined in the ninth century or thereabout, but go back to a much earlier period.

215 R. Marcus' translation; *Antiquitates*, XIV, 22: *δίκαιος ἀνὴρ καὶ θεοφιλῆς*. A comparable meed of praise is possibly meted out by Josephus to John the Baptist (*Antiquitates*, XVIII, 117), but the reference to him has been regarded by some scholars as a Christian interpolation.

216 St. Jerome's recension is also reminiscent of the Oriental recensions cited here in some significant particulars.

There are some indications that an unknown recension of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* may have been the ultimate source of the passage in Agapius immediately following upon the Testimonium.²¹⁷

Conceivably, Agapius' version of the Testimonium could have been taken from this hypothetical version of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. However, this is a mere supposition, which may to some extent be verified or disproved by an examination of the sources of the portion of Agapius' chronicle dealing with the period of the Second Temple and the early centuries of Christianity.

Origen's remarks on the disbelief of Josephus prove that his copy of the *Antiquitates* did not include the vulgate recension of the Testimonium. These remarks can easily be made to fit in with Agapius' version. It can, however, be argued that the version of the Testimonium known to Origen²¹⁸ manifested, with regard to Christianity, a more pronouncedly sceptical or negative attitude than the non-committal version of Agapius.

Is there any possibility that this version should be identical with, or come close to, the original text of the Testimonium as composed by Josephus? This might have seemed to be the main question arising from the existence of this version, if there had not been a school of thought that considers that the Testimonium is wholly a Christian forgery. In the light of the fact that this view is, or has been, strongly represented among scholars, a preliminary question seems to be necessary; it may be put as follows: does the existence of Agapius' version (which was generally left out of account in the discussion of the Testimonium) tend to show that the scepticism of the scholars in question was unjustified?

No clear-cut or final answers to these two interrelated questions

217 And, at least, of one other passage.

218 On the whole, it seems probable that he did know a recension of the Testimonium.

can be looked for; there are too many unknown factors. However, certain considerations spring to mind.

As has been stated, none of the main objections put forward against the authenticity of the vulgate recension of the Testimonium would hold water if they were levelled against Agapius' version. In order to compose the latter Josephus need not have been a Christian. In fact, as far as probabilities go, no believing Christian could have produced such a neutral text; for him the only significant point about it could have been its attesting the historical existence of Jesus. But the fact is that until modern times this particular hare was never started. Even the most bitter opponents of Christianity never expressed any doubt as to Jesus' having really lived. They confined themselves to deploring the consequences of this fact, and, in certain cases, Jesus' behaviour. Josephus, however, who, within certain limits claimed to be an objective historian, could have written this text.

It might, however, also be the result of a Christian adaptation of a passage, included in Josephus' *Antiquitates*, which was originally much more hostile to, or critical of, Christianity. Both these alternative surmises evidently imply that Josephus' *Antiquitates* did originally contain a Testimonium of some sort dealing with Jesus. This may be regarded as an answer to the preliminary question formulated above. We must, however, note that both surmises are predicated upon the assumption, which seems to me justified, that Agapius' version does not stem from the vulgate recension. No Christian would have tampered with the text with a view to eliminating all the phrases that are concerned with Jesus' superhuman nature and actions and to replacing the author's affirmation of Jesus' Messiahship and his appearance after death by non-committal statements that merely mention that such claims were made on behalf of Jesus. And there is no indication whatever that the text had been manipulated by a Jew, a Jewish Christian or a Pagan. Moreover, all the data we possess concerning Agapius' account of the

relevant period of history appear to show that he obtained his facts from Christian sources.²¹⁹

It is admittedly difficult to accept the idea that a tenth-century Arabic chronicle has preserved a version of the Testimonium that comes closer to Josephus' original text than the vulgate recension attested in the fourth century. The odds seem to be very high that a passage of this nature, translated in all probability from the Greek into Syriac and from the Syriac into Arabic, would in the course of centuries have been altered out of all recognition. However, this difficulty seems to me to be mainly of a psychological nature. There appears to be no valid reason why a version of the Testimonium preserved in Arabic should not have escaped Christian censorship to a greater extent than the vulgate version, or even altogether. Moreover, as we have seen, an important trait of Agapius' version is corroborated by St. Jerome's third-or fourth-century recension.

We are thus left with two possibilities: either the version of Agapius is the product of Christian censorship applied to the original text in a less thoroughgoing form than in the case of the vulgate recension, or it did not undergo censorship at all; in that case the deviations from the original text which it may be assumed to contain should be set down as the usual alterations due to the mistakes of scribes and translators. The first hypothesis seems to me to be the more probable one, but for no very conclusive reason. At the moment this is anybody's guess.²²⁰

219 Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* was, as we have seen, a main source for Agapius or the Syriac Chronicler he used. As has been suggested above, the relation between Agapius' work and Byzantine historiography should be examined.

220 It has been suggested that a reference to a version of the Testimonium different from the vulgate recension (and, as I may add, also from that of Agapius) is to be found in a dialogue purporting to give an account of a religious debate at the court of the Sassanids; see E. Bratke, *Das*

In this connection the following specific point should also be noted. The last sentence of Agapius' version, corrected by a comparison with Michael's version, could be read: *He was thought to be the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.* The last words of the sentence offer a sort of explanation, albeit not a very enlightening one, of the term *Messiah* – *χριστός*, which clearly had to be explained in a work destined for readers of Greek; at the time of Josephus most of these could have made nothing of the phrase of the vulgate recension *ὁ χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν*. This is an additional reason — over and above the obvious one, namely, his unbelief — for maintaining that he could not have written this; whereas the sentence of Agapius and of Michael could conceivably be authentic.

It has often been noted that, outside this vulgate version — whose authenticity was, to say the least, doubtful — the term *χριστός* is used by Josephus in one passage only, *Antiquitates*, XX, 200, where he speaks of James, the brother of Jesus, who was called *the Messiah* – *τοῦ λεγομένου χριστοῦ*.

Sometimes it has been assumed that the fact that in speaking of the chiefs of the Jewish insurrectionary movements Josephus

sogenannte Religionsgespräch am Hofe der Sassaniden (Texte und Untersuchungen, XLIII), Leipzig 1899, p. 36; cf. M. Goguel, Jesus and the Origins of Christianity (English transl.), New York 1960, p. 78, n. 4. Goguel's translation of this reference reads: Josephus spoke of Christ as a just and good man, manifested by grace divine by means of miracles and signs, and who did a great deal of good to many people. On another possible interpretation of this passage, see Bratke, op. cit., pp. 223 ff. The words a just and good man – ἀνδρὸς δικαίου καὶ ἀγαθοῦ may be regarded as somewhat reminiscent of Agapius' description (according to one version): his conduct was good and he was known to be virtuous. It seems, however, to be more significant that these words are, as is noted by Bratke (op. cit., p. 230), very similar indeed to the expression occurring in Malalas' quotation from Josephus (see above, n. 61): ἀνθρώπων ἀγαθὸν καὶ δίκαιον. Apart from this, the quotation in the dialogue has no point of resemblance with Agapius' version of the Testimonium.

does not refer to anyone among them as being regarded as the Messiah is due to the wish not to irritate the Romans and to foster their suspicions with respect to the Jews. However, there are no indications that any of these chiefs claimed to be the Messiah.

As far as the evidence we possess goes, it could be supposed that this title, which had been used in speaking of reigning kings and of high priests, was not, in the Roman period prior to Jesus, applied to an eschatological saviour or deliverer who had actually lived and manifested himself during this period.²²¹ According to this hypothesis Jesus was described by Josephus (just as he was by Matthew i:16) as *ὁ λεγόμενος χριστός* not only because his adherents considered that this title was rightfully his, but also because at that time everyone, both adherents and opponents, knew that this was a cognomen peculiar to Jesus. The fact that a sentence of Agapius' version, which may be authentic, records that Jesus was thought to be the Messiah and gives some sort of explanation of the term does not, of course, conflict with this hypothesis; it is, in fact, favourable to it.

221 In a period posterior to Jesus it appears to have been applied to Bar Kokhba by those who believed in his mission.

Appendix

GALEN ON CHRISTIANS, ACCORDING TO AGAPIUS

IN A PORTION of a book bearing the title *Galen on Jews and Christians*,¹ Professor Walzer treats of a text attributed to Galen by some Oriental, Moslem, and Christian authors, which refers very favourably to the Christian way of life. All these authors but one state that the text occurred in Galen's summary of Plato's *Republic*. The single exception is Bar Hebraeus, who both in a Syriac and in an Arabic work² tells us that the text is extracted from Galen's summary of the *Phaedo*. Walzer gives no credit whatever to this piece of information, his reasons being as follows:³

Nowhere else are Galen's words attributed to his summary of the Phaedo. It is, moreover, highly improbable that Bar Hebraeus, or his immediate predecessor, had access to more writings of Galen than were known in the ninth century to Hunain Ibn Ishāq, who was already unable to trace Galen's summary of the Phaedo and could not translate it into either Syriac or Arabic. Hence it is almost certain that the substitution of the Phaedo for the Republic is due to Bar Hebraeus' notorious carelessness in such matters and of no significance whatever. In addition, Bar Hebraeus is by no means an 'independent witness', since his discussion of Galen's life is nothing but an abridged copy taken from the History of Learned Men by Ibn al-Qiftī (published after 1227 C.E.), who, again, attributes the statement to Galen's summary of

1 R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (henceforth: Walzer), Oxford 1949, pp. 15–16, 57 ff., 87–98; cf. P. Kraus & R. Walzer, *Galeni Compendium Timaei Platonis, (Plato Arabus, I)*, London 1951, pp. 37–38 of the Arabic text and pp. 99–100 of the Latin translation.

2 Extracted from the Syriac.

3 Walzer, p. 93.

the Republic. Bar Hebraeus can therefore be eliminated from future discussions of this statement.

Walzer's assertion that *nowhere else are Galen's words attributed to his summary of the Phaedo*. . . is incorrect, as is proved by the following passage occurring in Agapius' chronicle:⁴

He⁵ also said in his commentary on a book of Plato called the Phaedo:⁶ *The people called Christians have built their doctrine upon enigmatic indications⁷ and miracles. [As far as] the way they act⁸ [is concerned], they are not inferior⁹ to the genuine philosophers. For they love continence, keep fasts¹⁰ and prayers,¹¹ and avoid unjust actions. Among them there are men who do not pollute themselves with women.¹²*

Bar Hebraeus' version¹³ is in various details closer to Agapius than to that of the Moslem writer quoted by Walzer,¹⁴ even if one abstracts from the attribution of the text to the commentary on the *Phaedo*. In addition, both Agapius¹⁵ and Bar Hebraeus¹⁶ quote — in order to prove that Galen was not a contemporary of Jesus — a passage of Galen's *Anatomy*, stating, *inter alia*, that this was composed in the reign of Antoninus Caesar. But there are also divergencies between the two texts. Moreover, Agapius does not refer to a second proof of the fact that Galen

4 Ed. Cheikho, pp. 180–181.

5 Galen.

6 One MS has *Nār.n*, and the other *Nādān*. Cheikho is certainly correct in emending the latter name to *Fādān* – *Phaedo*.

7 *Rumūz*.

8 *A'māl*; literally: *actions*.

9 *Aqall*; literally: *less*.

10 In the singular.

11 In the singular.

12 Agapius adds: *I say that he means by enigmatic indications the parables concerning the Kingdom of God formulated in the pure Gospel.*

13 A Latin translation of this version occurs in Walzer, p. 93.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

15 Ed. Cheikho, p. 93, close to the beginning of the text quoted above.

16 Walzer, pp. 92–93.

lived after Jesus, which is adduced, as Walzer points out,¹⁷ not only by Bar Hebraeus, but also by Ibn al-Qiftī¹⁸ and Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a in their works on the history of physicians. According to this proof, Galen must have lived after Jesus, because in the text under discussion Galen speaks of Christian monasticism, a phenomenon that only appeared one hundred years after Jesus.

It follows that if Agapius was, with regard to our passage, a source of Bar Hebraeus, he was not the only source. Possibly, however, he did not use Agapius, but some other work — one could think of the Syriac source of Agapius, but this is only one possibility among many — that also named Galen's summary of the *Phaedo* as the work from which the text concerning the Christians occurred in the summary of the *Phaedo*, whereas according to the other sources it occurred in the summary of the *Republic*. The evidence for the second tradition is later than the evidence for the first. For Agapius lived before all the authors mentioned by Walzer as quoting Galen's text.¹⁹ 'Ubayd Allāh Ibn Jibrā'il Ibn 'Ubayd Allāh Ibn Bakhtishū, who, as Walzer notes, wrote a treatise concerning Galen which was the source of the passages in Ibn al-Qiftī and Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a referred to above, lived in the eleventh century; and the Christian philosopher Ibn Zur'a, who in a treatise *Concerning the Main Questions Discussed Between Christians and Jews* gives a short version of the text of Galen, which, according to him, occurred at the end of the summary of the *Republic*, died in 1008,²⁰ more than sixty years after the date at which Agapius' chronicle or a part of it was being written. However, this chronological point does not seem to be of primary importance, since Agapius

17 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

18 Ibn al-Qiftī, *Ta'rikh al-ḥukamā'*, Leipzig 1903, p. 128; Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Kitāb 'uyūn al-anbā' fi ṭabaqāt al-ḥukamā'*, edited by Müller, Königsberg 1884, I, pp. 76–77.

19 See, however, below, n. 25.

20 See Walzer, p. 91.

and all the authors quoted by Walzer indubitably made use of earlier writers.

Walzer makes the point that *it is highly improbable that Bar Hebraeus or his immediate predecessor had access to more writings of Galen than were known in the ninth century to Ḥunain Ibn Ishāq, who was already unable to trace Galen's summary of the *Phaedo* and could not translate it into either Syriac or Arabic.*²¹ It seems to me that the argument is irrelevant, for it is more than probable that the quotations of philosophical texts made by Agapius and by Bar Hebraeus in his historical writings are not extracted directly from philosophical works, but from historical chronicles, which, in the last analysis, drew most of their materials from Christian historiography written in Greek.

There is, of course, no difficulty in supposing that a Christian historiographer writing in Greek quoted a text — which may have been either genuine or spurious — purporting to be derived from Galen's summary of the *Phaedo*.

As a matter of fact, the treatise of 'Ubayd Allāh Ibn Jibrā'il, rightly regarded by Walzer as the source of Ibn al-Qiftī's and Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's quotations of the text of Galen, was likewise based on historiographical works dealing with chronology. The treatise was written by 'Ubayd Allāh in order to answer a question posed to him as to the time in which Galen lived, this being a controversial topic. In the beginning of this treatise quoted by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a,²² 'Ubayd Allāh states that he found his material in a chronological work written by Ilyā the Metropolitan of Nisibis²³ and in a short history written by Hārūn Ibn 'Azzūr.²⁴ Ibn al-Qiftī²⁵ states — and he may very well be

21 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

22 I, p. 72.

23 He died in 1049.

24 Ibn al-Qiftī, p. 136: 'Azūn. The transcription of the name given in the text is that of Graf; see below, n. 25.

25 He [*Ubayd Allāh*] relied on it [*the treatise in question*] in speaking of

right — that ‘Ubayd Allāh relied mainly on Hārūn. There are also some reasons for believing, as Walzer does,²⁶ that ‘Ubayd Allāh may have used Ishāq Ibn Ḥunayn’s *History of the Physicians*.

Walzer also surmises²⁷ that Ishāq’s work was used by Ibn Zur’a when he quotes Galen’s text. In his case the evidence is less clear. He may have utilized a historiographical work. It is even conceivable that, being a philosopher, he may have read a manuscript of Galen’s summary of the *Republic*; a possibility which is apparently discounted by Walzer. If one abstracts from this possibility, it may appear that the evidence in favour of each of the two traditions, the one maintaining that the text of Galen is extracted from the summary of the *Republic* and the other that the text appeared in the summary of the *Phaedo*, are supported by evidence of approximately equal strength. The fact that the first tradition is adopted by a greater number of authors is obviously of no great importance in this context. And, as we have indicated, the fact that the second tradition is attested earlier than the first is also not very significant.

One of these traditions may, of course, be due to a simple error in transmission. If it is not, several ways of interpreting the data are left open: It is conceivable that Galen may have inserted similar texts into the two summaries in question; or that the text may have originally occurred in one summary only, having been added to the other by interpolators; in both

Galen [namely] on a history written by the monk Hārūn Ibn ‘Azūn, in which the latter enumerated the kings and Caesars from the time of Alexander, [giving] the duration of the reign of every one of them (loc. cit). G. Graf lists Hārūn Ibn ‘Azzūr among the Christian Arabic authors who lived prior to Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq. See his *Geschichte der Christlichen arabischen Literatur*, II, Città del Vaticano 1947, p. 112. As he points out, a MS of Hārūn Ibn ‘Azzūr’s historical work is extant. It is listed in Sbath’s *Fihris*, under No. 2696.

26 P. 94.

27 *Loc. cit.*

summaries the texts would be spurious, having been composed by Christian interpolators. There is also the possibility that one of the summaries, or both, originally included a reference made by Galen to the Christians, and that the text that we are acquainted with is the result of an amplification and, perhaps, also an alteration due to Christian interpolators.

In this context, the fact that all, or nearly all, statements made in Galen's text²⁸ can be matched by assertions made by Christians of the early centuries of Christianity about themselves is, it seems to me, relevant. A more precise observation may be even more so. It can be shown that there is a great similarity between Galen's text and some passages of Philo's description, in the treatise *De Vita Contemplativa*, of the way of life of the Therapeutae. This similarity comes out rather clearly if one compares some portions of this description as summarized in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*²⁹ by Eusebius (who equated, as did other Church Fathers, the Therapeutae with the Christians) with the full text of Galen, as reconstructed by Walzer,³⁰ or with Agapius' version of this, or the parallel text given above.

Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*:

II, 17:10 *They³¹ study the sacred scriptures and expound their national philosophy by allegory, for they regard the literal interpretation as symbolic of a concealed reality indicated in what is beneath the surface.*

II, 17:16–17 *Having laid down for the soul continence as a foundation, they build the other virtues on it. None of them would take food or drink before sunset, for they think that philosophy*

28 The statement included in the first sentence of Walzer's reconstruction of the text has been maintained by Christian philosophers as well as by those of other religions. It is characteristic of mediaeval Arabic philosophy in general; see below, p. 81.

29 In Kirsopp Lake's translation; one word has been changed.

30 P. 15; Walzer's translation has been modified in some details.

31 The Therapeutae.

deserves the daylight and the necessities of the body darkness; for this reason they allot the day to the one, and a small portion of the night to the others. Some of them neglect food for three days for the great love of knowledge dwelling in them, and some so delight and luxuriate in the banquet of doctrine, so richly and ungrudgingly presided over by wisdom, that they abstain for twice that time, and are accustomed scarcely to taste necessary food every six days.

II, 17:19–20 *For he³² says that women belong also to those under discussion and that most of them are aged virgins who kept their chastity from no compulsion, like some of the priestesses among the Greeks, but rather from voluntary opinion,³³ from zeal and yearning for wisdom, with which they desired to live, and paid no attention to bodily pleasures, longing not for mortal but for immortal children, which only the soul that loves God is capable of bearing of itself. He then proceeds to expound this more clearly: ‘But the interpretations of the sacred scriptures are given them figuratively in allegories.’*

Walzer’s reconstruction of Galen’s text:

Most people are unable to follow any demonstrative argument consecutively; hence they need enigmatic indications and benefit from them — and he (Galen) understands by enigmatic indications tales of reward and punishment in a future life — just as now we see the people called Christians drawing their faith from parables

32 Philo.

33 Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VII, 48. In this passage Origen refers to Christian men who abstain from sexual congress and to Christian women who preserve their virginity all their life. According to him, these women compare favourably with the few pagan women who keep their virginity in honour of the gods they believe in. Origen states that he will not go into the question whether the reason for their doing this is or is not that they are guarded by men. This may allude to the statement of Philo (*De Vita Contemplativa*, 68), quoted by Eusebius in the passage cited in the text, that unlike the aged virgins, who are members of the community of Therapeutae, Greek priestesses preserve their virginity only under constraint.

*and miracles, and yet sometimes acting in the same way as those who philosophize.*³⁴ *For their lack of fear of death*³⁵ *is patent to us every day, and likewise their restraint in cohabitation. For they include not only men but also women who refrain from cohabiting all through their lives; and they also number individuals who, in self-discipline and self-control in matters of food and drink and in their keen pursuit of justice, have attained a pitch not inferior to that of genuine philosophers.*

Agapius' version of Galen's text has four main points: the Christian use of allegory;³⁶ the Christian fast³⁷ (a trait referred to in other versions of the text as their self-control in matters of food and drink); the importance the Christians attribute to continence; and Christian monasticism (in this connection he speaks of men only; other versions of the text speak of men and women).

All of these particulars are found in Eusebius' summary of Philo's description of the Therapeutae. The fact that in referring to complete sexual abstinence throughout life this text mentions only women seems to me to be of secondary importance. It is also noteworthy that no version of Galen's text and, for obvious reasons, also not the summary of Philo's description, refers in any way to Jesus or to any specific Christian belief. The reference, which is found in Ibn al-Qiftī, Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a and Abu'l-Fidā', but not in Agapius or Bar Hebraeus, to the lack of fear of death, which makes the Christians similar to the

34 Or: *doing things similar to the achievements of genuine philosophers* (see Walzer, p. 57, n. 5).

35 Some sources add words which can be roughly translated *and of its sequel*; cf. Walzer, p. 16; p. 67, n. 1.

36 The view that Christian formulations have to receive an allegorical interpretation is current in Christian writings. It is found, *inter alia*, in a manifest Christian forgery, the correspondence of Saint Paul and Seneca; in the thirteenth letter Seneca refers to the allegorical and enigmatic character of many of Paulus' texts.

37 He also adds prayers, a particular which is not found elsewhere.

philosopher, cannot be found in Eusebius' summary, but can be paralleled in relatively early Christian writings.³⁸

The notion expressed, according to Walzer's reconstruction, in the first sentence — found only in Abu'l-Fidā' — that most people, being incapable of following a demonstrative argument, need allegories, is a commonplace of Arabic philosophy, which probably took it from the Greeks. There is no reference to it in Eusebius' summary, nor in other undubitably genuine passages of Galen in which he speaks of Moses, the Jews and the Christians.³⁹ A somewhat similar statement is, however, made by Origen.⁴⁰

On the whole, the resemblances between the text attributed to Galen and Eusebius' summary of Philo's treatise seem to me

38 Thus, according to Origen (*Contra Celsum*, II, 45), the apostles surpassed in courage and endurance the philosophers of whom the Greeks speak. It may be noted that before Galen another Pagan philosopher, namely, Epictetus, referred to the indifference of the Christians, whom he calls Galilaeans, to death. According to him, this attitude resulted from habit (*ὑπὸ ἔθους*); see Epictetus, IV, 7:6.

39 See Walzer, pp. 10–15.

40 Origen remarks that if it were possible for all men to give up the business of their lives, devoting their leisure to philosophy, no one would have needed to take any other road. For within Christianity, too, the religious beliefs are investigated and the enigmas of the prophets, the Gospel parables and myriads of symbolic events and commandments interpreted. This, however, is impossible because of the necessities of life and also because of human incapacity, as only very few men turn devotedly to reason (*logos*). This being so, what better way is there to help the majority of people than the one transmitted by Jesus to the nations? What is better for the mass of the believers: somewhat to amend their habits, being helped by their faith in punishments for sin and rewards for good, or not to accept conversion based on simple faith, and put it off until they can examine the doctrines? Evidently, practically all men with very few exceptions would not, if they chose the second possibility, achieve the results that may be obtained from simple faith and continue (to cling to) a very evil way of life.

to be significant;⁴¹ they may justify the hypothesis that when this text was composed,⁴² either by Galen himself or by a Christian interpolator, the treatise in question or some Christian summary of it was drawn upon.

A recapitulation of the main conclusions that have emerged seems to be required. These conclusions may be formulated as follows:

1. There is an independent tradition that maintains that Galen's text concerning the Christians occurred in the summary of the *Phaedo*.

The evidence in favour of this tradition is comparable in validity to the evidence that attests that the text occurred in the summary of the *Republic*.

2. The immediate sources of 'Ubayd Allāh Ibn Jibrā'il Bakh-tishu's treatise were two historiographical works treating of chronology. This treatise may have been also influenced by Ishāq Ibn Ḥunayn's *History of the Physicians*.

3. As supposed by Walzer, the passage we have referred to as Galen's text was probably composed in Greek.

4. There is a close resemblance between Galen's text and some passages in Philo's description of the Therapeutae. These points stand out in the summary of this description made by Eusebius, who, like other Christian authors, believes that Philo speaks of the early Christians. This resemblance should be taken into account in a discussion of Galen's text. It does not necessarily prove that the text is spurious, though, on the whole, it tends to give greater credibility to this thesis.⁴³

41 They are much closer than the resemblances between Galen's text and a passage of Alexander of Lycopolis concerning the Christians with which the text is compared by Walzer (p. 72). Like the text and like Eusebius' summary, this passage does not mention Jesus or any specific Christian belief, but it does not mention Christian asceticism either.

42 Or amplified and given its final form; see below, n. 43.

43 As indicated above, there is a possibility that 'Galens' text' is the result of an amplification of a shorter genuine passage of Galen dealing with the Christians. This passage may have been altered in the process.

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כתבי האקדמיה הלאומית הישראלית למדעים

החטיבה למדעי-הרוח

עדותו של יוסף בן מתתיהו על ישו
בנוסח ערבי והמשתמע מכך

מאת

שלמה פינס

ירושלים תשל"א

בס' קדמוניות היהודים (יח, 63—64) של יוסף בן מתתיהו מצויה פיסקה הדנה בישו. פיסקה זו מכילה, בין השאר, את המשפטים האלה:

באותו זמן היה ישו, אדם חכם, אם אפשר לקרוא לו אדם. ... הוא היה המשיח [כריסטוס]. ... הוא הופיע לפניהם [לפני אלה שאהבו אותו בראשונה] ביום השלישי [אחרי צליבתו] כשהוא שוב חי. דברים אלה ועוד רבבות נפלאות אחרות אמרו עליו [היינו, ניבאו עליו] הנביאים האלוהיים.

הנוסח המקובל של הפיסקה הזאת, הידועה בשם Testimonium Flavianum (כלומר, עדותו של יוסף פלאוויוס), מצוטט על-ידי אוסביוס (מת בשנת 339 או בשנת 340), אך לא לפניו. אם הפיסקה היא אמנם פרי עטו של ההיסטוריון היהודי, הרי גודעת לה חשיבות רבה ביותר, מאחר שיש לראותה כתעודה הקדומה ביותר שבידנו שנכתבה על-אודות ישו על-ידי אדם שלא השתייך, כמסתבר, לעדה הנוצרית. עם זאת ברור, שמחבר הנוסח המקובל של הפיסקה היתה לו עמדה קרובה או זהה לעמדה הנוצרית, ועובדה זאת יש בה כדי לעורר חשד בדבר אותנטיות הפיסקה. זה מאות בשנים, מאז תחילת העת החדשה, ניטש יכוח ער בעניין זה, והוא נמשך עד הזמן הזה. דרך הכללה אפשר לומר, שרווחות שלוש גישות: (1) יש חוקרים הרואים בנוסח המקובל נוסח אותנטי; (2) חוקרים אחרים פוסלים את אותנטיות הפיסקה מכול וכול ורואים בה אינטרפולאציה נוצרית ותו לא; (3) לדעת אחרים כלל הנוסח המקורי של ס' קדמוניות היהודים טקסט הדין בישו, אלא שהנוצרים עיבדו ותיקנו אותו. כמה חוקרים ניסו לאתר תיקונים אלה ולסלקם, ולשחזר את הטקסט המקורי.

בכל הוויכוחים והדיונים שהתנהלו לא הוקדשה תשומת-לב — עד כמה שידוע לי — לנוסח של הפיסקה הנדונה המצוי בחיבור היסטורי מן המאה ה'י', שנכתב בערבית על-ידי המחבר הנוצרי אנאפיוס, שהיה אפיסקופוס בכנסייה האורתודוקסית (מלכית). והרי תרגום הנוסח, המובא כאן תוך התעלמות מאי-אלה חילופי-נוסח בעלי חשיבות משנית:

באותו זמן היה אדם חכם שנקרא ישוע. והיה לו אורח-חיים נאה, וידוע היה בתורת בעל מידות טובות [או, לפי גירסה אחרת: היו לו

אורח־חיים נאה וידיעה מופלגת]. אנשים רבים מקרב היהודים ושאר האומות היו תלמידיו. פילאטוס גזר עליו צליבה ומוות, [אך] אלה שהיו תלמידיו לא זנחו את משנתו. הם סיפרו, שהופיע להם שלושה ימים אחרי צליבתו ושהיה חי. ואולי הוא המשיח, אשר אמרו עליו הנביאים נפלאות.

בנוסח זה אין המחבר מציג את השאלה אם ישו היה בן־אנוש או יצור נעלה מזה. דבר הופעתו אחרי הצליבה נזכר כסיפור שסיפרו תלמידיו, ואין המחבר מחווה את דעתו על אמינותו. אם בנוסח המקובל הזכרת האמונה במשיחיותו של ישו היא בבחינת קביעה חד־משמעית מצד המחבר, הרי בנוסח של אגאפיוס נוספה להזכרה הזאת התיבה 'אולי'. על־סמך ההבדלים בין שתי הנוסחאות (אלה שפורטו כאן ואלה שלא פורטו), אפשר לקבוע, כי בנוסח של אגאפיוס נעלמה או נחלשה במידה רבה מאוד הנימה הנוצרית המאפינת את הנוסח המקובל, אותה הנימה אשר בעטייה התגלע הוויכוח על אותנטיות הפיסקה שלפנינו.

בהקשר זה ראוי להעיר, כי המשפט האומר שישו היה המשיח מופיע בצורה פחות החלטית מאשר בנוסח המקובל בשתי נוסחאות אחרות: האחת — בשפה הסורית, בכתבי מיכאל הסורי (חי במאה ה'ב'); והאחרת — בלאטינית, בדברי היירונימוס (חי במאות ה'ד'—ה'ה'). לפי הנוסח של היירונימוס, שהוגדר לפעמים כספקני, 'נחשב [ישו] למשיח [כריסטוס]'. לכך יש להוסיף, כי במידה שלא ינק במישרין מחיבוריו של יוסף בן מתתיהו, השתמש אגאפיוס בהרצאתו על תקופת ישו בראש וראשונה בכתבים היסטוריים שנתחברו בידי נוצרים, וכי לא נזקק למחבר שהיה מסוגל לסלף את 'העדות הפלאוויאנית' מתוך יחס עויין לנצרות.

לאור הממצא העובדתי מסתבר (אם בוחרים בהשערה הזהירה ביותר), שהנוסח של אגאפיוס (ולגבי פרט אחד הוא הדין גם בנוסחאות של היירונימוס ושל מיכאל הסורי) עובד פחות על־ידי הצנזורה הנוצרית משעובד הטקסט המקובל, שאולי נתקבל בזכותו של אוסביוס. המסקנה העולה מכך היא, שהנוסח של אגאפיוס קרוב יותר לנוסח המקורי של ה'עדות'. אין במסקנה זו משום קביעה, כי הטקסט המקורי המשוער הוא פרי עטו של יוסף בן מתתיהו, אך עם זאת יש באופי נוסחו של אגאפיוס כדי להחליש אחדות מן הטענות שהובאו נגד הסברה, שס' קדמוניות היהודים הכיל פיסקה על ישו.