

The First Edition of William Whiston's English Translation of Josephus published in 1737

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Part I

Early Translations before William Whiston

(Part I may not be read at the workshop)

The English translations of Josephus have a long history, of more than four hundred years. Although the name “P. Morisyn” appears as the first translator of Josephus in the preface to the translation of Roger L’Estrange published in 1692 or in the preface to the translation of J. Court published in 1733, we usually regard Thomas Lodge as the first translator of the entire works of Josephus from both Latin and French. Lodge’s translation contains the *Rule of Reasons* (the *Fourth Book of Maccabees*) as Josephus’ own work.

According to H. Schreckenberg, after the publication of the first edition in 1602, Lodge’s edition appeared in 1609, 1620, 1632, 1640, 1655, and 1670. As a paper on Milton written by a Japanese scholar suggests, we could imagine that the English poet Milton (1608-1674) read Lodge’s translation, but we are not certain if Shakespeare (1564-1616) read Lodge’s translation or not.

The revised edition of Lodge’s translation appeared in 1677. The title page declares that this edition “revised, and refined” Lodge’s translation according to the French translation of Monsieur Arnauld D’Andilly published in 1667. This French translation is said to be the first based on the Greek text. In “Advertisements concerning the Works of Josephus”, the reviser of Lodge’s translation emphasizes that he has directly translated

the *Rule of Reason* from the Greek text, not depending upon the epitomized edition made by Erasmus. This edition contains not only the *Rule of Reason* but also *Embassy to Gaius* as Josephus' work. At the end of the introductory remarks to the *Jewish War* in the same "Advertisements", we could read a very long and strong anti-Jewish message. The reviser regards the destruction of Jerusalem Temple mentioned in the *Jewish War* as the realization of Lord's prophecy. Thus he induces his readers to refer to the Gospel accounts by saying or shouting "Look at Matthews 24: 2", "Mark 13:2", "Luke 19: 44" etc. He also emphasizes that: (1) Prophecy is the miracle of miracles; (2) The destruction of the Temple in the year 70 occurred in accordance with Jesus' prophecy; (3) Therefore, it guarantees the divinity of Jesus. This is a very strange syllogism.

Sir Roger L'Estrange's English translation appears in 1692. The title page emphasizes that this edition is "all carefully revised and compared with the original Greek". According to its list of subscribers names, 438 people subscribed the edition and 834 sets were sold. The professions of those subscribers are briefly mentioned and the variety of their professions would surprise us. After this list, L'Estrange mentions with thanks the name of John Hudson (1662-1719) , Chief Keeper of the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford, who produced the Greek text of Josephus. According to Shreckenberg, this edition was printed not only in various places of England but also in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston of America.

The epitomized edition of Josephus appears at the very end of the 17th century. In the preface to this edition (8 pages in length) is seen an anti-Jewish Christian message which is, however, repetition of the message already seen in Lodge's revised edition. Is this epitomized edition based on the revised edition Lodge's translation? Though we are inclined to imagine so, it is hard to

tell. However, we could conclude that the writer of this preface is identical with the writer of the “Advertisements” in Lodge’s revised edition.

The translation history of Josephus in the 18th century starts with the appearance Jackson’s Josephus in 1732. This edition also contains a list of subscribers names. According to it, 497 people subscribed this edition. Though among them are 2 clerics and 21 black fryers, the professions of subscribers are various. The “Publisher’s Preface” attached to this edition is interesting. According to it, critics have difficulties in determining which of the two books, the *Jewish War* and the *Jewish Antiquities* was written first. Since the preface to the *Jewish Antiquities* refers to the *Jewish War*, the answer seems to be crystal-clear. We may wonder at the purpose of this strange out-of-place remark.

The translation of J. Court appears in 1733. This edition contains not only the *Fourth Book of Maccabees* and *Embassy to Gaius*, but also the *Chronicles of Kings of Judaea* written by Justus of Tiberias. Though the title page states that The *History of the Life of Herod and his Action* written by C. Noldius is added to the edition, we cannot find it in any place. In the preface, J.Court points out that the style of the *Fourth Book of Maccabees* is very different from the works of Josephus. He also mentions in the preface that Morisyn was the first translator of Josephus.

Part II

William Whiston—His Life and his personality

William Whiston (1667-1752) was born in Leicestershire in 1667 as the son of Joshua Whiston. In 1686, he entered at Clare College, University of Cambridge and in 1696, he wrote a book entitled *A New Theory of the Earth* and dedicated it to his master

Isaac Newton of the Trinity College. In this book Whiston claimed that the flood of Noah mentioned in the Genesis was caused by a comet and thus he asserted that the biblical narratives were based on history. In 1701 Whiston became an acting professor of mathematics on behalf of Newton and two years later he became a successor to him, He taught mathematics and natural philosophy. In 1708, Whiston published his thesis in which he claimed that the *Apostolic Creed* was the most holy of all canonical books of the New Testament and that the doctrine of the Trinity was wrong. Because of this statement, he was regarded as a devotee to Arianism. The teaching of this doctrine in Cambridge was then thought to be in violation of the “45th statute” which prohibited the Cambridge people from teaching something against the doctrines of Anglicanism. In 1710, Whiston was deprived of his professorship in Cambridge and had to move to London with his wife and four children. He was then 43 years old. He became fanatic in spreading his own conviction of Christianity. In 1711-12, he published his *Primitive Christianity Revived* in five books in which he defended the teaching of the *Apostolic Creed* and Arianism. The Anglican Church accused him because of the contents of this publication, but thanks to the death of Queen Mary on August in 1714 he was acquitted of the charge. He then published a booklet in which he tried to appeal to people why he was accused. He was a man of conviction. During this period, he was informed that the *Apostolic Creed* was the product of the fourth century, but he became all the more fanatic. In the spring of 1726, a woman called Mary Toft claimed that she gave birth to two rabbits. A doctor attested that he felt the jumping of rabbits in her abdomen and another doctor also attested that this kind of thing could happen. People in London are said to have been divided into “pro” and “contra” groups about the truth of the story. Although Mary Toft was arrested and

imprisoned by the end of the year, Whiston is said to have been drawn to Mary Toft's story as a proof that the end of the world was coming soon. In fact, Whiston declared in 1752 that Mary Toft clearly achieved the prophecy mentioned in the *Book of Esdras*.

Part III

W.Whiston's English Translation of Josephus in 1737

A. General Observation of Whiston's Translation

According to Whiston's statement made at the end of the second volume, he started translating the works of Josephus on December 9, 1734 at the age of 67, and finished his work on January 6, 1736 at the age of seventy. His Josephus was published next year in two books in the folio edition. According to a list of his publications attached at the end of the second book, he published 62 books as of 1737. Amazing speed and productivity indeed!

Whiston used Hudson's Greek text which, as I have already pointed out, was used by Roger L'Estrange in his translation of Josephus.

The order of the works of Josephus in Whiston's translation is: the *Jewish Antiquities*→*Life*→the *Jewish War*→*Against Apion*. However, Whiston places the *Chronicles of the Jewish Kings* written by Justus of Tiberiras immediately after the *Jewish Antiquities*. He took it from the Codex XXXIII of Photius's *Bibliotheca*. Whiston refuses to include in his translation the *Fourth Book of Maccabees* by saying that it is not the work of Josephus. Judging from the contents of the book, its style and vocabulary, we could easily argue that the book was not written by Josephus, but it had long been regarded as the work of Josephus partly because he in his *Jewish Antiquities* 20:267-268

refers to his future writings and partly because both Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* 3: 10 and Jerome in his *On Illustrious Men* 1 3 regard the *Fourth Book of Maccabees* as Josephus's own work. Because of the mistaken identification these ecclesiastical writers made and thanks to the existence of the abridged translation of Desiderius Erasmus from Latin, the *Fourth Book of Maccabees* had long been regarded as the work of Josephus. Whiston made the right decision for the first time in the modern translation history of Josephus not to include it in his translation of Josephus.

B. Some characteristics seen in Whiston's translation

In the second volume of his translation, Whiston inserts eight dissertations which cover 120 pages. Those who have finished reading his first volume (568 pages) are forced to read his dissertations because they are attached not at the end of, but in the beginning of the second volume.

Every dissertation is full of what we call "Christian passion" or "Christian ardor." Let us see the first dissertation. It deals with the witnesses of Josephus concerning Jesus (Christ) and James the Just. As everyone of you knows, the works of Josephus became a kind of Christian heritage among the ecclesiastical writers of the first several centuries because the *Jewish Antiquities*, Books 18 and 19, contains the witnesses of Josephus about Jesus (Christ), John the Baptist, and James the brother of Jesus. The Ecclesiastical writers jumped for joy, and kept saying not only to his fellow Christians but also to the Jewish people and Gentiles: "Look, there is an outside witness about Jesus Christ. A witness made by a Jew!" However, the authenticity of these witnesses, especially the witness about Jesus Christ began to be doubted in the century preceding the age of Whiston. For example, Lukas Osiander (1534-1604), German theologian, doubted its

authenticity. The 17th century witnesses the appearance of intellectuals who flatly denied its authenticity.

Whiston evidently knew the attacks upon Josephus's witness, and thus in his attempt to salvage it from the attacks, he collects the remarks of people in the past who referred to Josephus's witnesses. In the first half of the dissertation Whiston cites the witness in the remarks of the twenty five writers from Tacitus of the second century down to an abbot of the Benedictine Abbey of the 15th century. He juxtaposes them to see if there is any difference between them. Though there are sometimes slight differences among them, he says with confidence that the witness of Josephus has been handed down correctly up to his time.

In the latter part of his dissertation, Whiston discusses in what sense Josephus said that Jesus was Christ. He also discusses a possibility that Josephus himself was a Christian. In doing so, he evidently bases his argumentation on his knowledge derived from the *Ecclesiastical History*. Whiston also argues why Origen (c.182-c.251) and Photios (820-891) did not refer to the witness and why Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.215) and Tertullian (c.150-c.215) kept silence about Josephus' witness.

C. Anti-Jewish stance in Whiston's translation

The first edition of Whiston's translation contains a numerous number of footnotes, and we could easily detect in some of them his anti-Jewish stance. One example would be enough.

In his preface to the *Jewish War*, with a section number 4, Whiston says that Josephus is the most reliable witness to the facts that: (1) These sufferings which the Jews, the killers of our Savior suffered have become the greatest ever since the beginning of the world.; (2) Our Savior predicted these sufferings and his prediction came true. In referring to the prediction of the Savior, Whiston refers to Matthew 24.21, Mark 13.19, and Luke 21.23,24.

In giving the citations from the Gospel accounts, he evidently follows his predecessors' anti-Jewish stance. These kinds of theological footnotes with anti-Jewish messages were not removed until 1921 when Max Margolis of Dropsie College, edited and improved drastically Whiston's works.

D. Evaluation of Whiston's translation

Ever since Whiston's translation was published in 1737 in London, it was printed in Dublin, Edinburgh, Birmingham, and Newcastle. In London alone, it was printed four times in the 1700's and 26 times in the 1800's. Towards the end of the 1700's, Whiston's translation was brought to the New Continent. It was first printed in Worcester of Massachusetts, and then New York, Springfield, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cincinnati. According to American history, the so-called Puritans were in the Second Revivalism, and Josephus was the only work permitted to read for them.

Whiston's translation of Josephus was thus welcomed not only in England but also in the New Continent partly because he was a colleague of Sir. Isaac Newton and partly because he was regarded to have defended the authenticity of Josephus' witness about Jesus Christ. As a result of this, people came to think that Whiston's translation was the best translation ever made, without any defects at all. Yes, the myth of Whiston's translation came into being.

Part IV

Various Translations after W.Whiston

(Part IV may not be read)

The new English translations of Josephus keep appearing. In 1740, three years after the appearance of Whiston's translation, J.

Wilson made his translation of Josephus. He places his *Life* first, and then the *Jewish Antiquities*, *Against Apion*, the *Jewish War*, and finally the *Fourth Book of Maccabees*. He has included the *Fourth Book of Maccabees* without mentioning any reason, which Whiston has refused to include in his translation as not being the work of Josephus. In his brief preface to his translation, Wilson explains why he has decided not to attach to his translation any introduction nor dissertation. Perhaps with Whiston's translation in mind, Wilson emphasizes that his translation is "a fair and just Translation."

I do not know which library has Wilson's translation, but I had the privilege of seeing it in the library of Mrs. E. Eisemann, collector of the works of Josephus in America.

In 1777, the joint translation of Thompson and Price appears in London. This edition contains a list of subscribers names. According to it, 836 people subscribed it. Among them were 42 clerks, 41 women with the title of Mrs. and 8 women with the title of Miss. Despite the fact that the publication of Whiston's translation and L'Estrange's translation continue, the preface seeks the justification of its publication in the discontinuation of the publication of Josephus.

In 1785, C. Clarke's translation appears. According to its list of subscribers names, 393 people subscribed the edition. Among them were 17 clerics, 23 women with the title of Mrs. and 14 women with the title of Miss. Clarke places the *Jewish Antiquities* first and explains the reason. According to him, the problem of which of the two works, the *Jewish Antiquities* and the *Jewish War* was written first has not yet been solved, he places the *Jewish Antiquities* first because he follows the general opinion that the *Jewish Antiquities* was written prior to the *Jewish War*.

In 1789, G.H. Maynard translation of Josephus appears.

Although the title page suggests that it is the translation from the Greek text, as H.Schreckenberg rightly points out this is nothing more than the enlarged edition of C. Clarke's English translation. This edition contains some dissertations, articles and references. The longest article (80 pages) is a history of the Jewish people written by Maynard. It covers more than 1700 years after the period of Flavius Josephus. In this history, Maynard attempts to answer the question why the Jewish people are still permitted to be alive. It is quite easy to detect the theological influence of St. Augustine of Hippo upon him in his anti-Jewish stance. According to its list of subscribers' names, 22 clerics purchased this edition, 860 men with the title of Mr. , 67 women with the title of Mrs., and 40 men with the title of Esq. purchased this edition respectively. Besides these, the names of 2 Lords, 6 doctors, and 13 people with the titles of Lieutenant, Captain, Major are written.

Finally, mention must be made of the translation made by Robert Traill in the years 1847-1851. He was the first who sharply criticized the translation of William Whiston as being full of defects. He emphasizes that because of the importance of the works of Josephus, the translation must be accurate, clear, and fluent. Traill, like Thomas Lodge, became a victim of famine which attacked Ireland in the winter of 1846-1847. His *Jewish War* was posthumously published by his editor, but his *Jewish Antiquities* was not published. Robert Traill was a graduate of the Trinity College, Dublin. It is still my work to trace his translation work.

