

3,1 And at first, as I said, Ebion declared that Christ is the offspring of a man, that is, of Joseph. For a while now, however, various of his followers have been giving conflicting accounts of Christ, as though they have decided on something untenable and impossible themselves. (2) But I think it may be since they were joined by Elxai—the false prophet <I mentioned earlier> in the tracts called “Sampsaeans,” “Ossenes” and “Elkasaites”—that they tell an imaginary story about Christ and the Holy Spirit as he did.

3,3¹¹ For some of them even say that Adam is Christ—the man who was formed first and infused with God’s breath.¹² (4) But others among them say that he is from above; created before all things, a spirit, both higher than the angels and Lord of all; and that he is called Christ, the heir of the world there.¹³ But he comes here when he chooses,¹⁴ as he came in Adam and appeared to the patriarchs clothed with Adam’s body. And in the last days the same Christ who had come to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, came and donned Adam’s body, and appeared to men, was crucified, rose and ascended. (6) But again, when they choose to, they say, “No! The Spirit—that is, the Christ—came to him and put on the man called Jesus.”¹⁵ And they get all giddy from making different suppositions about him at different times.

3,7 They too accept the Gospel according to Matthew. Like the Cerinthians and Merinthians, they too use it alone. They call it, “According to the Hebrews,” and it is true to say that only Matthew expounded and preached the Gospel in the Hebrew language and alphabet¹⁶ in the New Testament.

3,8 But some may already have replied that the Gospel of John too, translated from Greek to Hebrew, is in the Jewish treasuries, I mean the treasuries at Tiberias, and is stored there secretly, as certain Jewish converts have described to me in detail. (9) And not only that, but it is said that the book of the Acts of the Apostles, also translated from Greek to Hebrew, is there in the treasuries, so that the Jews who have read it, the ones who told me about it, have been converted to Christ from this.

→ 4,1 One of them was Josephus—not the ancient Josephus, the author and chronicler, but Josephus of Tiberias, <born> during the old age of

¹¹ With 3,3-5 cf. Hipp. Refut. 9.14.1.

¹² Adam has the Spirit of Christ and is therefore the first appearance in the world of the true prophet: Clem. Hom. 3.20-21; Rec. 1.45.4.

¹³ Clem. Hom. 3.20.2.

¹⁴ Loc. cit.

¹⁵ See p. 119 n. 14.

¹⁶ Cf. Iren. 1.26.2; 3.11.7; Eus. H. E. 3.27.4; Jer. C. Pelag 3.2; Vir. Ill. 3 (Richardson p. 8).

the Emperor Constantine of blessed memory. This Josephus was awarded the rank of count by the Emperor himself, and was authorized to build a church for Christ in Tiberias itself, and in Diocaesarea, Capernaum and the other towns. He also suffered a great deal from the Jews themselves before he came to the Emperor's notice.

4,2 For this Josephus was counted as one of their men of rank. There are such persons, <who> rank next after the patriarch and are called "apostles."¹⁷ They attend on the patriarch, and often stay with him day and night without intermission, to give him counsel and refer points of law to him. (3) Now the patriarch at that time was called Ellel. (I think that was how Josephus pronounced his name, unless I am mistaken because of the time). He was descended from the Gamaliel who had been one of their patriarchs. (4) One may suspect, and others have suggested this as well, that these patriarchs were descended from the first Gamaliel, the Savior's contemporary, who gave the godly counsel of refraining from abuse of the apostles.

4,5 When Ellel was dying he asked for the bishop who then lived near Tiberias, and received holy baptism from him *in extremis* for a pretendedly medical reason. (6) For he had sent for him by Josephus, as though he were a doctor, and he had the room cleared and begged the bishop, "Give me the seal in Christ!" (7) The bishop summoned the servants and ordered water prepared, as though intending to give the patriarch, who was very sick, some treatment for his illness with water. They did what they were told, for they did not know. And sending everyone out from pretended modesty the patriarch was vouchsafed the laver and the holy mysteries.

5,1 Josephus told me <this> in conversation. For I heard all this from his own lips and not from anyone else, in his old age when he was about 70 or even more. (2) For I was entertained at his home in Scythopolis; he had moved from Tiberias, and owned a notable estate there in Scythopolis. Eusebius of blessed memory, the bishop of Vercelli in Italy, was Josephus' guest, since he had been banished by Constantius for his orthodox faith. I and the other brethren had come there to visit him, and we were entertained too, along with Eusebius.

5,3 Now when I met Josephus at his home, asked him about himself, and found that he had been a prominent Jew, I also inquired his reason, and why it was that he had come over to Christianity. And I heard all this plainly (from him), not at secondhand from anyone else. (4) And since I

¹⁷ Cf. Eus. In Isa 18:1-2; Jer. In Gal 1:1 (Raspanti p. 11).

think that, because of the Hebrew translations in the treasures, the things the man went through are worth recording for the edification of the faithful, I deliberately give Josephus' entire reason.

5,5 Josephus was not only privileged to become a faithful Christian, but a great despiser of Arians as well. In that city, I mean Scythopolis, he was the only orthodox Christian—they were all Arians. (6) Had it not been that he was a count, and the rank of count protected him from Arian persecution, he could not even have undertaken to live in the town, especially while Patrophilus was the Arian bishop. Patrophilus was very influential because of his wealth and severity, and his familiar acquaintance with the Emperor Constantius. (7) But there was another, younger man in town too, an orthodox believer of Jewish parentage. He did not even dare <to associate> with me in public, though he used to visit me secretly.

5,8 But Josephus told me something plausible and amusing, though I would think that even <here> he was telling the truth. He claimed that after his wife died, fearing that the Arians might take him by force and make him a cleric—to flatter him into conversion to the sect they would often promise him higher preferments if need be, and to make him a bishop. Well, he claimed that this was why he had married a second wife, to escape their ordinations!

6,1 But I shall go back to telling the story of the patriarch and make Josephus' own story known in all its particulars to those who care to read it, in the words he used to me. (2) "Just as the patriarch was being granted baptism," he told me, "I was peeping in through the cracks in the doors and realized what the bishop was doing to the patriarch—found it out, and kept it to myself. (3) For besides," Josephus said, "the patriarch had a very ample sum of money ready, and he reached out, gave it to the bishop, and said, 'Offer it for me. It is written that things are bound and loosed on earth through the priests of God, and <that> these things will be loosed and bound in heaven.'¹⁸ (4) When this was over," he said, "and the doors were opened, the patriarch's visitors asked him how he was after his treatment, and he replied that he was *very* well For he knew what he was talking about!"

6,5 Then <after> two or three days, with the bishop visiting him often in the guise of a physician, the patriarch fell asleep with a good hope in store. He had entrusted his own son, who was quite young, to Josephus and another very capable <elder>. (6) All business, then, was transacted

¹⁸ Cf. Matt 18:18.

through these two, since the patriarch, being a boy, was still childish, and was being brought up under their supervision.

6,7 During this time Josephus' mind was often troubled over the rites that had been performed in the affair of the baptism, and he was considering what he should do. Now there was a "gazophylacium" there which was sealed—"gaza" means "treasure" in Hebrew. (8) As many had different notions about this treasury because of its seal, Josephus plucked up the courage to open it unobserved—and found no money, but books money could not buy. (9) Browsing through them he found the Gospel of John translated from Greek to Hebrew, as I said, and the Acts of the Apostles—and Matthew's Gospel moreover, which is actually Hebrew. After reading from them he was once more distressed in mind, for he was somehow troubled over the faith of Christ. But now he was prodded for two reasons, his reading of the books and the patriarch's initiation. Still, as often happens, his heart was hardened.

7,1 While all his time was occupied with these things, the boy Ellel had left to be reared as patriarch was growing up. (No one usurps the positions of authority among the Jews, but son succeeds father.) (2) Just as the lad was reaching full vigor some idle youths of his own age with vicious habits unfortunately met him. (I guess he was called Judas, but because of the time I am not quite sure.) (3) His young contemporaries got him into many evil practices, seductions of women and unholy sexual unions. They undertook to help him in his licentious <activities> with certain magic devices—making certain love-philtres and compelling free women with incantations to be brought under duress for his seduction.

7,4 Josephus and his fellow elder, who were obliged to attend the boy, bore this with difficulty and often both charged him and admonished him verbally. But he preferred to listen to the young men, and he hid his indecencies and denied them. And Josephus did not dare to voice his accusations of him openly; instead he admonished him, as though for his education.

7,5 Well, they went to Gadara for the hot baths. There is a gathering there every year. Persons who wish to bathe for a certain number of days arrive from every quarter supposedly to get rid of their ailments, though this is a trick of the devil. For where wonders have been given by God the adversary has already spread his deadly nets—the bathing there is mixed!

7,6 There happened to be a free woman of unusual beauty in the bath. Lured by the habit of his licentiousness the young man rubbed his side against the woman's as he strolled about in the hot-air room. (7) But being Christian, she naturally made the sign of the cross. (There was no

need for her to behave improperly and bathe in mixed company. These things happen to simple lay persons, from the laxity of the teachers who do not forewarn them through their instruction.) (8) Still, that God might make his wonders manifest, the youngster, I mean the patriarch, failed in his enterprise. For he sent emissaries to the woman and promised her gifts; but she insulted his messengers and did not yield to the pampered youth's futile efforts.

8,1 Then, when his helpers learned of the boy's pain which he betrayed for the girl, they undertook to prepare more powerful magic for him, as Josephus himself described it to me in full. (2) After sunset they took the unfortunate lad to the neighboring cemetery. (In my country there are places of assembly of this kind, called "caverns," made by hewing them out of cliff sides.) (3) Taking him there the cheats who accompanied him recited certain incantations and spells, and did very impious things to him and in the name of the woman.

8,4 By God's will this came to the attention of the other elder, Josephus' partner, and on realizing what was happening, he told Josephus. And he began by bemoaning his lot, and said, "Brother, we are wretched men and vessels of destruction! What sort of person are we attending?" (5) And when Josephus asked the reason, no sooner were the words out of his mouth than the elder seized his hand and took Josephus to the place where the persons doomed to die, with the youth, were holding their assembly in the cemetery for magic. (6) Standing outside the door they listened to what the others were doing, but withdrew when they came out. (It was not dark yet; it was just about sundown, and one could still see dimly.) (7) After the monsters of impiety had left the tomb Josephus went in and saw certain <vessels> and other implements of jugglery thrown on the ground. They made water on them and covered them with a heap of dust, he said, and left.

8,8 But they knew the sort of woman on whose account they had plotted these wicked things, and he watched to see whether they would win. (9) When the sorcerers had not prevailed—the woman had the aid of the sign and faith of Christ—he learned that the youngster had waited for the girl's arrival on three nights, and later quarreled with the persons who had performed the jugglery because he had not succeeded. (10) This made Josephus' third lesson—where Christ's name was, and the sign of his cross, the power of sorcery did not prevail. But at this point he was by no means convinced that he should become a Christian.

9,1 Then the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said, "I am Jesus, whom your forefathers crucified; but believe in me." When he was not convinced even by his he fell into grave illness and was given up for

lost. But the Lord appeared to him again, and told him to believe and he would be healed. And he promised and recovered, and again persevered in his obstinacy.

9,2 He fell ill a second time in turn, and was given up in the same way. When he was assumed to be dying by his Jewish kin he heard the words from them that they always repeat in secrecy among themselves. (3) An elder, a scholar of the law, came and whispered to him, “Believe <in> Jesus, crucified under Pontius Pilate the governor, Son of God first yet later born of Mary; the Christ of God and risen from the dead. And believe that he will come to judge and quick and the dead.” That same Josephus told me this plainly during his story, as I can truthfully say.

9,4 Besides, I have heard this sort of thing from someone else. He was still a Jew from fear of the Jews, but he often spent time in Christian company, and he honored Christians and loved them. He traveled with me in the wilderness of Bethel and Ephraim, when I was going up to the mountains from Jericho and saying something to him about the advent of Christ, and he did not dispute it. (5) I was amazed—he was learned in the Law as well and able to argue—and I asked the reason why he did not dispute, but agreed with me, about Jesus Christ our Lord. I had got no further than this when he too revealed to me that when he himself had been near death they had told him secretly, in a whisper, “Jesus Christ, the crucified Son of God, will judge you.” (6) But let this be recorded here, from a genuine report about these persons and about this formula.

10,1 Josephus was still sick. And though, as I said, the presbyter, along with the others, had told him, “Jesus Christ will judge you,” he was still hardened. But the Lord in his lovingkindness again said to him in a dream, “Lo, I heal you; but rise and believe!” But though he recovered again, he did not believe. (2) When he was well the Lord appeared to him in a dream once more and scolded him for not believing. And he promised him, “If, for an assurance of your faith, you choose to work any miracle in my name, call upon me and I will do it.”

10,3 There was a madman in the city who used to roam the town, I mean Tiberias, naked. If he was dressed he would often tear his clothing apart, as such people will. (4) Now Josephus was overcome with awe and wished to put the vision to the test, although he was still doubtful. So he brought the man inside, shut the door, took water, made the sign of the cross over it, and sprinkled it on the madman with the words, “In the name of Jesus of Nazareth the crucified begone from him, demon, and let him be made whole!”

10,5 Falling down with a loud cry, the man lay motionless for a long time foaming profusely and retching, and Josephus supposed that he had

died. (6) But after a while he rubbed his forehead and got up and, once on his feet and seeing his own nakedness, he hid himself and covered his privy parts with his hands, for he could no longer bear to see his own nakedness. (7) Dressed by Josephus himself in one of his own himatia, in proof of his comprehension and sanity, he came and thanked him and God profusely, for he realized that he had been cured through Josephus. He spread word of him in town, and this miracle became known to the Jews there. (8) Much talk ensued in the city from people saying that Josephus had opened the treasuries, found the Name of God in writing and read it, and was working great miracles. And what they were saying was true, though not in the way they thought.

10,9 Josephus, however, still remained hardened in heart. But the merciful God who is continually arranging good opportunities for those who love him, grants them to those whom he deems worthy of life. (11,1) As things turned out for Josephus himself, after Judas the patriarch, of whom we have spoken, grew up—I guess he was called that—to repay Josephus he granted him the revenue of the apostolate. (2) He was sent to Cilicia with a commission, and on arriving there collected the tithes and firstfruits from the Jews of the province, from every city in Cilicia. (3) At this time he lodged next to the church, I don't know in which city. But he made friends with the bishop there, <went to him> unobserved, borrowed the Gospels and read them.

11,4 Since <he was> very severe as an apostle should be—as I said, this is their name for the rank—and indeed was a reformer, he was always intent on what would make for the establishment of good order and purged and demoted many of the appointed synagogue-heads, priests, elders and “azanites” (meaning their kind of deacons or assistants), many were angry with him. As though in an attempt to pay him back these people took no little trouble to pry into his affairs and find out what he was doing. (5) For this reason a crowd of meddlers burst in upon him at home in his residence, and caught him pouring over the Gospels. They seized the book and grabbed the man, dragged him to the floor with shouts, bore him off to the synagogue with no light mistreatment, and beat him as the Law prescribes. (6) This made his first trial; however, the bishop of the town arrived and got him out. Another time they caught him on a journey, he told me, and threw him into the river Cydnus. <When they saw> him taken by the current they thought he had gone under and drowned, and were glad of it.

11,7 But a little later he was vouchsafed holy baptism—for he was rescued (from the river). He went to court, made friends with the Emperor Constantine, and told him his whole story—how he was of the highest

Jewish rank, and how the divine visions kept appearing to him, since the Lord was summoning him to his holy calling, and the salvation of his faith and knowledge. (8) And the good emperor—a true servant of Christ, and, after David, Hezekiah and Josiah, the king with the most godly zeal—rewarded him with a rank in his realm, as I have said already. (9) He made him a count and told him to ask what he wanted in his turn.

Josephus asked nothing of the emperor but this very great favor—permission by imperial rescript to build Christ’s churches in the Jewish towns and villages where no one had ever been able to found churches, since there are no Greeks, Samaritans or Christians among the population. (10) This <rule> of having no gentiles among them is observed especially at Tiberias, Diocaesarea, Sepphoris, Nazareth and Capernaum.

12,1 After receiving the letter and the authorization along with his title, Josephus came to Tiberias. Besides, he had a draft on the imperial treasury, and he himself had been honored with a salary from the emperor.

12,2 And so he began to build in Tiberias. There was a very large temple in the town already, I think they may have called it the Adrianeum. The citizens may have been trying to restore this Adrianeum, which was standing unfinished, for a public bath. (3) When Josephus found this he took the opportunity from it; and as he found that there were already four walls raised to some height, made of stones four feet long, he began the erection of the church from that point.

12,4 But lime was needed, and the other building material. He therefore had a number of ovens, perhaps seven altogether, set up outside the city. (In the language of the country they call these “furnaces.”) But the horrid Jews who are always up to trying anything did not spare their usual sorcery. Those grand Jews wasted their time on magic and jugglery to bind the fire, but they did not entirely succeed.

12,5 Well, the fire was smouldering and not doing anything but had practically ceased to be fire.¹⁹ When those whose task it was to feed the fire with fuel—I mean brushwood or scrub—told Josephus what had been done he rushed from the city, stung to the quick and moved with zeal for the Lord. (6) He ordered water fetched in a vessel, (I mean a flask, but the local inhabitants call this a “cacubium,”) <and> took this vessel of water in the sight of all—a crowd of Jews had gathered to watch, eager to see how it would turn out and what Josephus would try to do. Tracing the sign of the cross on the vessel with his own finger, and invoking the name of

¹⁹ ἀλλὰ τῆς ἰδίας ὡς εἰπεῖν φύσεως ἐκτὸς ἐγένετο

Jesus, he cried out, (7) “In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom my fathers and those of all here present crucified, may there be power in this water to set at naught all sorcery and enchantment these men have wrought, and to work a miracle on the fire that the Lord’s house may be finished.” (8) With that he wet his hand and sprinkled the water on each furnace. And the spells were broken, and in the presence of all, the fire blazed up. And the crowds of spectators cried, “There is one God, who comes to the aid of the Christians,” and went away.

12,9 Though they harmed the man on many occasions, he eventually restored part of the temple at Tiberias and finished a small church. He left then and came to Scythopolis and made his home. However, he completed buildings in Diocaesarea and certain other towns. (10) So much for my account and description of these events, which I recalled here because of the translation of the books, the rendering from Greek to Hebrew of the Gospel of John and the Acts of the Apostles.

13,1 But I shall resume the thread of my argument against Ebion—because of the Gospel according to Matthew the course of the discussion obliged me to insert the whole of the knowledge which I had gained. (2) Now in what they call a Gospel according to Matthew, though it is not the entire Gospel but is corrupt and mutilated—and they call this thing “Hebrew”!—the following passage is found: “There was a certain man named Jesus, and he was about thirty years of age,²⁰ who chose us. And coming to Capernaum he entered into the house of Simon surnamed Peter, and opened his mouth and said, (3) Passing beside the Sea of Tiberias I chose John and James, the sons of Zebedee,²¹ and Simon and Andrew and <Philip and Bartholomew, James the son of Alphaeus and Thomas>, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot.²² Thee too, Matthew, seated at the receipt of custom, did I call, and thou didst follow me.²³ I will, then, that ye be twelve apostles²⁴ for a testimony to Israel.” (4) And, “John came baptizing, and there went out unto him Pharisees and were baptized, and all Jerusalem. And John had a garment of camel’s hair, and a girdle of skin about his loins. And his meat,” it says, “was wild honey, whose taste was the taste of manna, as a cake in oil.”²⁵ (5) This, if you

²⁰ Cf. Lk 3:23

²¹ Cf. Matt 4:18. What precedes is a combination of the Gospel passages Mark 1:21; 29; Matt 5:2; Matt 4:18.

²² Cf. Matt 10:2-4; Luke 6:14-16. The list given here, however, is not identical with either.

²³ Cf. Matt 9:9.

²⁴ Cf. Clem. Rec. 1.40.4; Clem. Alex. Strom. 6.418.2.

²⁵ Cf. Matt 3:4-5; Num 11:8.