

Yochanan and Yahshua in the Slavonic / Aramaic Josephus

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To the reader: This day I have tried my best to edit both commentary and text in a way that is more sound than the original translations, and as accurately as I could redact. If I have made errors (which you will certainly find), then understand that these were not intentional. If the errors are minor, please do contact me with a fix. I present this work to you in the name of the Elohim of the Word and Yahshua of the Testimonial. And so it is. - jhs 102618

Classical Introduction with Notes

IN The *Antiquities* of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus there are three passages of outstanding importance for believing readers, seeing that they are the only external witnesses to the Nazarene Faith from the first century. As such they have been submitted to the closest cross-examination and scrutiny. The general result of the inquiry into the authenticity of their testimony has established for most scholars the judgment, that we have here to deal not with a homogeneous body of evidence, but with three different witnesses, one of which is distinctly good, another as distinctly bad, and a third very probably good. The passage on Yochanan the Baptist is well-nigh universally accepted as affording no grounds for reasonable skepticism, and as therefore providing a most valuable external proof that Yochanan was a historical character. The account of Yahshua, on the other hand, has been called into most serious question by the vast majority of *liberal* scholars, and by very many conservatives, on numerous grounds, and chiefly because the writer unequivocally affirms that Yahshua was the Messiah, a statement which *no Jew* could have made (???). The third is a reference to James, the brother of Yahshua 'called' or 'said to be Messiah's brother', which without hesitation may fairly be ascribed to Josephus himself. Many then who reject the Yahshua-passage as indubitably spurious, accept the James-reference as free from reasonable suspicion, and thus obtain a brief but valuable early external evidence for today's believers.

Josephus composed his *Antiquities* in Greek, and completed them in 93/94 A.D. They are a general survey of the traditions and history of his people up to the special period of which he had already treated in detail in his first and most famous work, *The Jewish War*. In describing the events which led up to the outbreak of the revolt, he treats of all the other religious and political movements in Palestine, even the most insignificant, contemporary with the beginnings of Messianism, and yet he says not a single word about the Baptist or Yahshua. This is a very striking and puzzling omission. Where precisely we should expect to find such mention, and where far greater opportunities occur for bringing it in than in *The Antiquities*, we are confronted with 'the silence of Josephus.' The *War* was first of all composed in Aramaic and circulated among the Jews of Palestine and Babylonia, doubtless

to convince them of the futility of resisting the might of the Roman arms. Of this original edition, however, no trace has so far been discovered. The work known to us is in Greek. It is not a translation so much as a re-composition very carefully prepared on the models of Greek history; and in this Josephus sought the help of Greek stylists. It reads indeed like an original composition; whatever the Aramaic contained, *the work as it now stands has been clearly adapted to suit the mentality of the wider public of the Greco-Roman world and the literary circles of the day to whom it was presented.* (We might ask, What does this imply? Would we accept the possibility that Josephus did not write this account in Aramaic first as he did with Wars? And what if this work is neither *Antiquities* or *Wars*? Certainly, as prolific as Josephus was, would he not have written other accounts in Aramaic, his native language? -jhs)

This Greek edition (of *Wars*) was composed between 75 and 79 A.D. It is of course not impossible to suppose that in the Aramaic there may have been reference to the Yochanan- and Yahshua-movements. But *why then should Josephus have cut them out*, when there is an indubitable passage concerning Yochanan and a higher probable reference to Yahshua in *The Antiquities*? To conjecture a satisfactory answer to this dilemma is exceedingly difficult; it remains an unsolved *crux*. For had there been any such passages in the Aramaic edition of the *War*, surely Christian apologists would have seized upon them and insisted that they should be restored to the Greek text? unless by chance they contained matter they would not like to see in wider circulation. That clear light will ever be thrown on this 'silence of Josephus' problem is hardly to be expected. (Josephus had plenty of reason to keep silent in the Greek editions! Was not Yochanan and Yahshua, as Davidids, considered to be disestablish-mentarianists? Were not the Davidids brought to Rome before several Imperial administrations for questioning? Did not Trajan have them executed? Reason enough to keep silent before the Romans. -jhs))

Nevertheless the subject may be said to have recently entered on a new phase: certain hitherto unknown material has been brought forward, which has forced the problem once more into the arena of controversy; and it may very well be that in the future this new material will have always, directly or indirectly, to be taken into consideration whenever the familiar Josephean passages are reviewed or re-discussed.

There is extant in a number of MSS. a *Slavonic or Old Russian translation of the War*. In this version there are no less than *eight pieces* referring to Yochanan the Baptist (3), Yahshua (4) and the first Believers (1). These remarkable passages, of which the Greek text shows no trace, have been excerpted and the Slavonic text of them critically established by the collation of four MSS.

In the first place it is agreed on all hands by the German scholars who have investigated them, that these pieces were not originally composed in Slavonic and interpolated into the translation. Not only is the style foreign to correct Slavonic idiom, but the peculiar nature of the contents is so alien to Slavonic mentality, that to suppose so late a writer as a Slavonic translator, who could at the very earliest be assigned only to the 10th century, is out of the question. They are indubitably translations, and moreover clearly rendered from Greek. This is shown not only by the construction of the sentences in general, but also by the clumsiness and uncertainty of the translator in his rendering of particles and conjunctions; moreover the Greek original for the veil or curtain of the temple (*katapetasma*) is retained. (The translators could well have been the great Sts. Cyril and Methodius! -jhs) These eight pieces were excerpted from the rest of the text and first made accessible for the general world of scholarship, in German translation, by A. Berendts, in 1906.

The consensus of learned opinion in Germany (and elsewhere apparently no notice whatever has been taken of the 'find') from the start has been entirely unfavorable to their authenticity. (Note – German scholarly opinion in general in 1906. -jhs) That is to say, no one has so far ventured to claim them for Josephus himself. They were immediately and almost unanimously dismissed as transparent Christian forgeries, and that too of a late date and of no sort of historic value of any kind. Here and there, however, were signs of some hesitation in endorsing so wholesale and precise a verdict; for a few, the matter seemed not so simple as it appeared at first sight. The first *caveat* was entered and the subject brought into a new perspective by R. Seeberg in a somewhat popular but highly suggestive treatment, which he boldly entitled 'A New Source for Jewish the Earliest History of Christianity.' Though Seeberg's reputation as a specialist on questions of origins forbade the rejection of his view as that of an irresponsible eccentric, no attention was paid to it, perhaps because he had not attempted to work out his theory in detail. This task, however, was speedily undertaken by Johannes Frey, of the University of Dorpat, who had just published a very valuable and thorough-going study of the History of the Passion. In 1908 Frey produced a substantial volume, in which he treated the material to an acute analysis and with minute elaboration, and in other respects showed a remarkable grasp of all the puzzling complexities of a whole series of problems which an intensive scrutiny of the passages brought out.

In the first place Frey called attention to the fact that the general characteristics of these pieces were very different from those of all other ancient Christian forgeries known to us. His main contention throughout this very thorough inquiry is that the author, whoever he may have been precisely, must be held in general to be a Jew and not a Christian. There is *no evidence of direct dependence* on early canonical Christian literature, *no sign that he had any acquaintance* with the precision of written

tradition. In so far as there is agreement with the Gospels or Acts, it is only in respect to the barest generalities; *there is nothing even to show acquaintance* with the precise inner oral traditions of the Christians themselves. It is all set forth from an external standpoint. Nevertheless, the writer is not simply fabricating freely out of his imagination. He has traditional material of some sort to go on. He is trying to set forth what he has heard and gathered, and *what at times puzzles him considerably*. He reports opinion of what people say; some this, others that. He would also play the part of the impartial historian, considering probabilities and even possibilities. He is not a hostile critic by any means; on the contrary, he is in general sympathetic. Indeed he regards both Yochanan and Yahshua as outstanding personalities, even astonishingly so, and his sympathies are enlisted for them because he thinks they have both been most unjustly done to death. His attitude is thus in general that of a friendly Jewish outsider - a very difficult part for a convinced Christian to play without betraying himself in some fashion as a believer in the full Christian claims. He, however, nowhere asserts that Yahshua was the Messiah. Frey's main contention, then, following Seeberg, is that the writer worked on Jewish general popular oral sources; in other words, he had at his disposal traditions proximate to the occurrences, and therefore worthy of attention as giving a picture of an early outside view of nascent Christianity.

Seeberg thinks that Christian manipulation must be admitted in three or four places; but Frey tries to show that he is here mistaken. Frey is perhaps not sufficiently cautious in thus leaving no loophole. But even with this qualification, if the main contention of both scholars can stand, the possibility of our being faced with early external traditions of some kind is a matter of quite extraordinary interest, and deserves the careful attention of all students of pertinent history.

As practically nothing is known of these passages by English readers, it may be of service to present those few of them who see this study, with a translation of the German version of these eight extracts. They may then judge for themselves how the contents strike them. But whatever may be their opinion as to their value or worthlessness, it cannot be denied that every scrap of material, however intractable, that can be held by any trained mind to contain the possibility of having even the remotest bearing on the surroundings of earliest Nazarene faith as we know it, possesses a unique interest and fascination of its own; for the first century is otherwise practically silent outside the New Testament documents.

The version that follows is made from the German translation given in Frey's volume; I have, however, added the sub-titles. It is literal and clumsy, like the German, which faithfully follows the Slavonic. The variant readings in the MSS. are slight, and I have not noted them in detail. For the present paper is intended for the general reader solely, and not for the specialist, who must deal at

first hand with Frey's technical exposition, which, as far as I am aware, has not yet been disposed of, or indeed in any way answered.

Yochanan's Proclamation and His Rebuke of the Authorities

1. Now at that time a man went about among the Jews in strange apparel for he had put pelts on his body everywhere where it was not covered with his own hair. 2. Indeed to look at he was like a wild man. 3. He came to the Jews and summoned them to freedom, saying: "Elohim has sent me, that I may show you the way of the Torah, wherein ye may free yourselves from many power-brokers. 4. And there will be no mortal ruling over you, only the Highest who has sent me." 5. And when the people had heard this, they were joyful. And there went after him all Judea that lies in the region around Jerusalem. 6. And he did nothing else to them save that he plunged them into the stream of the Jordan and dismissed them, instructing them that they should cease from evil works, and *promising* that there would *then* be given them a ruler who would set them free and subject to them all that is not in submission. But that no one of whom we speak would himself be subjected. 7. Some reviled, but others got faith. 8. And when he had been brought to Archelaus (reigned until 6 AD.) and the doctors of the Torah had assembled, they asked him who he is and where he has been until then. 9. And to this he made answer and spoke: "I am pure; the Spirit of Elohim has led me onward, and I eat cane and roots and tree-food. 10. But when they threatened to put him to torture if he would not cease from those words and deeds, he nevertheless said: "It is appropriate for you *instead* to cease from your heinous works and cleave to YHWH your Elohim." 11. And there rose up in anger Simon, an Essan by extraction, a scribe, and he spake: "We read the divine books every day. 12. But you alone now come from the forest like a wild animal *and* you dare in truth to teach us and to mislead the people with your condemning words?" 13. And he rushed forward to do him bodily violence. 14. But Yochanan, rebuking them, said: "I will not disclose to you the mystery that dwells in you, for you have not wanted it. 15. Thereby an untold calamity is to come upon you, and because of yourselves." 16. And when he had spoken so, he went on to the other side of the Jordan; and while no one dared rebuke him, *he did what he had done* as before.

Yochanan's Interpretation of Philippos' Dream

1. While Herod Philippos was still in possession of his dominion, he saw a dream - how an eagle tore out both his eyes. 2. And he summoned all his wise men. 3. But when each interpreted the dream differently, there came to him suddenly, without being summoned, that man of whom we have previously written, that he went about in skins of animals and cleansed the people in the waters of the Jordan. 4. And he spoke: "Give ear to the word of YHWH *concerning* the dream you hast seen. 5. The eagle - that is your *acceptance of bribes*; because that bird is violent and rapacious. 6. And that sin will take away your eyes, that are your dominion and your wife." 7. And when he had so spoken, Philippos died before evening and his dominion was given to Herod Agrippa.

Yochanan's Persistent Rebuking of Agrippa and His Execution

1. And Herod *Antipas*, *Philippos'* brother, took *Philippos'* wife Herodias. 2. And because of her all the scholars of the Torah despised him, but dared not accuse him before his face. 3. But only that one - *the one* they called a wild man - came to him in anger and said: "Why have you taken your brother's wife? 4. As your brother died a death void of pity, you too will be reaped off by the celestial sickle. 5. Elohim's decree will not be silenced, but will destroy you through *an* evil affliction in foreign lands. 6. For you do not raise up seed for your brother, but gratify your fleshly lust and commit adultery, seeing that four of his children are yet alive." 7. Now when Herod heard *this*, he was filled with anger and commanded that they should beat him *up* and drive him away. 8. But he accused Herod incessantly wherever he found him, and right up to the time when Herod put him under arrest and gave orders to slay him. 9. Now his character was extraordinary and his way of life not that of a man; indeed, just like a bodiless spirit *he lived*, and thus did he *ever* continue. 10. His lips knew no bread; not even at Pesach did he taste unleavened bread, saying that, in remembrance of Elohim who had freed the people from slavery, it was given for eating in the flight, for hasty was *that* passage. He did not allow himself to come near wine or intoxicating drinks. And every animal he despised *as food*, and every wrong he rebuked, and the production of trees served him for use.

The Ministry, Trial and Crucifixion Of Yahshua

1. A man came forward at that same time (if is fitting to call him *simply* a man). 2. His nature and form were *that of* a man; but his countenance was greater *than that of* a man. 3. His works, that is to say, were like Elohim, for he brought forth amazingly wondrous and powerful works. 4. So it is not possible for me to call him *simply* a man. 5. But again, noting the *type of* existence he shared with all, I would also not call him an angel. 6. And all that he did *was* through some kind of invisible power, which he accomplished by word and command. 7. Some said of him, that our first Torah-giver has risen from the dead and demonstrates many cures and arts. 8. But others simply supposed he was sent by Elohim. 9. Now he *seemed* to oppose himself regarding the Torah and did not observe the Shabbat in accordance with ancestral custom. 10. Yet, on the other hand, he did nothing wrong nor *did he commit* any crime; but by word solely he effected everything. 11. And many of the folks followed him and accepted his teachings. 12. And many inner beings became unsure, supposing that by *him* the Jewish tribes would set themselves free from the Roman hands. 13. Now it was his custom to stop often on the Mount of Olives facing the city. 14. And there also he affirmed his cures to the people. 15. And there gathered themselves to him a hundred and fifty armed men (knechten), but of the folk a multitude. 16. Yet when they saw his power - that he accomplished everything that he would by word - they urged him to enter the city and cut down the Roman soldiers and Pilatus,

and to rule over us. 17. But he scorned that. 18. And thereafter, when news of it came to the Jewish leaders, they gathered together with the High-priest and spoke: "We are powerless and weak to withstand the Romans. 19. But since the bow is bent *already*, we will go and tell Pilatus what we have heard, and we will be without great worry *in the case that* he hear it from others and we be robbed of our stuff and be put to the sword; even *have* our children ruined." 20. And they went and told it to Pilatus. 21. And he sent *troops* and had many of the people cut down. 22. And he had that wonder-worker brought up. And when he had instituted a trial for him, he perceived that he is a good deed doer; not an evildoer, nor a revolutionary, nor one who aimed at power, and *Pilatus* set him free. 23. You should know: *That man* had healed *Pilatus* dying wife. 24. So *Yahshua* went to his accustomed place and did his accustomed work. 25. And as again – even more folks gathered together around him. Thereby he won more glory through his works than all *the rest*. 26. The teachers of the Torah were poisoned with envy and gave thirty talents to Pilatus so he might put *Yahshua* to death. 27. And he, after he had taken *the talents*, gave them *his* consent that they should themselves carry out their purpose. 28. And they took him and crucified him according to the ancestral Torah.

The Treatment of the First Nazarenes

1. *The Emperor* Claudius sent his authorities to those states to Cuspius Fadus and Tiberius Alexander, both of whom kept the people in peace, not allowing them to depart in anything from the pure *Roman* Laws. 2. But if anyone diverged from the word of *their* Law, a *legal* complaint was brought before the teachers of the Law. 3. Often they expelled *the accused* and sent him to the Emperor's presence. 4. And at the time of these two *men*, many had been discovered as slaves of the previously described wonder-worker; and as they spoke to the people about their teacher - that he is alive – though dead - and that he will free you from your slavery - many from the folks listened intently to *Yochanan and Yahshua*, and took up their precepts, 5. not because of their reputations; for indeed they were of the humbler sort of *folks* - some just shoemakers, others sandal-makers, others artisans. 6. Yet as marvelous signs, they accomplished in truth *all* they would. 7. But when those noble governors saw the people being misled, they deliberated with the scribes to seize and put them to death, fearful that the small be not so small if it were to end up being great. 8. But they shrank back in alarm over these signs, saying: "In the plain course of *life*, such wonders do not occur. 9. But if they do not issue from the directive of Elohim, they will quickly be convicted." 10. And they gave *the Nazarene Believers* the authority to act as they would. 11. But afterwards, becoming pestered by them, they had them sent away, some to the Emperor, but others to Antioch, others again to distant lands, for the testing of the matter. 12. But Claudius removed the two governors *and* sent Cumanus (48 AD).

The Trilingual Inscription Concerning Yahshua

At the foundation of the Temple were columns . . . and on these were inscriptions in Greek and Roman and Jewish characters, publishing the Torah of purity and announcing that no foreigner should enter the inner court; for they called it the Qadosh, to which one had to ascend up fourteen steps, and whose upper story was built in a square. And over these inscribed tablets hung a fourth tablet with the inscription in these *three* characters *something* to the effect that Yahshua has not reigned as king; he has been crucified by the Jews, because he proclaimed the destruction of the city and the laying waste of the temple.

Portents at the Death of Yahshua and Rumors of His Resurrection

1. This curtain [katapetasma] was complete before this generation, because the people were righteous; but now it is lamentable to look at. 2. You should know that it had been suddenly torn from the top to the ground when, through bribery, they delivered over to death the doer of good, the Man. Yes, he who through his own doing was no man. 3. And they tell of many other signs that came to pass at that time. 4. And it was said that after he was put to death, yes after burial in the grave, he was not found! 5. Some then asserted that he *has* risen; but others, that he has been stolen by his friends. 6. I, however, do not know which speak more correctly. 7. For a dead man cannot rise of himself, though possibly with the help of another righteous man; unless it be an angel or another of the divine authorities, or by Elohim himself appearing as a man to accomplish what he will - both walk with men and fall, and lie down and rise up, as it is according to his will. 8. But others said that it was not possible to steal him, because they had put guards all round his grave amounting to thirty Romans and a thousand Jews. 9. Such is described as to that curtain. Moreover, *as to the cause of its tearing, there are other explanations as well.*

A Prophecy Concerning Yahshua

Indeed, some by this understood *who the subject of the Star Prophecy might be as Herod*, but others the crucified wonder-worker Yahshua, others again Vespasian.

(The Star Prophecy: I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. - Numbers 24:17)

In Conclusion

A few very general remarks may be added calling attention to the most salient points. In the pieces about Yochanan, there is nothing sufficiently distinctive to show any literary dependence on the New

Testament accounts. On the contrary, there are entire novelties and wide divergences. In the first place the strong political coloring given by the writer to the proclamation of the prophet is quite out of keeping with anything to be found in the Gospel presentation. But the most striking difference is the protracted period assigned to Yochanan's activity. 'At that time' means during the ethnarchy of Archelaus. Now Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., and Archelaus, who succeeded him, was deposed in 6 A.D. It is quite inconceivable that any Christian writer who had the Gospel-story before him could have made what would be so astounding a statement to Christian ears, one that would at once appear to the most moderately instructed as an obvious and foolish blunder. Surely the last thing an intelligent forger would desire to do would be to give occasion to his readers to call the canonical narrative into question concerning so prominent a feature as Yochanan's almost equal age with Yahshua, and so practically invite them to dismiss all the graphic details of the birth-stories as fictitious unless it be that he wrote before these stories were in circulation. No one short of a lunatic would concoct 'evidence' against his own side. The writer must therefore have moved in circles who would see no difficulty in assigning to Yochanan a public activity of at least 30 years; for he tells us that Yochanan survived the death of Philippos, which took place somewhere between 33 and 36 A.D.

The cross-examination of Yochanan by the authorities and the incident of Simon the Essene are also arresting novelties; but there is nothing improbable in them. The introduction of the name Essene does not in any way depend on Christian tradition; for the surprising fact is that, though there are close parallels between some of the doctrines of the Essenes and gospel-ethics, and between some of their practices and the regulations, for instance, laid down for the mission of the apostles and the communal observances of the earliest communities of believers, the New Testament writers never mention the name. The wording of the refusal of Yochanan at the end of his rebuke to disclose a certain mystery to his official opponents has led some to the supposition that this is a cryptic reference to Yahshua, meaning 'the mystery dwelling among you.' That of course would be impossible at so early a date as prior to A.D. 6. But surely, quite apart from this, a Christian apologist would have been at pains to bring out clearly so essential a feature as Yochanan's acknowledgment of the Messiahship of Yahshua, and not go out of his way to disguise it? It is a curious and thought-provoking phrase. It may refer to the 'kingdom,' to the indwelling rule and Torah of Elohim, that is brought to consciousness in the hearts of the repentant; or it may possibly be that Yochanan had some inner mystical doctrine to reveal, for we have to remember that the Mandan or Gnostic Yochanan-tradition, which has come down to our own days, has ever laid the greatest stress on the mystical element in the teaching of the Baptizer.

The interpretation of the dream of Philippos, like the stress laid upon Yochanan's strange appearance and dress and his extraordinary mode of life, is just such a detail as would strike the imagination and linger in the memory of the people. What more likely and in keeping with precedent than that a prophet should interpret the dream of the king? But here we have, not only a novelty for readers of the gospel-account, but also a contradiction with Josephus himself. The unfavorable character given to Philippos, the stress laid on his 'venality,' is in complete contrast with the reputation given him by Josephus in his *Antiquities* (XVIII. iv. 6), where he is praised for the mild and peaceable disposition he displayed in his government, and for the personal interest he took in the administration of justice. Now the *Antiquities* was completed in 93/94 A.D. Had then our writer known it, he would not presumably have made Josephus contradict himself so egregiously. This raises the question as to the possibility of his having written before the *Antiquities* got into wide circulation.

(Note: Archelaus was relieved from his duties by Rome, replacing him by Antipas. Historical documents tell us that the reason for this is that Archelaus was so cruel a tyrant that his first act upon ascending was to have thousands of people murdered. Josephus is still dealing with Roman agents, and Rome appointed all these Herodian rulers. While Josephus is hosted by the Flavians, would he offer up an extremely negative critique of the Herods? No. -jhs)

In some respects, this description of Herod marrying his brother's wife agrees with the synoptic account and in others differs from it as to this marriage. But Josephus himself in his *Antiquities* (XVIII. v. 1 and 4) tells the story quite differently from both. (This kind of contradiction is hardly rare in Josephus.) There we read that Herodias was married first of all to Herod Boethus and that the wife of Philippos was Salome, the daughter of this union; so that Philippos was son-in-law of Herodias. Herod Antipas, says Josephus, was the second husband of Herodias, and the marriage took place while the first husband, Boethus, was still alive. Josephus, moreover, says that Philippos died childless; while our author avers that he left four children surviving him. Moreover Josephus in the famous passage concerning Yochanan in the *Antiquities* (XVIII. v. 2) knows nothing of Yochanan's execution being due to so personal a cause as is depicted both by the Gospels and our author, though very differently; it is in the *Antiquities* ascribed solely to Antipas' apprehension of the political consequences of the Baptist's movement. Our author is then clearly ignorant of both the *Antiquities* account and also of the most characteristic feature of the Gospel-narrative, the graphic story of the dancing of the daughter of Herodias. Everything therefore goes to show that he is drawing on some other traditional source. (This is not to say Josephus changed his story, which he occasionally does. -jhs)

Finally, as the climax to Yochanan's extraordinary scruples about food, it is asserted that he would not touch unleavened bread even at Pesach, an absolutely obligatory observance in Jewry. Moreover he is made to give an exegetical justification for his abstention. This is the distinctive touch of a Jewish hand; it is exceedingly unlikely that it would ever have occurred to a late Christian.

As to the Yochanan-pieces then we seem to be moving in a thoroughly Jewish atmosphere, and there is nothing characteristically Christian about them.

The Yahshua-pieces are naturally the most arresting and form the main crux of the whole matter. It seems to be generally held that all the eight pieces are by the same hand. They may be said to have in general the same terms of expression, to breathe the same spirit and present similar characteristics. In the main Yahshua-pieces the author makes a show of trying to get at a reasonable point of view; but he hesitates in his judgment and frankly confesses his inability to make up his mind. He is convinced that the more generally credible events themselves are historic; but as to the sheerly miraculous elements he is content to set them forth as rumors giving rise to absolutely contradictory opinions. So non-committal and rationalistic a proceeding is quite foreign to the mentality of a convinced Christian. This attitude of reserve and the very striking divergences of the writer from the Gospel-accounts are in the sharpest possible distinction to the perspective and procedure of the compilers of such apocryphal documents as the *Acts of Pilatus* and *The Gospel of Peter*. In the latter the literary dependence on the gospels is manifest on all hands; what is added is in no way contradictory, but adduced solely to exalt the greatness of Yahshua and heighten the impression of the miraculous element.

Star Prophecy – if it is carefully and critically compared with the famous ~~spurious~~ passage concerning Yahshua in our text of the *Antiquities* (XVIII. iii. 3), it will at once be seen that if there is any possible question of dependence between them, it is not on the side of our author. Even among the opinions he cites, there is no hint of Messiahship. When he says that some "supposed that he had been sent by Elohim," it means no more than what he makes Yochanan assert of himself, namely, that he was a prophet. It seems to me moreover highly improbable that any late Christian could have referred to his Master, the one and only Son of Elohim, as 'that wonder-worker' or the 'crucified wonder-worker Yahshua.'

The divergences from the Gospel-account of the Yahshua-story are so striking that they need not be dwelt on. To every instructed Christian the gospel-narratives are presumably so familiar in all their details, that the contradictions with our author's account will present themselves automatically. Nevertheless the more one meditates on the accounts of the typical external acts of the ministry and the intrigues of the Jewish authorities to compass the death of Yahshua, the more does it seem

within its own measures not to be inconsistent; in fact it hangs very well together from an outside point of view. That view is in no way due to a manipulation of Gospel-information; it is based on very different data, and has all the appearance of an honest attempt to piece together and interpret floating traditions and conjectures reflected from days contemporaneous perchance with the attempts of the 'many' to set forth the events, as the introduction to the Lukan gospel informs us.

The phrase 'servants,' 'slaves,' 'men-at-arms,' 'knights' as applied to the disciples, it may be noted, is a thoroughly Jewish conception; it was used by the Rabbis to emphasize the relationship between pupils and teacher. The precise figure 150 may be a round number; otherwise it depends on a tradition for which the 12 and the 70 were of no importance.

The final sentence, which avers, not only that the Jewish authorities themselves crucified Yahshua, but that this was in accordance with the Torah, is so astonishing in the latter respect that it has been set down to *a gross blunder of the Slavonic translator from the Greek original*, which may have read 'contrary to the Law,' with the genitive and not the accusative. This seems a reasonable supposition; though we must remember that Jewish rulers in Maccabean days did crucify their political opponents.

The trilingual inscription statement is a wild piece of fanciful combination. The writer has heard of an inscription connected with the execution of Yahshua; indeed it was required by Torah that the formal charge should be placarded in all cases of capital punishment. Moreover he has heard that this particular notice was set forth in three languages; and he also has heard that there were trilingual inscriptions outside the inner court of the Temple. In combining the two he departs so far from his general sobriety that we might almost think the passage was by another hand; but this is otherwise not probable. The first charge against Yahshua was that he had excited the people to revolt; of this he was acquitted by Pilatus. The authorities had then to give some other excuse: Yahshua was executed not because of any Messianistic agitation, but because he prophesied disaster to the temple and the holy city. Some excuse had to be found that would placate the people.

In the tearing of the veil and the reference to many other portents seem to depend on characteristically Christian tradition; but it need not be supposed that this tradition was in the fixed Gospel-form in which we now have it. The phrase 'prior to this generation' is intended to mean some 30/40 years before Josephus wrote his History (75- 79 A.D.). It is interesting to note that at that time similar portents were in the air; for Jewish tradition (the Talmuds and Josephus himself) makes mention of a mysterious spontaneous opening of the heavy iron temple-doors 40 years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Gospel of the Hebrews refers to a similarly mysterious breach in the iron threshold of the same doors. There were widespread legends of portents current in the folk-

memory. Our author then goes on to treat of the rumors and contradictory statements about the resurrection; and here, as before, he ruminates on possibilities, giving the conjectural pros and cons, but declining to commit himself on the side of the most vital belief of Christendom.

Concerning the early Christians, such is equally as far from literary dependence on the canonical Acts as are the Yahshua-pieces on the Gospels. There are wide divergences; and the whole produces an impression of utter ignorance of the detailed, methodical setting-forth of the thirty years of history contained in the Acts. Isolated facts, such as Paul's being sent to Caesar at Rome, are absurdly generalized on the one hand, and on the other the events of decades are crammed into the narrow time-frame of some four years, the period of office of the two governors mentioned (44-48 A.D.). The phrase "But if they do not issue from the counsel of Elohim, they will quickly be convicted" is thought by some to indicate literary dependence on a similar saying in the Acts. But the latter famous utterance, ascribed to Gamaliel (prior to 7 A.D.), is worded so very differently that, if any connection between them can be supposed, it may well be ascribed in both cases to the uncertain echoing in the popular mind of a well-known Rabbinical pronouncement.

In conclusion, then, it may be said that the hope of extracting anything of value out of these astonishing and puzzling interpolations depends on establishing the reasonableness of the hypothesis, that they are based on echoes of popular traditions still floating about in the Jewish environment of Christianity in, say, the last third of the first century. There is, I think, much that goes to show the likelihood of this supposition, or at least to deter us from summarily dismissing it. But even if we are persuaded to this extent, we are confronted with the still more difficult task of imagining a satisfactory conjecture as to the status and motive of the writer.

If we hold him to have been a Jew, as the above analysis seems to require, what plausible motive can we ascribe to him for interpolating the matter into the text of Josephus? Was he a disinterested lover of history who thought that Josephus had fallen short of historical impartiality by neglecting to mention two such remarkable personages as Yochanan and Yahshua and two such important movements as those associated with their names, and desired to amend the historian in this respect in days when copyright had not yet been dreamed of?

Or may we assume that a pupil of Josephus would think himself entitled to amend the narrative?

If, on the contrary, he was a Christian, the interest in filling the gaps would be easily understandable, had he based himself on canonical tradition. But the divergences from and flat contradictions of that tradition are so extraordinary, that one is all the time kept asking in astonishment: What sort of a Christian could this man ever have been?

To have succeeded in producing such an impression designedly argues the procedure of a mind of such extraordinary subtlety and psychological dexterity that it is too uncanny for credence. Any deliberate attempt of this kind would surely have betrayed itself in some way; but as a matter of fact there is no indication of subtle manipulation of Gospel-data anywhere. It is not only very difficult but entirely out of the question to think that any late Christian forger could have thus deliberately challenged the firmly established canonical tradition on so many points. Therefore if the writer were a Christian, he must have been a first-century man; that is to say he wrote before the Greek canonical gospels were in general circulation or at any rate before they had penetrated to his environment.

There remains only one other possible conjecture from which everybody has so far instinctively shrunk: *Can the writer after all have been Josephus himself?* But if so, why does he contradict himself so flatly, to say nothing of the difficulty of conjecturing his motive for cutting out the passages?

It thus appears that, whatever hypothesis of authorship we make, whether Christian, Jew or Josephus, we are left floundering in a welter of inconsistencies; all that can be said is that *the Jew alternative* is the least improbable.

And there we must leave this baffling problem, in the hope that our readers will at any rate be interested in having it brought to their notice; for in any case these passages must be considered striking curiosities, even perhaps the greatest to be found, in the ancient literature that is generally classed under the 'Christian forgeries.'