

N I C O D E M U S

J. Rendel Harris, 1932.

The investigations which have been recently re-opened on the Testimony of Josephus with regard to Jesus Christ have done more than substantially to vindicate the authenticity of the statement attributed to the Jewish historian; they have re-acted upon the problems of the New Testament itself, and especially that great riddle for critics of the Gospel records, the origin and date of the Fourth Gospel. On the one hand we have restored to us a blurred page of a great historian, and to some extent may be said to have discovered a new Josephus; on the other hand we have discovered that the pages of the Fourth Gospel also need some rectification, and that we are on the way to the recovery of a new St. John.

Let us see what is involved for us in these statements, and in what respect they constitute for us a new point of departure in Biblical and theological criticism.

The new material which has come to light, from which the new conclusions have been deduced, is of two kinds first, documentary; and second critical. The first block of new material is the discovery of a Russian version of the *Jewish War* of Josephus, a tradition of that great story which, though evidently much interpolated and corrupted, contains statements which cannot be neglected by the student who is desirous of a right understanding of Josephus and his work. The second accession of material is not altogether new, though from the neglect with which it was received on its first appearance it might be supposed to be the very opposite of new, namely the discovery that the main body of the New Testament writings, whether Gospels or Epistles, repose upon a prior documentary foundation, the lost document called *Testimonies against the Jews* with an alternative title of *Testimonies concerning the Christ*. This collection of Testimonies has acquired fresh importance, from the researches of the Dutch scholar, Dr Plooi, who shows that, in its first form, the document referred to was extant in a Palestinian or North Syrian guise, being written in the Aramaic language, and under the influence of those Jewish explanations, current in the synagogues, which we know under their later title as the Biblical Targums. The critical study of this subject of the anti-Judaic Testimonies has led to the practical transfer of the main body of the collection which passes under the name of Cyprian from the third cen-

ture to a date in the first century, earlier, as we have said, than the writings of the New Testament, to which it forms a prologue, the study of which is absolutely necessary for the textual critic or the exegete.

Our first statement, then, is two-fold. First, the researches of modern criticism, brought to a definite conclusion by Dr Robert Eisler, have vindicated the authorship of the Flavian Testimony and restored it, approximately, to its non-Christian form; second, the researches into the anti-Judaic methods and materials of the early Christians, brought to a climax by Dr Plooi, who has carried out the speculations of earlier scholars to a final statement, have given us the necessary background for the development of the Christian doctrine.

The new situation in criticism has been created by placing the Testimony of Josephus side by side with the anti-Judaic Testimonies; when this is done, as Eisler was the first to detect, there is seen to be a connection between the two. Josephus is aware of the existence of the anti-Judaic document which the Christians employ in their propaganda, and expresses a measure of disagreement with it. If the Testimonies have a section to prove that Christ is called *Man and Angel*, he objects to the latter term while conceding the former. In so doing, however, he does not concede the obvious; he has a saving clause as to the propriety of calling the Messiah a man, when he has performed such miracles as are beyond human power. This statement the Christians made use of when transcribing the text of Josephus. It was certainly a very striking concession. The genuineness of the miracles is admitted; nor does it seem that it has ever been doubted by Jewish controversialists; we can see in the Gospel that it was the explanation of the miracles that was in debate, not the actual works of power. It was a dilemma for the observer, who thought the assistance of Beelzebub to be a more proper explanation than divine cooperation. Equally strange is the fact that in our time when at last the Jews have begun to write the Life of Christ for themselves, a writer so tinged with modern views as Klausner finds it admissible to concede the miracles. With somewhat less confidence, we may say that Josephus, while shaking his head at some things which he found asserted in the Christian *Testimonia*, admitted that the final appeal was to Moses and the prophets. There was certainly not so wide a gulf between Josephus and the early Christian advocates as to make an argument between them impossible. In this connection let it be noted that there was no need to stress, as we did in our recent Essay, the language of Josephus unduly, as to the "ten thousand things" which the prophets had foretold of the Christ as though the enunciation were ironical, or perhaps a misunderstanding of a Semitic text. I am reminded by my colleague Miss Sherlock that the Greek word $\mu\upsilon\rho\iota\alpha$

(myria) can mean either ten thousand or simply "very many," according as the accent is placed on the first or second syllable: we may then with perfect propriety translate Josephus in the sense that the prophets had foretold many other things concerning the Messiah. It is not necessary even to make such a statement into a Christian affirmation, and it is within the bounds of reasonable possibility that the Jews had themselves evolved a Testimony Book before the time of Christ, and that there are traces of this in the Gospel where reference is made as to "what the Scribes say" regarding either the Christ, or his forerunner, the Elijah of prophecy. In such a case the common ground might be much wider than we at first imagined: the polemic part of the Flavian Testimony might be further reduced. However that may be, the Testimony itself which is embedded in Josephus' works, in the *Antiquities* for certain (A.D. 94) and very likely in the *Jewish War* also (A.D. 75), is almost of the nature of an official document; for Josephus is the leading Pharisee in the literature of the first century, and the leading representative of Judaea in Rome.

This explains at once, what Eisler detected, the dependence of the apocryphal *Acts of Pilate* upon Josephus. The other Joseph, he of Arimathea, is made to quote the Flavian Testimony, with the Flavian hesitation and the Flavian affirmation, the hesitation as to whether it is proper to call the person *a man* who has done works that were more than human, and was in fact best described in modern terms as a *Super-man*. The importance of the reference to the *Acta Pilati* is great; it takes us into the world of half-formed opinion, where the indecision of the Jewish teacher is copied approvingly by the anonymous Christian writer, who has not reached a complete statement about the Christ, but is content with what is already being said in religious circles, both Jewish and Christian.

It was at this point that the writer of the Fourth Gospel comes on the scene, and represents Jesus as refuting in his own person the antagonistic statements of Josephus. Reference has already been made in our Essay to the passages where the words of Jesus occur. It is well to remind ourselves of them. If Josephus said of Jesus that "this was the so-called Christ (or Messiah)," a passage which the Christians altered by the omission of the word *so-called*, we can see why Jesus challenges the Jews because "Ye do not believe that I am he" (sc. the Messiah); which incredulity is accompanied by an admission of the miracles on the part of those who were incredulous of his Messiahship; for "though he had done so many miracles before them they did not believe in him"; and again, "If I had not done among them the works which no other had done, they would not have had sin."

Now these quotations cover a wide tract in the Fourth Gospel; they range from viii. 14 to xii. 27, and to xv. 18. That takes in not only the irritating controversies between our Lord and the Pharisees, but the calm retrospect of the time of the Last Supper. Take them together, they agree with Josephus and the *Acta Pilati* in their description of the miraculous works of Jesus, and they contradict the opinion of Jews, including Josephus, as to whether He were the Christ or not. It would be easy to add other passages in which a challenging reference is made to the works done by Jesus: one of the most striking is John x. 17, 18, where it is said that “if I am not doing the works of my Father (ἐὰν μὴ ποιῶ τὰ ἔργα), do not believe me; but if I am so doing – I will not say, Believe me, but You do believe the works.” He leaves them on the horns of a dilemma. A very challenging form of appeal to anyone who had conceded the Works and had disavowed the Worker. How applicable this all is to the situation which is taken by Josephus in his *Testimonium* must be clear to every candid person. It suggests that the speeches of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel have been edited to meet a controversial exigency.

Nor is this all; of the two points in which we find Josephus expressing the direct negative, one, which has been already referred to, is the question whether Jesus is the Christ, which Josephus meets with the formula, “he that is called the Christ”, the other is the title of “Angel” which is given in the Christian *Testimonium*, to which Josephus takes exception; “Man, if you will, but not Angel.” In the New Testament we have the Angelic Messenger replaced in the Epistle to the Hebrews by *Apostle* and High Priest,” with some evidence for an objection the term *Angel* as being susceptible of a Docetic interpretation; in the Fourth Gospel we have a constant, repeated affirmation that Christ is the one whom God has sent. It is almost the favourite term in the Fourth Gospel, and is used by Jesus of himself, as well as by others to describe him. So that here also we have the affirmation repeated, where Josephus had suggested a negative. This is why we make the suggestion that there is matter in the Fourth Gospel, which is not only anti-Judaic, but definitely anti-Josephic, and we have to ask whether this does not mean that the Gospel is later in date than Josephus himself, and is, in some respects, particularly in the speeches reported, non-historical in character. If it should turn out that in the Fourth Gospel Jesus is made to reply to Josephus, the anachronism would re-act on the general question of the authorship, and it would be more difficult to decide how much of the work is a genuine contribution to history.

We are now going to examine a particular incident in the Gospel, the first appearance of the mysterious Pharisee named Nicodemus. The portrait of Nicodemus and

Christ's conversation with him is one of a pair of what we may call *illustrated Dialogues*, containing Christian truths of the first magnitude. Nicodemus hangs adjacent to the Woman of Samaria, and the conspicuous characteristic of the two is that they are *Duologues* rather than *Dialogues*. If the record of these conversations is historical, we can only say that the reporter of them is Jesus Himself: for when a private discourse is thus reported, no other person being behind the arras we have to choose as reporter in one case either Jesus or Nicodemus, and in the other either Jesus or the anonymous Samaritan Woman. In the open air, at all events, an arras for a listener does not exist. The two portraits being evidently by the same hand, we arrive at the final decision that the artist is Jesus, and not either Nicodemus or the woman. We have in that case dissected out what we may call a fragmentary *Gospel according to Jesus*, a portrait painted by Himself in two positions. If this could be maintained it would be easy to detect the meaning of either discourse; the one discourse is on the New Birth, the other on the New Worship. In which case Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman are foils to set off fundamental doctrine for the First Period.

The matter, however, is not so simple as it looks. The Nicodemus portrait has been badly damaged and is broken at the lower end. It has been restored, and the restorer has put himself on the broken canvas. Any reader can satisfy himself that the record is broken; Jesus and Nicodemus disappear, perhaps Jesus is "left speaking," but the hand of the editor, with his favorite statement about witnessing what we have seen and telling what we actually know, is already recognisable, and the completed discourse about the Serpent in the Wilderness is a highly evolved piece of allegory which belongs to a later date. It is a pity that the story is left incomplete. One would have been glad to have it rounded off as neatly as the story of the Woman in the Fourth Chapter; for Nicodemus, though he does not appear in the Synoptic accounts, will turn up again in the Fourth Gospel, always with a sense of increasing devotion and discipleship. He will take Christ's part in the Sanhedrin, he will be the second of the chief mourners at the Burial. But how, it will be asked, did the report get abroad of what happened in the secret session of the Sanhedrin? If this is historical, it would seem natural to assume that it was Nicodemus that reported it, and that raises again a further question as to whether we were correct in assuming that it was Jesus' report of the Night Interview and not the report of Nicodemus. A worse perplexity remains behind. Let us turn back to the portrait of which we were first speaking. The picture hangs on a nail. The discourse in c. 3 is in sequence with the closing verses of c. 2. These verses tell how Jesus, at some unexplained visit to Jerusalem, said to be a Passover festival, did so many miracles that many believed on

him in consequence of what they saw; and it is this statement that is the prologue to the story of the Night Visit. There is no explanation of these remarkable miracles and consequent conversions. No account is given of a single miracle, and the Passover at which they happened is suspect on the side of chronology.

This is, however, a mere trifle. After all, we have no detailed account of Christ's marvels nor of his movements from Galilee to the South; what is more perplexing is that the terms in which Nicodemus addresses the Lord are closely connected with the Flavian Testimony as we observed it in the previous cases. Let us see what Nicodemus has to say, the great elect Pharisee of the Gospel narration. He calls the Master διδάσκαλος, a Teacher, not merely politely a Rabbi; this teacher has “come from God,” then he is the Ἄγγελος of whom Josephus and the early Christian *Testimonies* speak, the former hesitating, the latter affirming. The proof of the *Angel* is the *Miracles*; they are super-human, they need God for their explanation. We see that we are in the Josephan sequence, with the terms *Angel*, *Miracle-Worker*, *Teacher*. When we recall the previous suspicions with regard to what the Fourth Gospel says of Jesus in language parallel to that of Josephus, we are obliged to ask whether the language of Nicodemus in the Gospel is not affected from the same source; the only difference between Pharisee Josephus and Pharisee Nicodemus being that the latter accepts Christ as the *Angel*, and the former accepts him as the *Miracle-Worker* only, denying him the title given in the *Testimonia*.

We might perhaps say that this makes Nicodemus into a lay figure, created for purposes of edification, but this may be too rapid a conclusion. The Fourth Gospel did not elsewhere give the impression that Nicodemus is a lay figure.

JOSEPHUS AGAIN.

Let us now see if we can carry the enquiry a little further. Is it possible to resolve certain other points of the enigma of the tradition of Josephus regarding the Christ? We have learnt a good deal already on the matter of the Flavian Testimony; but it is not yet clear whether this testimony is one or two. If the Slavonic text is to be trusted, even without viewing it as a complete or trust-worthy tradition, we have two Flavian Testimonies, not necessarily coincident at all points. Flavian A is our old-time friend of the *Antiquities*, Flavian B is the recently arrived visitor from the *Jewish War*; Flavian A belongs to the end of the first century; that would be quite certain, if, as Thackeray suggested, one could detect in it the touch of the amanuensis of the later books of the *Antiquities*; it appears to be the document which Justin Martyr set himself to re-

refute in his *Apology* when addressing the Roman Senate, though the statement must not be made too positively. Flavian B is some twenty years earlier, and existed in two forms, one in Aramaic addressed to the Mesopotamian Jews, the other in Greek, addressed to Imperial Rome. We have made a strong case for the belief that the Russian Josephus has in it evidence of an ultimate Aramaic original, even if it be itself a clear translation from the Greek. We showed that the key to the understanding of the Flavian texts, whether one or both, was to observe the underlying motive of Josephus, in his attitude towards the Christian collection of proof-texts from Moses and the prophets, which defines the character of the Messiah, and his attitude toward Judaism. Josephus is regarding these prophetic Testimonies in a peculiar way; he at once owns and contradicts, he criticises without altogether disapproving, appears to admit the evidence of the miracles on the one hand, and of the prophets on the other, but speaks of Him that is “the so-called Messiah.” We were able to confirm the accuracy of Eisler’s reference to the *Book of Testimonies* having reached the same result by a different road. We were able also to draw a further important conclusion as to the Ecce Homo of the Fourth Gospel, by finding its prophetic origin.

We can now take another step in advance in the solution of the remaining difficulties. If we turn to the Russian text we shall find the following statement in Flavian B:

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“There appeared a certain man of magical power, if it is permissible to call him a man, whom certain Greeks call a Son of God, but his disciples call the true prophet, said to raise the dead and heal all diseases.”

We stop at that point, in order to affirm that THOSE LAST WORDS ARE THE ACTUAL HEADLINE OF A SECTION IN THE CHRISTIAN BOOK OF TESTIMONIES. The proof is as follows: it was pointed out by me when I first wrote on the subject of *Testimonies* that Justin Martyr in his *Apology* to the Roman Senate, quotes freely from the prophets concerning Christ, and amongst his quotations we find the following: —

ὅτι δὲ καὶ θεραπεύσειν πάσας νόσους ἀνεγερεῖν ὁ ἡμέτερος
χριστὸς προεφητεύθη, ἀκούσατε τῶν λελεγμένων. ἔστι δὲ
ταῦτα. Τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ, ἀλείται χολὸς ὡς ἔλαφος κτέ.

“And that our Christ was foretold that he should *heal all diseases and raise the dead*, listen to what was said: ‘At his coming the lame man shall leap as an hart,’ etc.” — Justin: 1 Ap. 48.

The same statement, introducing the prophecy of the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, is repeated in an abbreviated form at a later point in the Apology: —

“When the heather ‘learnt that it was foretold that he should *heal diseases and raise the dead,*’ they dragged in Asklepios.” — Justin 1 Ap. 54.

Here then we have the headline of a section in the *Testimony Book*, and it is transferred bodily to the text of Flavian B, as being what the prophets have said and what the disciples say concerning Christ.

The importance of this discovery is obvious. Josephus, both in Flavian A and Flavian B, is regarding the Christian Testimonies: the antiquity of the collection is past question.

That is only a minor point; for our present purpose it is more important to have shown that the use of Testimony matter in Josephus is justified, and, as far as the evidence goes, the Flavian Testimony in the *Antiquities* is not independent of that in the *Jewish War*. In either case Jesus is the Wonder-Worker, in fact he has no other name in the Russian text, and we showed that this was the original of the θαυματουργός in the *Antiquities*, to which description of Jesus as Thaumageater Christians naturally objected.

It is evident that a much closer and more sympathetic study must be made of this Russian text. The terms describing Christ are ancient and significant. For instance, there is the *True Prophet*, which we recognize as the *Prophet of Truth* in certain collections of the Sayings of Jesus, and there is the admission that some say that “He is sent from God,” which is one of the commonest terms used Christ of Himself in the Fourth Gospel. It is implied in the address of Nicodemus to Jesus in the third chapter of the Gospel of John (“thou art come from God, a teacher”); and this at once raises the question of the relation of the Fourth Gospel to the Josephan traditions.

Our knowledge of the existence of a collection of early Christian Testimonies, of a pre-evangelic and Messianic Type, and with a definite anti-Judaic temper, has increased in a number of ways our knowledge of the primitive belief of the Christian community and thrown light upon some obscurities in the Gospels. We have been able to confirm in some directions the speculations of Dr Eisler, who had also seen that the statements of Josephus with regard to Jesus Christ required a background or their proper intelligence in the *Christian Book of Testimonies*. It was an advantage to be able to see Josephus posing against the Testimonies, and a succession of early

Christian writers contradicting Josephus, while the disputants on both sides appear to have been agreed on the miraculous character of the works of Jesus. We were able to recapture the controversial atmosphere of the first century, and to find out what certain people wanted to say and to persuade other people to believe, and what certain other people wanted not to have either said or believed. It became clearer, in the course of our enquiry, that it was not possible to reject altogether the statements contained in the Russian version of the *Jewish War*, and we deduced from this Slavonic tradition the conclusion that there was a Flavian Testimony to Jesus Christ belong into this earlier writing of Josephus, and that the well-known Testimony in the *Antiquities* had not only been, to some extent, altered by Christian hands, but had actually undergone some change at the hand of Josephus himself. In some ways the Testimony in the *War* is more friendly than we could have expected: the writer is careful to say, that Jesus, except for His breach of the Sabbath Law, and some similar traditions, was of an upright character and harmless nature “He did nothing shameful,” says Josephus, “he did nothing by sleight of hand”; no conjurer of the common kind, this Wonder-Worker. Josephus of the time of the Jewish War, knew better than to say, as Celsus did later, that one could see these tricks done any day in the market-place for two pence.

It will be seen that our estimate of the Russian document becomes more favourable the more we study it.

We are now going to show that the same document will assist us, not only to recapture early Christian mentality, and to some extent early Jewish mentality for a period before A.D. 70, but that it will also restore to us the Jewish mentality that for a period that antedates the Christian era.

We recall to our minds the steps by which we were able to establish the existence of the early Christian *Book of Testimonies*, which we have now tracked back from the ages of Cyprian and Lactantius, through the quotations of Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Justin, to a form in which we can still recognise the primitive document, very little changed in form or content. It was Messianic in character, and for the most part occupied in defining the marks by which the Messiah could be recognised. For instance, one of its leading sections was the proof that the Messiah “when he came,” would “heal all diseases and raise the dead,” the actual text being taken from the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah. The “coming of the Deliverer” was implied in the words, “Your God shall come ... *He will come* and Save you. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, etc.” Christian Fathers who refer to this Testimony commonly prefix the

words, ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ “at His coming,” and it was the detection of this prefixed explanation by Irenaeus and Justin that opened our eyes to the fact that these two writers were not quoting Isaiah directly but only a Testimony from Isaiah. (See what is said on this matter in my little book on *Testimonies*, Pt. 1.)

The early Christian emphasis on the Messianic “Coming,” may be noted in a modification or expansion of the head-line, such as we find in Cyprian, to the effect that the Messiah is the one “qui venturus esset,” as the “illuminator and slavator,” where we can see the eyes of the blind being opened as in Isaiah, by the one who is to come and save you.”

If the reader wants another Patristic specimen of the way in which Isaiah 35 was used Messianically, he may turn to Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* (6, 21), where he will find the παρουσία or “Coming,” played upon in the following manner: —

κένταῦθα διαρρήδην Θεοῦ ἄφιξις
θεοπίζεται σωτήριος·

while the chapter is headed:

ἐμφανῆς θεοῦ παρουσία,

and again

τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰς ἀνθρώπους Λόγου παρουσία,

and

τῇ εἰς ἀνθρώπους τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου παρουσία,

and

διὰ τῆς τοῦ σωτήριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ παρουσίας,
ὅφ’ οὐ καὶ τυφλῶν ἀνεεώχθησαν ὀφθαλμοί, καὶ κωφοὶ
τὴν ἀκοὴν παρειλήφασιν.

What Eusebius, following the early Christian tradition, says about the “Coming of the Saviour,” leads at once to the inference that the Messiah was described in the primitive Christian statement as ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *the Coming One*: it has not been suffi-

ently recognised that this title, for which we have New Testament evidence, is derived from the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, by means of a collection of Messianic proof-texts.

Now see the importance of this recognition. When John the Baptist, apparently in a time of some spiritual discouragement, such as is natural to prison walls, and prison diet, sends disciples to enquire of Jesus, they are told to ask whether he is “the Coming One,” or whether we are to look elsewhere, or elsewhen. Jesus relies in the terms of the thirty-fifth of Isaiah, performing certain miracles and translating them into corresponding language of Testimony: “Tell John ... that blind men are recovering sight, lame men are walking, lepers are cleansed, deaf men are hearing, dead men are coming back to life, and *there is good news for the poor.*”

The language of Jesus is that of a written Testimony, to which language his acts correspond: it says clearly that “I am the Messiah.” The importance of this Biblical recognition lies in the fact that there must have been a pre-Christian Book of Testimonies in which the Jews had recorded their own ideas and expectations of what Messiah would be like when he came. We shall now prove this, with the help of the Russian document, and prove it, not only for the Christian era, but for a time that is certainly anterior.

On the accession of Herod the great to the throne of Judaea, there was much discontent over the assumption of the kingship by a foreigner, and this discontent became permanent, and was always more or less in evidence. Let us see what the Slavonic text says on the matter: —

At that time the priests mourned and grieved together in secret. They durst not do so openly for fear of Herod and his friends. For (one Jonathan) spoke: “The law bids us have no foreigner for king. Yet we wait for *the Anointed, the meek one, of David’s line.* But of Herod we know that he is an Arabian, uncircumcised. *The Anointed will be called meek,* but this (is) he who has filled the whole land with bloodshed Under the *Anointed* it was ordained *for the lame to walk, and the blind to see, and the poor to become rich.* But under this man the hale have become lame, the seeing are blinded, the rich have become beggars, etc.”

Here Jonathan the priest is giving a series of Biblical Testimonies, which apply to the Messiah, the Anointed, and do not find verification in Herod. They are substantially the same Testimonies which Jesus sent back to John the Baptist; even the de-

scription of the “evangelisation of the poor” is not wanting (πτωχοι εὐαγγελίζονται). We infer, then that at the time of the accession of Herod there was in existence a series of collected *Testimonies concerning the Anointed*, and that there is some overlapping between this collection and the first Christian *Book of Testimonies*.

It is surprising in view of these parallelisms and coincidences, to find that there are people who still believe that Jesus never affirmed himself to be the Messiah. It would be nearer the truth to say that he never affirmed himself to be anything else.

It seems impossible to neglect the Russian Josephus, when from a single passage we are able to throw so much light both on Jewish and on Christian beliefs.

THE MAGIC OF JESUS.

The Russian text tells us clearly that whatever works of power were done by Jesus were accomplished by oracle rather than by miracle the mechanics of the conjurer were non-existent. “Everything, whatsoever he wrought through some invisible power, he wrought through some word and as command.” And again, “He himself did nothing shameful nor by sleight of hand, but by a word” The statements are too closely embedded in the narration to be subtracted as Christian interpolations. Moreover we can see that they are in accordance with the tradition of the New Testament itself and of later Christian traditions. In the New Testament Jesus commands unclean spirits and unruly winds, no machinery other than the word being applicable in either case. In the alter traditions, as Dr Plooj reminds me, such as the Abgar story, we have the correspondence between Jesus and Abgar opened by the latter with a statement that “I have heard of your cures that they are done without medicaments,” after which Abgar recites the cures in what is evidently a transcript of *Testimonies* of the type which we have been studying. “Report says, that thou makest the blind to see again, the lame to walk, and cleansest lepers . . . and thou raisest the dead.” Abgar expresses his doubt whether Jesus is God come down from heaven or a son of God, and begs Jesus to pay a visit to himself and his city. Jesus replies by quoting an oracle that those *who have seen me will not believe in me*, and explains that he must fulfil his mission in Judaea and then return *to Him that sent me*. Here we have grouped together the Angel or Divine Messenger, the Miracle-Worker without machinery, and the Testimony from Isaiah to the same. It is clear that the account in the Russian Josephus is altogether in harmony with these traditions, and as we said there is no need to remove them from the text of Josephus on the ground that they are Christian interpolations.

There is, however, one direction in which difficulty arises. We quoted above the statement in the restored text of Josephus that the Messiah should “heal all diseases and raise the dead,” which is identified as one of the leading Christian, and perhaps pre-Christian, *Testimonies* concerning the Messiah. It was not quite easy to find the words in question in the Russian text, and we suspected that the text had been expanded by Eisler from the Prologue to the *Letter of Lentulus*. Montefiore transcribes it without any mark of suspicion. It should have been bracketed. I do not mean that the passage is wrongly restored to the text, though everyone feels that Eisler is very easygoing in his insertions and omissions. In the present case there is ground for believing the restoration to be correct, whether it comes from Ps. Lentulus or not; for I do not think that either Eisler, or Montefiore who transcribes him, had any suspicion that a leading Christian Testimony had been put back into the text. For that reason we may approve the insertion. If it comes from the Prologue in the Lentulus letter, that is an unexpected argument for approving Eisler’s treatment of the text. We certainly did not expect to acquire primitive material from a twelfth-century Latin text: but it is clear that we are on fresh trails in the early history of the Christian movement, and must keep our eyes open for new evidence from any quarter whence it may arise. Josephus may very well have recorded the fact that the disciples of Jesus said that he was “to heal all diseases and to raise the dead.” We know on other grounds that they did so. The Christian tradition on the point is multiform and manifold.

JESUS AS PACIFIST.

We are now coming in view of the principal contention of Eisler, viz., that Jesus was a Pacifist leader of the people, who under pressure of his followers, became a Revolutionary, and instigated a revolt against Rome. We should like to have this matter fully discussed, and the evidence on one side and on the other, to be carefully restated. Montefiore in the *Hibbard Journal* has done much in this direction, and has pronounced an adverse verdict to Eisler, with which most students will be disposed to agree. Our contribution to the evidence adds one important element to the final argument and decision. Whatever may be said of Eisler’s treatment of the Gospels as being wilful and unworthy of exact scholarship, we have shown that outside of the Gospels, and in a definitely Jewish tradition, the newly-found Russian text of Josephus describes the priestly party in Jerusalem at the accession of Herod, as altogether non-resistant and pacifist. The Messiah who they expect is to be *the Meek One*. He will not shed blood as Herod has been shedding. He will enrich the poor, instead of pauperising the rich. And the statements made by Jonathan the priest under this

head have the force of oracles, their descriptions are based on prophetic authority. Even if the Law forbids an alien king, they will not lift a finger against him. That applies both to Herod and the Romans. If the Jewish pre-Christian Testimonies describe in this way a Pacifist Messiah, and if Jesus assumes the role of that Messiah, and endorses his prophetic description, perhaps even deducing from it his own statement as to being “meek and lowly in heart,” then we have the strongest case possible for the Christian statement concerning Christ as non-resistant. To prove Him anything else, the *onus probandi* will be upon Dr Eisler’s shoulders. So far as we have gone, the new evidence is against his interpretation of the events.

THE MESSIAH THE MEEK ONE.

We have seen that the pre-Christian description of the Messiah, disclosed by the Jews at the time of the accession of Herod, included amongst other titles that of the *Meek One* who was to come; and it may perhaps be asked what was the oracle of the Old Testament which was being quoted and acted upon by the Jewish leaders. I must surely have seen the prophecy of Zechariah (ix. 9) “Thy King cometh to thee; he is just and having salvation; he is meek and rides upon an ass.” This is certainly interpreted by the Jewish Priests in a pacifist, or at least an anti-zealot, sense; and it is in this sense that it must have been taken over in the Christian *Testimonies*. This is, however, the oracles of the Triumphal Entry: from which we are entitled to affirm that this *Entry* was a quietist Demonstration and not an incitement to Revolt against Rome.

A FURTHER TRACE OF THE ARAMAIC JOSEPHUS.

It will be convenient to add at this point a note on the importance of the observation of Dr. Plooiij with regard to the parallel in language and ideas between the Russian Josephus and the Abgar correspondence. In the former we are definitely told that Jesus worked “by invisible power, by word and command . . . He did nothing shameful, nor by sleight of hand, but by word alone.” In the latter series of documents, Jesus is addressed as the Saviour “who does cures without drugs or herbs.” Abgar then, proceeds to quote the great Testimony of the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, which report says that Jesus is fulfilling, concludes that Jesus must be either very God from Heaven, or a son of God, and begs that Jesus will come and heal him of his distemper. Evidently Abgar had his *Testimony Book* with the preface, “Your God will come . . . he will come and save you. At his coming the lame man shall leap as a hart, etc.” The passage in the prophet has become the motive for the message of Abgar, “I have

concluded,” says he, “that you are God, or God’s representative, come and save me.” To complete the parallel, one has only to add that Abgar was himself the lame man, and afflicted with gout! One more artificial fulfilment of prophecy.

Returning now to the parallel between the Russian text and the Abgar story, we infer that there is an underlying agreement between them, in the Miracle-Worker who uses no medicaments but only the word of command. Now it is clear that the Abgar literature, being genuine Syriac, is drawing upon Syriac materials, and it follows, that if that literature is drawing on Josephus, it is the Aramaic Josephus that underlies the text, and not any Greek recension of the same. Nor could this surprise us; for Josephus sent his first draft of the *Jewish War* across the Euphrates, and could not have missed Edessa in its circulation.

The Russian text, then, which is substantially in agreement with Abgar, may have behind it the Aramaic text of the *Jewish War*.

We will leave the further elucidation of this interesting question to Dr Plooiij. The whole problem of the Abgar literature appears to be involved.

CONCLUSION

From the study which has preceded we are entitled to make the following general statements: —

1. If we wish to understand the Gospels, we must get behind the Gospels.
2. If we wish to get behind the Gospels, we must study the first collection of Christian *Testimonies* concerning the Messiah.
3. If we wish to understand the early Christian *Testimonies*, we must get behind them; i.e.
4. We must study the Jewish collection of Messianic prophecies from which they are, in part at least, derived.

The Triumphal Entry with its Meek Messiah is only one of many Gospel incidents that are now made intelligible by the searchlight of the *Testimonies*. Jesus rode into Jerusalem, not on an ass, but upon a Testimonium.