Appendix II
The Slavonic Version of the Jewish War

A Slavonic (Old Russian) version of Josephus’s *Jewish War* was discovered in 1866. It is roughly 15% shorter than the Greek *textus receptus*, but it also includes some supplements, running in length from a few words to several pages. It has given rise to vigorous debates, since the most important additions concern New Testament personages—Herod, John the Baptist, Jesus—but they have a strange quality.

The intention of this Appendix is to argue in favor of the authenticity of this version, which goes back to an initial version of the *Jewish War* in Greek, written by Josephus himself.

1. Recent Scholarship

Thanks to characteristic errors, scholars have established that the translation was made from a Greek original in the eleventh or twelfth century, a period at which other Greek works were translated into Slavonic. The first critical edition was published in the 1930’s, accompanied by a French translation. In 1958, under difficult circumstances, N. Meščerskij published a critical edition in Russia which took account of Istrin’s work. A new tool for work has recently been published, a synopsis which presents the classic translation from the Loeb series with an English translation of Meščerskij’s edition. E. Hansack has pointed to a paradox. On the one hand, he notes the meticulous,

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indeed servile character of the translation: the translator employs circumlocutions which simply transpose the Greek into Slavonic, a phenomenon analogous to what might be called the “Septuagintal style,” where the original is very transparent. On the other hand, however, he observes the extreme freedom of the translator, who excises or moves around entire passages, adds others, and occasionally slips in brief glosses. The contrast is so plain that he feels obliged to envisage two separate phases, first a faithful translation of the Greek textus receptus, then a major reworking by a reviser who does not have the original text in his possession and who adapts the text in view of a specific readership. It is a remarkable fact that this reviser nevertheless adapts completely to the work of the translator, whose style and phraseology he employs.

We may therefore surmise that the translation, which was made at one single period, is faithful to its Greek source.

2. The Authenticity of the Source of the Slavonic Version

In the prologue to the Jewish War, Josephus relates that he first wrote “in the language of his fathers” for eastern barbarians, but then translated his work into Greek for the Roman world. Later, he writes that assistants had helped him improve his style; and it is in fact the case that this work, in its Greek textus receptus, has a literary quality which far surpasses that of his other works, which were written without assistants. Besides this, we find some small errors which suggest that the author was not well acquainted with Judaism, the geography of Judea, and even the Aramaic language. Nevertheless, he boasts of having been an exceptionally gifted adolescent: at the age of fourteen, he received teachers of the law who came to consult him. We must admit that in his latest works (the Antiquities and the Against Apion) he knows his religion very well. He was born in 37, and was about forty years old when the Jewish War was published; it is unlikely that he started from zero at that age and arrived sixteen years later at the mastery which he displays in the Antiquities, all the more so, since he declares that his compatriots recognized his superiority in doctrinal matters. This declaration is not made by chance: a number of pointers suggest that after he came to Rome, he wished to propose to Judaism a future under Roman protection; he acted like a priest, although he wanted to be recognized as a Pharisee.
These considerations permit us to draw a very precise conclusion. Josephus must have given his literary assistants in Rome a first draft of his work *in Greek*, which he himself had taken the pains to write. Accordingly, between the original Aramaic and the Greek *textus receptus*, there was an initial Greek translation made by the author. We may even imagine that he introduced new documents at each stage of this process, for that is what we see him doing later on: when he takes up anew in the *Antiquities* matters about which he has already written in the *Jewish War* (i.e., the entire narrative which runs from the Maccabean crisis to the events leading up to the *War in 66*), he introduces numerous data drawn from archives. This sometimes leads to redactional difficulties, where these documents contradict the earlier, more legendary accounts. In any case, these circumstances suffice to explain both the qualities and the defects of the version of the *War* which was produced by his collaborators.

3. *Omissions and Additions in the Slavonic Version*

Let us look at some examples of the divergences between what we will now call the Greek and the Slavonic texts. These fall into three categories.

*First*, omissions. For the sake of simplicity, we mention only the omission of entire passages.

The Slavonic text omits the prologue which I have already cited (*War* 1.1–30), in which Josephus attacks the inaccurate accounts of the war which have been given by earlier authors. He explains that, as an eyewitness of the facts, he is their best historian, and then gives a summary of the contents of the seven Books. The ensuing narrative begins with the Maccabean crisis (167–164 BCE) and opens with a characteristic sentence: “While Antiochus surnamed Epiphanes was fighting against Ptolemy VI for domination over Syria, a quarrel broke out among leading Jews.” Josephus was certainly not a direct eyewitness of this crisis; he is simply beginning his narrative with the leitmotiv that the troubles of the Jews were always due to internal divisions. By standing back from the latest crisis and using as his frontispiece a crisis which found a solution, he is suggesting a kind of model for the contemporary war and the outcome for which he hopes. In doing so, he follows the Jewish tradition, for which the prophet is an historian.
and the historian a prophet; but this contradicts what he says in the prologue, where he follows Thucydides and Greco-Roman historiography, who acknowledge only direct testimony, not the re-writing of ancient sources. We may suspect that this prologue was not found in the Aramaic version.

Some historical points are treated differently. For example, after the death of Herod, Archelaus endeavors in Rome to get Augustus to confer the kingship on him. This would be the confirmation of his father’s last testament (War 2.37–38). But the situation is confused, and Augustus hesitates.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Slavonic</th>
<th>Greek</th>
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<tr>
<td>While he reflected thus, a letter was brought from Varus, the governor</td>
<td>(39) Before Caesar took a decision on this matter, the mother of Archelaus, Maltake, died, and Varus sent from Syria letters about the defection of the Jews.</td>
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<td>of Syria, saying: “The Jews are revolting, since they do not wish to be</td>
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<td>under the power of the Romans. Take measures!”</td>
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<td>And when Caesar entrusted this charge to Varus, Varus took a regiment</td>
<td>(40) Varus had foreseen this event. After the departure of Archelaus (for Rome), he had gone up to Jerusalem and had left a legion in the city... then had returned to Antioch.</td>
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<td>and marched against those who were guilty of rebellion. He fought with</td>
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<tr>
<td>many (troops). Many of the Romans and of the Jews died. Later, the Jews</td>
<td>[(41–54: Sabinus, the procurator of Syria, is in Jerusalem [§16–19]; he wishes to seize the temple treasure, and this provokes a revolt; Sabinus hopes for aid from Varus.)]</td>
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<tr>
<td>submitted All he had to do was to display his forces, in order to</td>
<td>[(55–65: Varus puts down the insurrections.)]</td>
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<tr>
<td>disperse the camp of the Jews. As for Sabinus, since he was unable to</td>
<td>[(66–74: Varus finally arrives in Jerusalem.)]</td>
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<td>face thought of appearing before Varus, he had earlier left the city and</td>
<td></td>
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<td>reached the coastal district.</td>
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Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Herodians

Table (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Greek</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and promised to hand over the leaders. Varus sent to have them seized and brought before him. He threw into prison those who were older; he crucified two thousand of those who were younger.</td>
<td>(75) Varus spread out a part of the army in the countryside to seize the authors of the uprising, many of whom were brought before him. He kept in prison those who seemed less zealous; he crucified around two thousand of those who were guiltier.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The narrative in the Slavonic text amounts to less than one-tenth of the length of the Greek text. It is simple and clear: Varus, the governor of Syria, crushes a rebellion against Rome and punishes the guilty. In the Greek, the origin of the rebellion is Sabinus, who—according to two earlier passages (War 2.16–18 and 23)—is in league with Antipas against Archelaus with a view to seizing the treasure, although Varus has explicitly forbidden him to do so. This leads to a rebellion by the Jews which Sabinus is unable to quell until the arrival of Varus, whose presence suffices to reestablish order. However, Sabinus disappears. In fact, the Jews did not in the least rebel against Rome on this occasion: for shortly afterwards, they requested the eviction of Archelaus and the direct Roman administration. The narrative in the Greek text is long and complex, but the Slavonic is not a résumé of it, since the fact that it does not mention Sabinus means that it has a very different logic. This can be explained either on the hypothesis that the Slavonic has systematically suppressed the mention of Sabinus in a series of unconnected passages, without leaving the story incoherent in any way; or on the hypothesis that the Greek text has introduced in three distinct places new documentation about Sabinus's plot, adding this to the story of Varus’s repression (the two thousand crucified men in the Slavonic text). When we examine these two hypotheses, we see that the second possibility is more natural, because we would otherwise be compelled to assume that the Slavonic translator had a systematic aim of shortening and transforming this particular account in a drastic manner that he nowhere else displays. The political and military narratives are usually intact in the Slavonic, and indeed are sometimes decorated with highly picturesque small details.
Secondly, we find small additions. Prescinding from stylistic effects which are difficult to evaluate, we can classify these under two headings.

First, in some instances the Slavonic gives information unknown to the Greek text. For example, War 1.340 states that Herod, after a battle, wanted to take a bath and was alone; the Slavonic specifies that he “spent the evening in a village named Aulon, where there was a hot spring.” According to War 2.503, Cestius the governor left Antioch with an army and arrived in Galilee at a place named Zebulon; the Slavonic adds: “named Andron.” However, we cannot exclude the possibility that such supplements are due to accidents by copyists or translators, if the text on which they were working contained illegible glosses or words.

Secondly, in other instances we can diagnose the presence of glosses attributable either to the translator or to later copyists. For example, Hansack notes a number of double translations of one and the same word. This phenomenon may be due to the meticulous quality of the translator’s work, which we have mentioned above; or, where a gloss had explained in the margin the meaning of an obscure or obsolete word, a copyist subsequently inserted it into the text itself. An example of a different type is War 5.567, which speaks of Mannaeus son of Eleazar, who seeks refuge with Titus. The Slavonic reads: “Mannaeus the nephew of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the tomb while he was already decomposing.” The mention of the name of Jesus indicates the presence of a gloss (see below), but we do not know whether this was already present in the text which the translator had before him. In same way, we find the title “John the forerunner” before a passage about an unnamed “savage”; this title varies in the manuscripts, but we can always recognize (often deformed) the Russian transcription of πρόδρομος, “forerunner.”

Thirdly, there are lengthy additions. The most extensive of these concern Herod and the principal personages of the New Testament; the most curious are those concerning Abraham.

a. Antipater, the son of Herod, plotted to murder his father, but he was unmasked and condemned (War 1.640). The Slavonic adds a digression about divine providence:

We must admire the divine dispensation which renders evil for evil and good for good. And no one, whether just or unjust, can escape His all-powerful right hand. However, His marvelous eye reposes principally on the just. Abraham, the ancestor of our race, was removed from his own
country because he had behaved unjustly towards his brother when their domains were divided between them. And he was punished by the very matter in which he had sinned. But later, thanks to his obedience, God gave him the promised land.

This interpretation of Abraham’s departure from his native land as punishment for defrauding his brother has little in common with the biblical story, and it is hard to see why a Christian interpolator should have thought it up. However, we find it elsewhere in Josephus: at *Ant.* 1.281, he explains that Abraham was chased away by his family and that God led him to Canaan. When Josephus paraphrases Genesis, he follows the biblical narrative more closely: he says that Abraham was forced to leave Ur because he had criticized the idolatry of the Chaldaeans. Another passage proves that Josephus knew other non-biblical traditions about Abraham. In his discourse to his besieged compatriots in 70, Josephus takes Abraham as his example when he wishes to demonstrate the inefficacy of the armed struggle (*War* 5.379–381):

> Nekao king of Egypt, who was also called Pharaoh, went out with a great army and snatched Sarah, the queen and ancestress of our race, from her husband. On that occasion, did Abraham—her husband and our ancestor—take up weapons in order to avenge himself upon the one who had insulted him? You know that he had one hundred and eighteen generals, each of whom commanded innumerable troops. Despising all these, he invoked the assistance of God and, raising his pure hands towards the very place which you have just besmirched, he moved the invisible Helper to fight. And at the beginning of the first night, the queen was sent back untouched to her husband, and the Egyptian adored this place which you have besmirched with the blood of your compatriots. He fled, trembling before the nocturnal visions and dreams, and honoring with silver and gold the Hebrews who were beloved by God.

b. The Slavonic adds two lengthy texts of a legendary character about Herod the Great. The first (after *War* 1.369), situated shortly after Herod’s arrival in Jerusalem at the close of two years of civil war in Galilee and Judea (39–37 BCE), reports a secret debate among the teachers of the law, with the aim of discovering whether or not Herod is the Messiah. The subject is the fulfillment of some prophecies concerning the messianic signs (Gen 49:10; Deut 17:5; Isa 35:5–6; Dan 9:24–27; Zech 9:9), and the doctors of the law conclude that Herod does not fulfill these in any way. A certain Levi, who is faithful to Herod, seeks in vain to counter these arguments. He then denounces them to the king, who has them slaughtered. This episode presupposes that the question was in fact raised, and it is true that Herod had the
messianic star (from Balaam’s prophecy, Num 24:17) depicted on some of his coins; the Herodians who are mentioned in the gospels were still his partisans one generation later (see above). The origin of this claim on Herod’s part must be sought in Rome. When he acquired the kingship in Rome in 40 BCE, the situation was one of great urgency, since the Parthians had conquered Judea; but this was also the year that saw the reconciliation between Octavian and Antony which put an end to the interminable civil wars, and Virgil had composed a poem with a strongly messianic character about an heir who was to be born (the fourth Eclogue).

The second narrative concerns an analogous theme. Persian astronomers have seen a star ascending above Jerusalem, indicating the birth of one who is to be a master of the world. They arrive after a year and a half of observation, but they do not find anything, and the star disappears. Then it reappears, and they show it to Herod, who gives them an escort to follow the star. However, it vanishes once again, and they obtain permission to follow it on their own, after promising to return. After one year, they have still not returned, and the teachers of the law explain that according to the prophecies of Balaam and Daniel, a master will appear, born without a father. Herod makes enquiries in Judea in order to find such a child who is aged less than three years, and promises to adopt him—but in vain. The same Levi suggests that all the children be massacred, but the teachers argue successfully that according to Mic 5:1, the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem, and that it therefore suffices to kill all the children there. Herod does so. This story, with the intermittent appearances of the star, follows the career of Herod: the star, followed by infallible astronomers, approaches him, then goes elsewhere after two eclipses. The master born without a father may be an allusion to the legends which Suetonius reports about the virginal birth of Augustus, the son of a god (i.e. Apollo) and master of the world. The origin of this passage is uncertain. Eusebius (Hist. Eccl. 1.8.5) and Photius (Bibliotheca 238) both affirm that Josephus wrote about the massacre of the Holy Innocents in Bethlehem.

Finally, we have the information about John the Baptist and Jesus; or more exactly, we can identify the protagonists in these passages by a comparison with the gospels, since neither of them is named. The principal passages are the following.

Immediately after Augustus’s nomination of Archelaus as ethnarch of Judea (War 2.110), the Slavonic gives a description of a sav-
age dressed in animal skins who wandered through Judea inviting the Jews to liberty. He baptized in the Jordan and said: “God has sent me to show the path of the law, by means of which you will be saved from having many masters. You will no longer have any mortal master over you, but only the Most High who has sent me.” This could well sound like a Zealot sedition, and the man is brought before Archelaus; but he does not succeed in convincing the teachers of the law, and he declares to them: “I shall not reveal to you the mystery which is among you, because you have not wished this. And thus an invincible perdition has come upon you, by your own fault.” Then he flees to the far shore of the Jordan.

After the deposition of Archelaus, Herod’s two other sons, Antipas and Philip, retain and consolidate their respective tetrarchies (War 2.168); at this point, the Slavonic inserts another passage about the same savage, who explains a dream to Philip and predicts that because of his greed, he will lose both his province and his wife. Philip dies at once, and Antipas marries his wife, Herodias. This was contrary to the law, since he could not appeal to the institution of the levirate: Philip had four children. The teachers of the law are scandalized but do not dare to speak of this. The savage accuses Antipas unceasingly in public until the tetrarch loses patience and has him imprisoned (or cuts off his head, according to some manuscripts).

Later, under Pilate (War 2.174), the Slavonic speaks of “a man, if it is allowed to call him a man. His nature and his exterior were those of a man, but his appearance was more than human, and his works were divine.” He worked mostly on the Mount of Olives and performed miracles by his word, even on the sabbath. This led to controversies, since he obtained results (and thereby broke the sabbath), but without any physical action (and thereby respected the sabbath). His hundred and fifty servants urged him in vain to massacre the Romans and to reign over them. When they heard of this, the leaders of the Jews thought it best to denounce him to Pilate, since they were afraid that terrible reprisals would follow if the governor were to hear of a movement of this kind. Pilate captured the worker of miracles, but when he saw that he did not aspire to the kingship, he released him, “for he had healed his wife, who was dying.” Some time after this, the teachers of the law, who were jealous, purchased from Pilate the right to put to death the worker of miracles, “and they crucified him, in contradiction of the law of the ancestors.” Let us note in passing,
for what it may be worth, that some tendencies in the Judaism of that period accepted the idea that an exceptional human being could be of divine rank; it was the rabbinic tradition which later proscribed every opinion of this kind.

When King Agrippa I died in 44, leaving no child old enough to reign, Claudius appointed Roman procurators in Judea while maintaining the judicial authority of the Jewish institutions such as the Sanhedrin; under Augustus, after the deposition of Archelaus, and then again under Tiberius, this judicial authority had been transferred in its entirety to the prefects. After mentioning the procurators Fadus and Tiberius Alexander (War 2.220), the Slavonic text inserts a passage about the disciples of the worker of miracles, which is so short that it can be quoted here in full:

If anyone deviated from the letter of the law, this was made known to the teachers of the law. He was tortured and expelled, or else he was sent to Caesar. And under these procurators, there appeared numerous servants of the worker of miracles whom we have described above, and they told the people that their master was living, although he had died: “And he will free you from slavery.” And many among the people listened to their words. They lent their ears to their commandments. This was not because of their renown, for they were simple people, some of them sail-cutters [or: tent-makers], others shoemakers or artisans; but they wrought truly marvelous signs, as many as they wished.

When these noble procurators saw that the people were being led astray, they plotted together with some scribes to seize them and kill them: for a small matter ceases to be small when it leads to a great matter. But they felt shame and fear in the presence of the signs. They said that magic did not work so many miracles; if these people had not been sent by the providence of God, they would soon be put to confusion. And they were given permission to move around freely. Later, at the urgent request of those persons [i.e., the scribes], they dispersed them, sending some to Caesar and others to Antioch to stand trial, and dispatching others again to distant regions.

4. A Discussion of Authenticity

Hansack calls all these supplements “christological,” including even the visit of the Persians who follow the star, although the texts are in fact not particularly Christian. The most obvious anomalies are as follows: the star of the Persians does not arrive over Jesus; the clean separation between the worker of miracles and the savage, who is not in
any sense a forerunner; the complete absence of any biblical title or scriptural allusion in the case of the worker of miracles. Finally, the narrative of the disciples certainly represents a Jewish movement of workers of miracles in Judea, largely parallel to what we read in the Acts of the Apostles, but it stops just before the fundamental episode of Peter’s visit to the enemy officer Cornelius, where new—and specifically Christian—horizons open up. We must not confuse Christianity with a “Jesus movement.”

This means either that a reviser of Josephus’s text (a Byzantine scholar, or the Slavonic translator, or a later redactor), on the basis of the information supplied by the New Testament, has succeeded in imagining the kind of narratives that a Jew like Josephus could have written; or that everything must be ascribed to the first Greek draft which Josephus gave his assistants. In the former case, we must attempt to understand the forger’s intention, for far from confirming the narratives in the gospels, he casts a number of doubts on their substantial accuracy. In the latter case, we must obviously explain how a testimony as important as that of Josephus could disappear for a thousand years, although so many authors sought confirmation in impartial witnesses for the affirmations of the evangelists—and Josephus was considered the most important of these impartial witnesses.

R. Eisler, who published the most thorough study of the Slavonic text in 1929, realized that the supplements cited above are not particularly Christian. He ascribes them to a Greek translation of the first Aramaic version of the War, which he dates to 71. He describes the Slavonic translator as a Judaizer, perhaps an heir to the Jewish kingdom of the Khazars, who wished to produce anti-Christian propaganda. H. Thackeray, the leading specialist in Josephus at that period, was initially astonished, then genuinely interested in this hypothesis, but he died in 1930 before he could offer a definitive opinion. It cannot be denied that Eisler’s work contains exaggerations, and it received a generally cool welcome, though for two distinct reasons. Catholic scholars

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35 Nodet, Le Fils de Dieu.
disliked it because it called into question the accuracy of the gospels just as the church was emerging with difficulty from the Modernist crisis; and Protestant scholars held that the Slavonic supplements were necessarily Christian interpolations by virtue of the simple fact that they spoke of Jesus (even if only under a veiled form). These Protestant scholars, whose contemporary heir is Hansack, found valuable support in an article by E. Bickerman, who shared the same presupposition.38

In general terms, the passages which we have cited have a distinctly Jewish coloring, and this accords with the acknowledged competence of Josephus. We can make this point more specific by means of three different examples.

First, there is oriental evidence that the Aramaic version circulated. Shortly after the sack of Seleucia by the Romans in 165, a certain Mara Bar Serapion wrote in Aramaic a letter of encouragement to his son, inviting him to study philosophy. In the extract quoted here, he draws a parallel between what happened after the deaths of Socrates, Pythagoras, and a wise king of the Jews. This is Jesus, but Mara knows him through a non-Christian source, which can scarcely be any other author than Josephus—especially since the Slavonic text (War 5.195) mentions a trilingual inscription which speaks of “Jesus the king who did not reign, crucified by the Jews because he announced the ruin of the city and the desolation of the temple”:

But what else can we say, when the wise men are systematically eliminated by tyrants, when their wisdom meets only insults, and their thoughts are attacked with no possibility of defense? What advantage did the Athenians draw from having put Socrates to death? This brought upon them famine and plague. Or the people of Samos, from burning Pythagoras at the stake? Their land was covered with sand in one single hour. Or the Jews, from having [killed] their wise king? Their kingdom was taken away from them at precisely that epoch. God has made recompense for the wisdom of these three men. The Athenians died of famine; the Samians were submerged by the sea; the Jews, deposed and driven out of their own kingdom, are scattered among all the nations. But Socrates is not dead, thanks to Plato; nor is Pythagoras dead, thanks

to the statue of Juno; nor is the wise king dead, thanks to the new laws which he instituted.

Secondly, in the passage about the Essenes in the Slavonic text, we find at least two specific details which agree with documents found at Qumran. First, the nocturnal prayers (War 2.128) are also found in the Community Rule (1QS VI, 6–8): “And the Congregation shall watch in community for a third of every night of the year, to read the Book [i.e., Torah] and to study Law and to pray together.” The Greek goes on to speak of the “repose of the periods of seven days”—a very vague term, since it simply means series of seven days—but the Slavonic gives details of all the rhythms which are framed by the sabbath and the sabbath year and are perpetual, or at least multiple. Some of the Qumran documents (4QMMT, 11QT) speak explicitly of series each of fifty days after Pentecost, corresponding to the first fruits of bread, of wine, and of oil.

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<th>Slavonic</th>
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<td>In relation to the deity, they are above all pious.</td>
<td>(128) Their piety towards the deity takes particular forms.</td>
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<td>They scarcely ever rest, and they rise at night to sing the praises of God and to pray.</td>
<td>(147) They observe the repose of the periods of seven days,</td>
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<td>They observe in a particularly emphatic manner the seventh day,</td>
<td>since it is not enough for them to prepare their food on the previous evening, so that they need not kindle a fire on that day: they do not dare to move any utensil nor even to satisfy their natural needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>the seventh week, the seventh month, and the seventh year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>On the sabbath, they prepare no food, kindle no fire, move no utensils,</td>
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<td>do not relieve themselves.</td>
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39 Eng. trans.: Vermes, Dead Sea Scrolls, 81.
Thirdly, at the moment of ruin, Josephus relates a number of oracles which had predicted it. In the Greek text, they are difficult to understand (War 6.311–312), but the Slavonic shows us where we can find help in scriptural passages. The “prophecy of the quadrangle” fits both the crucifixion and the temple, when we bear in mind that the suppression of a vertical element (either the condemned man, or the Antonia Tower) leaves us with a quadrangular structure (though not a square: the cross with the *titulus*, or *crux parvis*) and that this permits a more effective resistance to an invasion. Let us now look at Dan 8:22: “As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation (*מגוי*), but not with his power.” In context, the thing broken and replaced is a “horn” (*קרן*), which may be the designation of a king: Alexander was replaced by the Diadochoi. But the same word can also designate an angle (cf. “the horns of the altar”). If we forget the context, we can make sense of the interpretations in the Slavonic text, which plays on these two meanings of the noun “horn,” viz. “king” or “angle.” In the case of the worker of miracles, a king was broken and then replaced by four angles; in the case of the temple, the Antonia formed an excrescence (a horn), or even a fifth angle. We should note that this interpretation can be made only on the basis of the Hebrew text.

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<td>(see below)</td>
<td>(311) <em>Thus the Jews after the destruction of the Antonia fortress, reduced the temple to the form of a quadrangle,</em></td>
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<td>Although there existed among the Jews this prophecy that the city and the temple would be laid waste by the quadrangular form, they themselves set to work to make crosses for the crucifixion, which entails the quadrangular form of which we have spoken, and after the ruin of the Antonia they made the temple quadrangular.</td>
<td>although they could see written in their book that the city and the temple would be taken once the sacred precincts had the form of a quadrangle.</td>
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[no parallel]
The biblical prophecy about the master of the world who is to come forth from Judea is virtually unintelligible in the Greek (we find it also in Tacitus and Suetonius); but the mention of Herod by the Slavonic text points us to the discussion of his messianic status which we have cited above. And this brings us to the blessing of Judah by Jacob (Gen 49:10), provided that we take it in one of the forms attested by the targum and by Justin, *Dial.* 120.3–4: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until there comes the Messiah to whom the kingdom belongs [Justin reads: “until the one comes for whom it is reserved”], and the nations will hearken to him.” This text thus refers to the appearance in Judah (Judea) of an exceptional personage, who may be either the last king of Judea or another man who takes the place of the kingdom that has fallen. Vespasian was in Judea when he became emperor; as for Herod, who was appointed king after the collapse of the Hasmonaean dynasty, he was not a Jew, and according to this prophecy he would possess legitimacy only if he was in fact the Messiah.

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<th>Greek</th>
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<td>They were driven to war by an ambiguous prediction found in the sacred books, which said that in those days one from the land of Judea would reign over the whole universe.</td>
<td>(312) <em>But the main cause that had incited them to the war was an ambiguous prophecy which was also found in the sacred scriptures which announced that in those days a man from their land would become master of the universe.</em></td>
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<td>With regard to this, there are several interpretations:</td>
<td>(313) <em>The Jews believed that this referred to one of their own, and many of their wise men interpreted it erroneously,</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>some believed that it was Herod, others believed that it was this crucified worker of miracles, still others believed that it was Vespasian.</td>
<td><em>since in reality the oracle was announcing the principate of Vespasian, which was proclaimed while he was in Judea.</em></td>
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5. Attempt at an Interpretation

With regard to Herod, Jesus, and John the Baptist, we must begin by interpreting a strange progression. The Slavonic has the passages mentioned above, with only a faint Christian coloring. The Greek contains no additional information about these personages, and more generally, it has no passage from which one might infer a messianic doctrine or hope. Finally, the Antiquities, which set out the Jewish doctrines at length, have nothing to say about an eschatological perspective (the posterity of David is lost to sight after Zerubbabel), but this work does have one passage about Jesus and another about John the Baptist, both of whom are named clearly. Let us look at these briefly. The passage about John the Baptist (Ant. 18.116–119) comes not before Pilate (as in the Slavonic text), but towards the end of the reign of Tiberius, well after Jesus. There are two obvious reasons for this major displacement: first of all, Josephus knew a dossier about Vitellius, the governor of Syria, which shows that Philip died in 34, and this entails that the affair of Herodias and Antipas occurred later; and secondly, Josephus maintains a link between this affair and the death of John the Baptist. However, he does not offer any real information about John’s life. He gives an extremely precise description of his baptism, but without linking it to the Jordan. Under these conditions, we may wonder whether he actually wished to efface the prophetic profile of John and every allusion to his role as Jesus’ forerunner.

The passage about Jesus (Ant. 18.63–64) is the famous testimonium de Iesu. This is in fact testimony to a confession of the Christian faith in Rome, which mentions the passion and resurrection in accordance with the prophets, somewhat in the manner of the “word of salvation” at Acts 13:27–31. This passage, which begins like the Slavonic text, describes Jesus’ activity very briefly: “Around the same time, there appeared Jesus, an able man—if indeed one should call him a ‘man.’ For he was a worker of miracles and the master of those who delight in welcoming strange things. He won over many Jews and also many from the hellenistic world.” This text admits that Jesus worked miracles, but he is evaluated negatively, since his bizarre teaching created

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40 On any hypothesis, Josephus has struggled to combine sources which were not very coherent: cf. É. Nodet, Flavius Josèphe: Baptême et résurrection (Paris: Éd. du Cerf, 1999), 83–98.
a school in which Jews and Greeks mingled in the name of scripture; and this means that the denunciation to Pilate was justified. This is an anachronism, as far as Jesus is concerned, but it shows us what was unacceptable to Josephus, who concludes as follows: “And the wretched group of the Christians, named after him, has not disappeared up to the present day.” The criticism is clear, but the language remains prudent.

This passage is rather brief, and it does not give the impression that it relates important events in Judea. Nevertheless, at Ant. 20.197–203, Josephus reports that the only notable action taken by the high priest Ananus was the legal stoning of “James, the brother of Jesus called the Christ.” This was a political error which led to his deposition, since the execution served only to increase the renown of James. This Ananus was not just anybody: in the Jewish War, he is presented as a model, and Josephus writes that if he had not been assassinated in 69, he would have been capable of averting the catastrophe thanks to his outstanding political ability (War 4.316–321). Ananus, the only known Sadducean high priest, thought that he could get away with eliminating James, who was important enough to be a threat to his position—for according to Hegesippus (quoted by Eusebius), some milieus actually regarded James as high priest. This means that both Ananus and James were very prominent men; but James is defined by means of his relationship to Jesus in this passage of undisputed authenticity. This suggests that Jesus himself must have been even more important than James—and this means that Josephus is not saying all that he knows.

The next step in our argumentation is the observation that Josephus calls the Christians “disciples” of Jesus, who is defined in a sentence that has disturbed the commentators, who judge it to be an interpolation: “It was he who was the Christ.” Since the verb is in the past tense, this can only be a Christian profession of faith. Besides this, the term christianos, which is a Latin formation (not Greek), has an origin that owes nothing to Jesus: initially, this was the criminological name for a Jewish messianic agitation which began under Caligula, when he planned to have his statue erected in the temple at Jerusalem. These protests are attested at Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. Suetonius (Claudius 25) writes that when Claudius took power, he expelled the Jews from Rome, since they were continually provoking unrest “at the instigation of ‘Chrestus’ (impulsore chresto).” These were not disciples of Jesus, but groups who expected the imminent coming of
the Messiah. At Antioch, we read that Barnabas and Paul were caught up in a similar tumult and were described as “Christians” (Acts 11:26). Subsequently, this term was retained in the communities associated with Paul, where both Jews and Gentiles mingled with one another. This led to a complete identification between “Christ” and “the risen Jesus,” despite a considerable distance from the Messiah whom the Jews expected: and this brings us to the words of Josephus. This identification can also be seen in Tacitus’s account of the execution of the “Christians” under Nero: these were not necessarily exceptionally angelic persons, since they denounced each other.

These remarks permit us to formulate a simple hypothesis about the evolution of Josephus. On his arrival at Rome in 67, he may have heard of christiani, but they were certainly far removed from his own social circle, and he had no immediate reason to associate them with the worker of miracles in Judea and his movement, of which he could not have been ignorant. We can therefore envisage three phases. First, there is a retrospective enthusiasm for the worker of miracles and a severe view of the consequences of his clumsy execution; this stage would be represented by the Aramaic Jewish War, which Mara bar Sarapion knew, and the Greek draft.

Later, around 75, when he discovered that the active posterity of Jesus was nothing other than the Christian rabble which posed a danger to the Jewish identity, he realized that he had said too much. This may have led him to withdraw quickly the copies of his work which were already in circulation and to “cleanse” the dossier which he entrusted to his assistants. This “dossier” contains nothing evocative of messianism. He received the formal approval of Titus for the final version of the Jewish War, and this presupposes that it was read by censors.

Finally, when he compiled the Antiquities under Domitian (ca. 93), the Christian movement had expanded in Rome to such an extent that Josephus was obliged to mention it. However, he did this prudently, isolating the movement from every specifically Jewish school.

This hypothesis of an urgent recall of the first Greek version permits us to explain a number of phenomena, while avoiding the hypothesis of an unusual creativity on the part of the Byzantine scholars or the Slavonic translators. First of all, we can grasp why Judaism inflicted the damnatio memoriae on Josephus for having spoken rashly, although his surrender to the Romans was scarcely different from that of his
contemporary Johanan ben Zakkai, the ancestor of the rabbinic tradition. At a later period, there remained a kind of rumor in the Christian church that he had said important things: for example, Eusebius claims that he is following Josephus when he links the beginning of the troubles in Judea to the death of Jesus, although he does not give an exact quotation.

How is the presence in Byzantium of a copy of the Greek draft to be explained? This must be attributed either to chance or to an error. We have seen that Photius, the initiator of the Slavonic mission of Cyril and Methodius, seems to have known an echo of this text, with regard to the children in Bethlehem. In any case, the copy later translated into Slavonic certainly came from Byzantium.41

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41 Eng. trans.: Brian McNeil.