Translation-Eastbourne-Pearse

Religious Discussion at the Court of the Sassanids (c. AD 600)

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Source: Roger Pearse

Religious Discussion at the Court of the Sassanids [Religionsgespräch am Hof der Sasaniden / De Gestis in Perside]

[Translated by Andrew Eastbourne] Page numbers refer to Bratke's edition; section numbers refer to Bringel's edition (unless otherwise stated, her edition of the "long recension"—pp. 288-494). References to "Bringel's text" normally introduce my own translation of her Greek text, not her (French) translation, and general references to Bringel's comments refer to footnotes ad locc. in her edition. Fragments of Philip of Side, and probable references to him, are put in boldface here. [p. 1] 1. When Arrhinatus was king of Persia, and second after him was Pasargarus, who held the highest rank of the highest officials in authority, and third was Diocles, who managed the satrapies and provinces, and Aphroditianus, holding the rank of "chief cook"—dialalia abdodedôrou mou toi—"the authority will judge purely"—there arose a dispute in this land between pagans and Christians concerning Dionysarus and Philip, the writers of history. The pagans championed Dionysarus, the Christians, Philip. 2. And when many had been agitated, the King gathered together all the bishops who were in those lands, numbering more than 100, and not a few archimandrites; [p. 2] among these they urged me also to come along—the only one from Roman territory; for all [these others] were from those regions.

3. And when they had been assembled, the King brought together the Rabbis of the Jews, saying to them: "Since some have said that the fine sayings of the pagans preach about Christ, and some dispute this, become judges of the two sides, and tell me the truth accurately. For I trust neither pagans nor Christians one-sidedly, when they are speaking in defense of themselves. Therefore, laboriously unfolding every idea in the divine book, and devoting all your thoughts to it, neither favoring the one group nor the other, report them to the unconquerable authority of my hands—knowing that if you are hindered by any other order, I will immediately see to the destruction of you all." And they fell down upon the golden pavement at his feet seven times, and said: "Imperial Master, first god of all authority and kingship,

grant us space for a defence!" And he granted it, saying: "Consider the religion which you revere, without partiality to either."

And they said: "Let us not come into evil suspicion, when your hand holds sway over all the land. We shall not say anything except what is right for Your Heavenly Divinity to hear. For we are not able to listen to pagans—for they are far from our religion—nor to give heed at all to the murderous and impure Christians, who have become tyrants over the whole human race, and have attacked all the just [commands] of the divine monarchy; they apply all [p. 3] their professions of faith to one single man, whom our ancestors rightly determined to destroy; and they treat the one who died as though he were alive, and they call upon the one whom they did not see as though they see him. But if it seems good to you, righteous masters, make the all-wise and noble Aphroditianus [act as] judge for the two parties."

And immediately the King said: "By Zeus, you have uttered inspired speech today!" And quickly bringing Aphroditianus, and sending those men [i.e., the Jews] away, he said to him: "Your people began the dispute against Philip, the priest of the Christians. Therefore, whereas I know that you neither take delight in feasting nor take pleasure in wine, but instead you spurn gatherings of people and despise reputation and cast aside money, devoting yourself solely to philosophy, I give you this order: Go yourself alone and respond to the chorus of priests, showing all deference to the truth, so that in this matter too the power of our kingship shall be preeminent." 4. But the Jews were putting this man forward as a trick, so that he might trample underfoot the Christians' name. This Aphroditianus was a pagan to whom no one's mouth was able to render an account. And there was no small struggle impending for us, so as not to be defeated by this man. For all the hairs [on our heads], if they became mental processes, would not be able to disentangle one simple thought of his.

5. Now then, when before the meeting everyone had been cowering in fear of him, and they were trying to escape from his inarguable stratagems, and were lamenting—before his appearance, I said to the bishops who were with me: "Do you not know that right here, the "un-wise" [art] defeated the "all-wise" art? Have you given yourselves such expectations of being entirely overcome by him? All the wisdom of the Chaldaeans and Babylonians has been overcome by the divine thought of that young man, Daniel. [p. 4] Therefore, in imitation of him, let us say: 'There is a God in heaven who reveals deep and hidden things.' So let us take along with us Casteleus the senior priest and let us continue entirely undefeated." 6. And after fasting and making prayers of entreaty, we assembled together, along with that man who had grown old in righteousness, Casteleus; and the bishops sealed themselves, keeping the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in their minds.

And now, Aphroditianus arrived—he himself having also grown old, being now in his eightieth year—and when he sat down upon a throne of gold, built from price-

less stones, since the faces of everyone were bowed to the ground, he recognized that they were in no way able to defend themselves before him. And he said to them, having been goaded by God: ”You peaceful priests, why are you disturbed? I have not come to cause you pain by any means, but rather to encourage you. So the contest can proceed painlessly. Take heart, then, and apply yourselves to the truth correctly, in earnest, and you will have victory.” And the bishops, hearing this, recovered their wits fully. 7. Irenaeus, the bishop of Basirênê, said: ”With whom is your God-fearing will disputing? With Dionysarus or with Philip? If you are at odds with Dionysarus, he is yours! You ought to be the judge regarding him. But if [you are at odds] with Philip, then we should make a defence in his regard, since he is a Christian.”

8. Aphroditianus said: ”It is well for you, priest, if you finish as you have begun. For I bear on my lips the things [written] by Philip. But, so that you will not think that I [p. 5] have made any additions, bring the so-called ’books’ themselves and read them to the assembly.” 9. Hesiod the bishop said: ”And if I bring out a book and you attack it as having been falsified…?” Aphroditianus said: ”I know, if anything has been left out or if anything has been added.” 10. And his long-winded book was brought, in which ”Greek Oracles” were contained. And he ordered the boy standing near him to read it: Phdgse distrarek tou ô—”let the one standing beside [me] read.” But he, not paying heed to the book, quickly declared it (?). And he said to him, ”Read from the story of Cassander.” And he read as follows:

11. Cassander died, leaving behind a sister, called Doris; she was the daughter of Pylades, who had been killed in Greece. Attalus the king of the Lacedaemonians lusted after her; and when they went to bed together, she, having a sword inside [the room], planted it in his heart and took control of the kingdom. And once this had happened, she acquired great fear. And his brother Philip went to live in Achaea and there taking as wife the sister of Calliopus their general, named Alisbis [p. 6], he was seeking to destroy Doris and her people. And they were afraid. For all the peoples around her, being enamored of her beauty, were helping her. For she would not give herself in marriage to just anyone. But since they were all afraid of her—for she had attacked many and had destroyed them all—the Achaeans decided at that time to send an embassy to Delphi and to receive an oracle there about this matter. And they, after setting out, asked Euoptia the priestess at the water of the Castalian [spring], for themselves to know the object of their coming. She, having tasted the spring water, answered thus: ”Philip, <child of Olympias, of Pella, going to places above Asia>, will strike the higher ring that circles everything with his all-powerful arm.”

12. But they, deriding and cursing her, said: ”Thrice-accursed one, we asked about a woman; we did not ask about a man who came from Macedonia, did we?” But she said to them that unconquerable times had begun to arise; for indeed she herself

[i.e., the woman] and that man, and those with him, would vanquish everyone. And they departed, with insults for the prophetess, and went off to the temple of Athens. And while a priestly cloth was being woven and fine purple was being applied to it, they came with a will and burst in. The priestess, Xanthippe, said to them with a burst of anger: ”You have entered here at an evil hour, you reckless and unruly ones!”—and they, becoming displeased in turn, mistreated her and said: ”You are unworthy of any honor; [p. 8] you are foreign to the priestly disposition—and you are disgracing the purple, which the gods granted to royalty, by which those who wear it possess honor and glory. Stop speaking strange things! Depart from your wineless drunkenness, you arrogant huckster!” But she said to them: ”You have brought these charges not against me, but against those who cannot be insulted. Nevertheless, receive a secure oracle and go your way: ’A certain youthful man, who is the effectual conception of a mingling bed, having the unconquerable weight of God’s unconquerable scale, will circle the boundless world like an egg, capturing all with his spear.’” But they, blowing on her, withdrew, speaking unlawful things against the gods. And they said, ”We do ourselves no good, if we do not go to Phoebus Apollo the Great!”

13. And they went to the temple of Apollo and said by way of entreaty: ”You victorious and pure well-pleasing gods, why do you treat your servants in this way—asking to win a womanly war? You throw us into a warlike war! Do not act this way, you immortals, true masters, who have granted to us the greatest material things as gifts; instead, give us clear signs. What, then, will happen to us?” And immediately a voice came in invisibly speaking as follows: ”The tripod turning a third turn, the prophet is the root;[p. 9] for [there are] three-fold of these [oracles]; a certain light-bringer, heaven-sent to earth’s plain, passing by, dwells within matter, forming for himself a body in the womb of a maiden. And her name is twice seventy-six. He, demolishing the lordships and every holy object of your reverence, will transfer the reward of all glory to the heights of his all-blessed wisdom.”

14. Aphroditianus said: ”You have pointed out as something impressive—something that escapes my notice, in your view—the fact that [these oracles] have spoken about the Macedonian and about your Christ. But the Macedonian, when he had trodden upon the provinces of the Persians in an untimely fashion, departed from them in a timely fashion, whereas Christ prevailed when he was defeated, and he put the machinations of the plotters to shame. 15. The bishops said: ”Your commendable love of wisdom has not missed anything pertaining to knowledge. But it was in doubt about the oracles [recorded] by Philip. Hence, if there is any truth and benefit contained [in them], share salvation with us, who have fled for refuge to your serenity.” 16. Aphroditianus: ”You think that I am ignorant of the opinions that have been voiced regarding Christ. But the fact that there is not one single voice and one single tongue—[such that] the people around him are plentiful or that group itself is not divided or at variance with itself, advancing

divided opinions itself—while the Jews speak differently about him (for indeed, I have both come into contact with their Scriptures and know yours; and the Scriptures themselves are well-constructed, but those who deal with [p. 10] them are inharmonious)—for this reason, Christian [teachings and arguments] remain implausible to me, hindered as they are by their own disputations—because [the teachers] are incoherent and thoughtless."

17. The bishops said: "And what nation does not fight against itself, both in earlier times and now? Jews, Samaritans, Greeks who live in religious ignorance, and the children of the Buddha [all disagree with themselves / each other (?)]. For indeed, Jews and Samaritans say that there is a Christ, but he has not yet come; and Greeks even unwillingly have proclaimed the doctrines concerning him, exactly as the prophets taught them."

18. Aphroditianus: "But you ought not to disagree, you who are said to rise above every [other] nation! Nevertheless, if you will bear with me, I will tell you countless further quotes about Christ. But the fact that the subject of him is so disputed by his own people leaves me in two minds. And not only that, but so does the fact that his own nation lies with all their might, never allowing truth into their thinking; they commit injustice, love impure unions, and are prone to anger, eager to destroy each other, each one believing as seems best to him, preferring his wishes over tradition—and all this is not characteristic of true religion. Therefore, I patiently urge you to listen to me; and I believe that I both give and receive help. For if I benefit you, then I myself have received a benefit. Indeed, I do not accept the eulogies you make to me: for I am nothing. I hate all that [is said] in order to curry favor, and I reject mere human glory. But if anything aims at truth, I take pleasure in it; if anything aims at righteousness, I rejoice in it; and I am not saying this by way of seeking praise—far be it from me to do anything with a view to pleasing mortal men! But [may I] speak and perform whatever is in accord with the God-pleasing laws. But as for you, noble priests—for I do not call you Christian priests, but ministers of divine power [p. 11]—pay attention to my words, as befits your consecrated status:"

Aphroditianus' Story 19. Christ was known to Persia from the beginning. For nothing escapes the learned jurists of that country, who investigate all things with the utmost care. The facts, therefore, which are inscribed upon the golden tablets, and laid up in the royal temples, I shall announce—for it is from the temples there, and the priests connected with them, that the name of Christ has first been heard of. The temple of Hera, surpassing even the royal palace, which temple King Cyrus, who was knowledgeable in all piety, built, and erected golden and silver statues of the gods in it, and adorned it with precious stones—not to digress with a detailed description of that ornamentation... Now about that time (as the inscribed tablets testify), the king having entered the temple, with the view of getting a dream-

interpretation, was addressed by the priest Prupippus thus: ”I congratulate you, master: Hera has conceived.”

And the king, smiling, said to him, ”Has she who is dead conceived?” And he said, ”Yes, she who was dead has come to life again, and begets life.” [p. 12] 20. And the king said, ”What is this? Explain it to me.”

And he replied, ”In truth, master, you have come here at just the right time. For over the whole night the images, both the males and the females, continuously danced, saying to each other, ’Come, let us congratulate Hera.’ And they said to me, ’Prophet, come forward; congratulate Hera, for she has been loved.’ And I said, ’Who was able to be loved—she who does not exist?’ They reply, ’She has come to life again, and is no longer called Hera, but Urania. For the mighty Helios has loved her.’ Then the females say to the males, disparaging the matter, ’Pege is she who was loved; for it was not Hera, was it? She espoused a carpenter.’ And the males say, ’She has rightly been called Pege, we admit. But her name is Myria; for she bears in her womb, as in the sea, a vessel conveying a myriad. And if she is also [called] Pege, let it be understood thus: This stream of water sends forth a perennial stream of spirit; it contains but a single fish, taken with the hook of divinity, and with its own flesh sustaining the whole world, while it dwells [there] as though in the sea. You have well said, ”She has a carpenter”—but not a carpenter whom she bears from a marriage-bed. For this carpenter who is born, the child of the chief carpenter, framed by his most sagacious skill the triple-constructed celestial roof, and established by his word this dwelling with its triple habitations.’ Thus, then, the statues continued to dispute with each other concerning Hera and Pege, and [at length] with one voice they said: ’When the day is brought to completion, we all, male and female, [p. 13] shall know the matter clearly.’ Now, therefore, master, tarry for the rest of the day. For the matter shall certainly receive full clarity. For that which has emerged is no common affair.”

21. And when the king remained there and was watching the statues, the harpers of their own accord began to strike their harps, and the Muses began to sing; and all the creatures that were within [the temple], whether quadrupeds or birds (made of silver and gold), were uttering their own characteristic voices. And as the king shuddered, and was filled with great fear—he was about to withdraw, for he could not endure the spontaneous tumult—the priest said to him, ”Remain, O King, for the full revelation is at hand which the God of gods has chosen to make plain to us.” 22. And when these things had been said, the roof was opened, and a bright star descended and stood above the pillar of Pege, and a voice was heard to this effect: ”Mistress Pege, the great Sun has sent me to make the announcement to you, and at the same time to serve you in your giving birth—as he produces blameless offspring with you, who are becoming mother of the first of all ranks [of being], bride of the single divinity with three names. And the child born without

seed is called the Beginning and the End: the beginning of salvation, and the end of destruction."

When this voice had spoken, all the statues fell upon their faces, with Pege alone still standing, on whom also a royal diadem was found to have been fastened, having on its upper side a star set with precious stones of carbuncle and emerald. And up above [i.e., in the sky], the star stood still. 23. And the king forthwith gave orders to bring in all the wise interpreters of signs, as many as were under his dominion. And when the heralds hurried them along with their trumpets, they all assembled in the temple. And when they saw the star [p. 14] above Pege, and the diadem with the starry stone, and the statues lying on the floor, they said: "O king, a divinely inspired and royal root has risen, bearing the stamp of a heavenly and earthly king. For Pege is the daughter of Karia the Bethlehemite, and the diadem is a kingly mark, and the star is a celestial announcement of marvels on the earth. Out of Judah has arisen a kingdom which shall destroy all the memorials of the Jews. And the prostration of the gods upon the floor anticipated the end of their honor. For he who comes, being of more ancient dignity, shall shake those who are new in it [i.e., dignity]. Now therefore, O king, send to Jerusalem. For you will find the Son of the Omnipotent God being carried in bodily form in the bodily arms of a woman."

And the star remained above Pege, who has been named Urania, until the magi went forth, and then it went with them. 24. And then, in the depth of evening, Dionysus appeared in the temple, unaccompanied by the satyrs, and said to the statues: "Pege is no longer one of us, but stands far above us, since she gives birth to a human being who was conceived by divine Fortune. O priest Prupippus! What are you doing sitting here? An action, indicated in writing, has proceeded against us, and we are going to be convicted [p. 15] as false by a person in action. The apparitions we produced, we produced; and that which we ruled, we ruled. No longer do we give oracular responses. Removed from us is our honour. We have become without honor and glory. There is one, one alone, out of all, who has received again his proper honour."

25. They said: "Do not be disturbed. No longer do the Persians exact tribute of earth and air. For he who established these things is at hand, and he brings tribute of actions to him who sent him—he who renews the ancient image, and puts image together with image, and brings the unlike to likeness. Heaven rejoices with earth, and earth itself boasts at receiving heaven's boast. Things which have not happened above, have happened below. He whom the order of the blessed has not seen, is viewed by the [order of] the miserable. Flame threatens those; dew is present for these. It [was] the good fortune of Karia to give birth to Pege in Bethlehem, and it [is] Pege's grace to become heaven-desired and to conceive grace of grace. Judaea has bloomed, and our affairs are withering immediately.

To Gentiles and foreigners, salvation has come; to the wretched, relief is provided in abundance. Rightly do the women dance, and say, 'Lady Pege, Stream-bearer, you who have become mother of the heavenly light-giver, you cloud that brings the world dew after heat, remember your servants, dear mistress.'"

26. The king then, without delay, sent the magi under his dominion with gifts, with the star showing them the way. And when they returned, they narrated everything to the men of that time—those very things which were also written on leaves of gold, to the following effect:

27. For when we came to Jerusalem, the sign, together with our arrival, [p. 16] disturbed everyone. They say, "What is this? Wise men of the Persians are here, and along with them an appearance of a star?" And the foremost of the Jews asked us what was going to happen, and the reason for our coming. And we said: "He whom you call 'Messiah' has been born." And they were confounded, and dared not oppose us. But they, for their part, said to us, "Justice of Heaven! Tell us what you know." And we said to them: "You have the disease of unbelief; and neither without an oath nor with an oath do you believe, but you follow your own ill-advised intentions. For the Christ, the child of the Most High, has been born, putting an end to of your law and synagogues. And it is for this reason that, struck as it were by a most excellent oracle as with a dart, you do not hear with pleasure this name which has come up against you suddenly." And they then, taking counsel together, urged us to accept their gifts, and tell no one such a thing [as the news] from this land [of theirs], lest a revolt rise against us. But we said: "We have brought gifts in his honor, with the view of proclaiming those mighty things which have happened in our country on occasion of his birth—and you bid us take your gifts, and conceal the things which have been made known to us by celestial divinity, and neglect the commandments of our own king? Or do you not know what an experience of the Assyrians you once received?" And they became afraid, and after beseeching us repeatedly, they sent us away.

When the one who was ruling over Judaea sent for us [p. 17] and had some converse with us, and asked us questions, we said to him [things] at which he was thoroughly disturbed. We departed from him, without giving any greater heed to him than to any worthless person. 28. And we came to that place to which we had been sent, and saw the one who had given birth and the one who had been born, the star indicating to us the lordly babe. And we said to the mother: "What are you called, O renowned mother?" And she says: "Mary, masters." And we said to her: "Where do you come from?" And she said: "From this district—[the district] of the Bethlehemites." "Have you not taken a husband?" She says: "I have only been betrothed, with only pre-nuptial arrangements having been concluded; but my thoughts are divided. For I had no wish at all to come to this [state of affairs]. But while I was giving very little concern to it, at the dawn of a certain Sabbath—at

the rising of the sun—an angel straightway appeared to me bringing me the good news of offspring, all of a sudden. And I was disturbed, and cried out, 'Let it not be so to me, Lord, for I do not have a husband.' And he persuaded me to believe, that it was by the will of God that I would have the son." And we said to her: "Mother of mothers, all the gods of the Persians have called you blessed: Your grounds for boasting are great, for you have transcended all women of renown, and you have become manifestly more queenly than all queens."

29. The child, moreover, was seated on the ground, being, as she said, nearly two years old, and having in part the likeness of the one who bore him. For she was small in stature even when holding her head up, and had a delicate body; and she was the color of wheat; and she had her hair bound up with a simple, very beautiful hair-style. And as we had along with [p. 18] us a servant quite skilled in painting, we brought back with us to our country a likeness of them both; and it was placed in the temple in which the oracle was given, with the following inscription: "In the heaven-sent temple, the power of Persia dedicated this to Zeus Helios, the great God, King Jesus." And taking the child up, and bearing him in our arms, each of us in turn, we saluted him and worshipped him, and presented to him gold, addressing Him thus: "[We give] to you what is your own; we lavish you [with gifts], O powerful one in heaven. Things unordered would be ordered in no way other than by your presence. In no other way could things above be brought into conjunction with things below, but by your descent. Service is not carried out to such a degree, if only a servant is sent, as when the [master] himself is present; neither [can so much be achieved] when the king sends only his satraps to war, as when he is there himself. It was quite fitting for your methods, for you to deal in this manner with the rebels."

And the child smiled and leaped at our fawning and our words. And when we had bidden the mother farewell, and when she had shown us honor, and we had glorified her as was necessary, we went to the place in which we lodged. 30. And when evening came, there appeared to us someone terrifying and awesome, saying: "Get away quickly, lest you fall prey to a plot." And we, in fear, said: "And who is it that is plotting against so august [p. 19] an embassy, O general of God?" And he replied: "Herod—but get up immediately and depart in safety and peace." And we speedily mounted our strong steeds and departed from there in all earnestness; and we reported all that we had seen in Jerusalem. Behold, then, such great things have we told you regarding Christ; and we know that Christ has become our Savior. "But you, by your ways, are opposed to him, slandering his pain and suffering all the time. For speaking unworthy things, and doing still more unworthy things, are a mark of hatred.

31. "As for me, I honor the Sun / Helios, which is beneficial to all, the one that sends out its rays of light; and in the same way, I marvel at Air, which stoutly

encompasses our bodies round about, and embellishes the earth with its other natural qualities. [Likewise,] the irresistible Fire, to which all corporeal nature is subjected, the proof more approved than all matter. [Likewise,] Water, the life of mortals—when it is not present, nothing fleshly shall live. And while I honor all these, I honor the one who graciously gave them, the one who stands as First Cause of the universe. He was owed obeisance from the undefiled powers alone, whose thanksgivings are uninterrupted and undivided, whom no other occupation ever dominates, whose attendance on him is unvarying and who worship him in accordance with their very nature. For human beings are known to be worthless, since they are slaves to their own pleasures.

32. And when Aphroditianus had said these things, the entire gathering fell silent, having nothing to answer. But it only said, ”Glory to you, O Christ, whose gifts of grace every mouth confesses.”

Aphroditianus said: ”There have been Christians [p. 20] indeed, but there have also been pagans, who practiced the utmost virtue. King Cyrus had very attractive female bodyguards where he slept: he was sharpening his desire, but also correcting it by such trials. He used to say that all glory was worthy of the heavenly power alone. He loved his fellow man so much that there was no poor man or even the least captive in Persian territory, because of his constant bestowing of benefits upon everyone. And Concencrates, who was truly a philosopher, possessed one single rough cloak—he lived near the peak of Masgabala, being terribly worn out by the snow and cold; and the wise Neoctetius said to him: ’You will perish, wise man, and die because of the heat and cold.’ And he said: ’If I die to those here [on earth], I shall live by my future hope.’ He asked: ’What [hope] is that?’ And the other said, ’Truly, I am directing my attention to a certain other life, and offering myself myself to it. For the Providence of God will not disregard those who have labored during the day: in the evening it will deem them worthy of reward and rest. Every day I see the heavens and the things of earth that seem good diminishing and decaying. And this takes place because of our ”exasperations,” which show beforehand that everything here below perishes.

But those who have acquired the virtues above do not die, as they are spoken about and answered with eternal remembrance by them.’ This man only ate fruit, and drank a little water once a day, not wishing to know anything else [p. 21] of what belongs to the world, [but] practicing death every day. And this is sufficient. And Dichorianus, who published so many things about God, and who used to say that he was nourished by these things, and not by those which harm the body—after preserving impassibility of body and mind for 90 years, while he was dying said: ’Glory to you, righteous Justice, who changed my [mind] regarding what was honorable.’ And there are many others of whom the book-lovers know—both Christians and true philosophers. But let us leave off for today, and tomorrow we

[will] inquire into the rest. If it is desired by the will of heaven that we come this far, we [will] achieve resolution of further questions in turn."

33. When everyone had departed, some archimandrites accused Aphroditianus to the king of having inclined toward the Christians, pleading on their behalf in everything, and engaging in no discourse about the true religion of the pagans, but instead working contrary to the pagans, conducting his exercise about Christ alone. The king, on the other hand, grew angry at them, and said to them: "You who are called Christians and heads of monasteries, what is your object in unsettling the affairs of the pagans? Why, as monks, are you not at rest?" And immediately Aphroditianus entered and told the king everything. And the king said to him: "In the name of our divinely inspired Fortune, I am in no doubt at all regarding you. For I know your guilelessness and truthfulness; and if only my kingdom had another one like you! But you are doing well in making known the truth to both Christians and pagans. Hence, take these sycophants and cut off their heads!" And Aphroditianus, taking them into his own house, accorded them [p. 22] all possible care, not in any way mistreating them, and [thus] he kept the Christians safe from the plot against them.

34. The following day, Oricatus the foremost of the enchanters came to him and said: "Master of everything under the sun, grant me glory, so that I may preside in this assembly, since I have three mighty acts to perform! And the king said: "Are you trying to rise above the marvellous Aphroditianus? Oricatus said: "If I do not demonstrate there a power which no one else has demonstrated, persuading them with great signs, then hand me over to be crucified! But the king did not wish to cause pain to Aphroditianus, and he told him the entire matter. Aphroditianus said: "What he intends to do, he cannot do in the midst of those men, and he [will] fail. But let him act as the king decides. And again, along with others, he troubled [the king], giving assurances to the king that he possessed the ability absolutely to undo the Christians, with all probability. The king said to him: "Go today to my council-chamber, and either persuade or be persuaded; and if you pass through this affair and persuade them without any compulsion, you will be deemed worthy of monuments—but if, on the contrary, you fail, you will be deprived of possessions and life. And he was sent to the gathering with a letter containing the following words: "The great king, superior to all glory, lord of peoples and tribes and islands, to the priests of the Christians who have assembled together, rejoice! I myself rejoice as well.

I have sent to you Oricatus, the leader of the [p. 23] enchanters belonging to my kingdom—who will in no way compel you, but will learn either to persuade or to be persuaded. But if he goes too far, he will come to know what the force of kingly power is able to do. And I am sending to you Aphroditianus, who is enthroned with me, for the sake of evaluating the aforementioned [Oricatus], and he will fill up any

lack or deficiency. Abanatranête chrô katelloi ter terennatoi—that is to say: 'The heaven-born power has deigned to converse with mortals.'"

35. Oricatus himself, along with others in white robes, came wearing a necklace with three Gorgon-faces—the figure of three "dignities," he said. When the holy Casteleus, who saw ahead with a prophetic eye, caught sight of him, he said: "This man is here to destroy himself." And when everyone had sat down, the same Oricatus said to the gathering: "We have heard that before now you have honored actions more than words. What then does your wisdom wish either to say or to do?" But everyone was silent, viewing him with displeasure; and he said to them: "If you remain silent, then it is necessary for me to say this—as it were, in accordance with your Scripture: that you should give us a sign or a wonder, or I should give one to you." The bishops, together with the holy Casteleus, said: "It is proper that you, who have put forward and proposed this, should do it first." The same group, again, said: "We do not have the 'dignity' to go after amazing deeds; instead, you yourself, since you are the standard of measurement for such things, display your [p. 24] power, so that we may know whether it really comes from a divine source." And he said: "Straightaway." And taking some clay, he fashioned a falcon and immediately caused it to fly. But the holy Casteleus along with the bishops paying attention to it—it straightaway fell, becoming clay again, and shattered. Oricatus said: "Grant me five responses whereby I can persuade you that I am a child of gods and everything obeys me as a powerful being." The gathering said: "Very well."

36. Oricatus said: "There are some Ethiopian Indians here, who have come in pursuit of business: I shall make them white quickly with a word." The bishops, along with the holy man, said: "If you know of anything that is a help to you, do it." And having brought the Indians [forward], he said: "I am able to make you white and send you home with many gifts." And they were content with this. And taking a silver dish and putting spring water in it, he called on the forces with which he was familiar. And when he had made the incantation, he poured [the water] on the two men by way of finishing [the process]. Immediately their entire bodies were covered with blisters, and their shouts went up to the heavens as they were burned up by the blisters. And he threatened the forces on whom he had called, shrieking at them and growing angry. The gathering, together with the holy man, said to the Ethiopians: "Behold the gifts of Satan! But believe in God, and he himself will heal you through water and the Spirit." And they said: "We believe in the God whom you worship, who will revive us in body and in spirit." And immediately they exorcized them—for their affliction was frothing up—and brought them down into the pool, saying: "Now you shall know the power of God and Christ the Savior." And they baptized them. And when they came up out of the water, their bodies were found [p. 25] free of any fault. And they said to Oricatus: "You afflicted us by means of

water, but God healed us by means of water. We are now going to tell our King about the amazing works of the Lord, and the benefits conferred by his soldiers."

37. But Oricatus waited, protesting and saying: "I still have three acts to perform—and by all means, if I suceed in one [of them], I win. And again, the bishops said: "For your own judgment, do what you wish. And he said: "I shall bring Philip the presbyter, concerning whom we are disputing, out of Hades into our midst—he will say that the History does not belong to him. The bishops said: "And again we say to you: At your own risk, do as you will. And taking a brazier filled with coals, he first placed calves upon it, and then also threw wine-bottles into the fire, such that many stepped back so as not to be harmed; but he, bearing staves of walnut, again called upon the familiar names of the demons—while the gathering loudly laughed at him. For they knew that he was going to be refute himself. And indeed, after an interval of time elapsed, and his artifice was being hindered, and he was trying to compel the force to show itself, there came into our midst the appearance of a certain monk, to whom the bishops, along with the holy Casteleus, said: "Where have you been a monk? Put to shame, it was transformed into a weeping woman, and they, as one, all said: "Whom are you lamenting? And she said: "The man who brought me here. And the holy man said to her:

"Say in the presence of everyone who you are, so that the man who brought you here will not seem to be boasting as though he had contrived some noble action. And she said: "I am an angel; I have been put to shame before you and debased because of the contentiousness of this man alone, who is not able to perform any signs. The gathering, together with Casteleus, said: "Behold! In the third procedure, you fail; and you remain in your failure. So then, since you have been beaten, henceforth give way before the men of God, lest you be destroyed by them. And he said: "I have been defeated three times, but in what remains [p. 26] I believe I will win. Then they say to the demon: "Do you confess that you are a demon, or [do you claim to be] a human being? And it said: "I am a demon, and I have come here to deceive—if I were permitted to do so. And they breathed upon it and caused it to disappear—and he, on the other hand, would not stop gnashing his teeth and blaspheming.

38. Oricatus said: "I shall fire up a furnace to a high pitch, and I shall walk into the midst of the fire and then come out." The gathering said: "Do this as your final sign." Then Oricatus in his turn said: "A woman has died before the gates. So then, the one in whose name she rises again, this one is a god." And they all rejoiced and were content. And he, for his part, making use of the sweet smell of incense, began to sprinkle the dead woman with the blood of goats." And again, he performed an ox-sacrifice and, snorting loudly, said threateningly to the familiar standing next to him: "I give you eight souls; grant me the one soul of the Nazoraean, since I am worn out because of you." And a voice came: "You have adversaries who are

defeating you in all respects. Now then, yield to defeat. For the angels of Jesus are standing with swords in opposition to us, along with our followers." But he, along with the hundred oxen, slaughtered birds, not at all acting well—and groaning deeply indeed because he had been triumphed over, he said to the bishops: "At this point I will believe in you, so that you may accomplish that for which I have lost esteem."

And the bishops, casting themselves down [to their knees] together with the holy man made their request to God, with toil and humility, and standing over the body with one accord, they raised a single voice, saying: "Lord, let impiety not defeat piety, but rather, glorify your name, O God, in the midst of these unbelievers who pay heed to vain things." And when they had finished their prayer, the woman sat up and stood up straight on her feet. 39. And Oricatus said: "By Hera, this power is great! And yet, the perfection [p. 27] of the fifth sign will persuade [you]. Let the furnace be fired up, and let each person enter there, [trusting] in whichever god he worships, and then the truth of the god will be manifest. However, I am going to select whomever of you I wish to enter the fire." And he chose Se.....tianus, bishop of Homobyrrhus. And that man, removing his tunic and clothing himself with the name of Christ, entered the furnace and took his place in the middle, while conversing with those who stood nearby. And the bishops said to Se.....tianus: "Come out, confessor, so that this man too may fulfill his promise." And he came out, having not even taken in any smoke at all." And so, Oricatus, trying not to lose face, went in, and was completely engulfed in flames, along with his clothing—and they took him and dragged him out, only half alive. And they prayed over him and healed him. Now then, those who were with him, having seen what had happened, said: "No power of the gods is equal to this power!"

40. And when the king found out about this, he proceeded against all his [i.e., Oricatus'] possessions, handing him over to Aphroditianus to be crucified. The latter, however, took him and led him to his house, and after taking care of him suitably for a few days, persuaded the king to receive him. And the king said to him: "I know of no man who has helped an enemy except you!" And he said: "We have learned to give help from the one who gives help to all. For when one does good to one's enemies, the force of enmity will no longer be useful; instead, dear peace will be there, dancing for the sake of everyone."

41. Now then, when the Jewish lawgivers knew that the Christians had won and had been honored in this way, they were bitterly jealous [p. 28] and they approached the king, saying: "Master, heavenly sun, the priests of the Christians are able, if they are willing, to resolve our doubts. So command them to make a decision on what concerns us, together with the divine Aphroditianus. For we are able, since we revere one single God just as they do, to gain insight into the question at issue—whether Christ has already been made manifest." And the king said: "Regarding

Christ, hear this without evasion: To those who came before us he did indeed appear, and a heavenly star made publicly known both him and his birth. And people from here brought gifts to him; and we have the image of the mother and the child, housed in the temple of the Heaven-sent. Regarding your coming to be in harmony, by Mithras, I pray that both parties may be belong to one single religion. But I do not know whether your love of power will allow you to be reconciled. For indeed, from the beginning this [love of power] has cast you down, attacking everyone tyranically."

43. And they answered: "We implore your immortal sovereignty, now that we have come into its presence: We are willing to be persuaded, as we engage with them in discussions which Aphroditianus, your partner in the throne, will hear and [thereby] provide a speedy resolution on every subject." 44. And the king summoned Aphroditianus and said to him: "Indulge your good character by judging between the Jews and Christians. For because of your freedom from falsehood, they all choose you as judge." And he wrote to the bishops a letter running as follows: "I, the king of kings, having the magnificence of the celestial gods, write as follows to the priests of the Christians: Jacob and Pharas, the foremost of the Jews, have asked me to persuade you to have a dialogue with them and to arrive at full assurance regarding Christ, whether in fact he has come. Therefore, do not approach them as foreigners, but receive them as parts of your own body, so that they may become fellow-members with you [in one body]. For if this happens, the innermost ill-will will be weakened, [p. 29] and justice and pious simplicity, being glorified, will grant the peace that befits our times. Marthedredela kornakykola peplandereinak—which is translated: He who administers the heavenly powers has given this command to mortals."

45. Jacob and Pharas, the Jews who were mentioned earlier, came to the gathering along with the guileless Aphroditianus, and when all were seated, Aphroditianus said: "Beloved men, let us not come together with each other in striving and contentiousness, like enemies, but rather become one in purpose and receive the truthful oracles. Therefore, I urge you to interact with each other without rancor." Then he says to the Jews: "Tell us without imposture all that is contained in your Law. For I will know if you take away or add anything. So tell us, for what reason have you gathered here?" 46. Jacob and his companions said: "For us, the discussion is about the Christ who is born in Bethlehem: whether he has indeed come." 47. Aphroditianus said: "And how are you inclined, regarding him?" And they answered: "He has yet to come." Aphroditianus said: "When do you think he will be born?" The Jews said: "At the end of time." Aphroditianus said: "And what more is there for him to do, when time is done away with?" The Jews said: "That which your inspired wisdom said—restoring what is done away with."

48. Aphroditianus: ”He will restore again what is done away with by his command and will? The story is incoherent. For it has nowhere been said that after the consummation of the world another such structure is to arise. Of this, your own prophet will convince you, saying: ’I shall send to you Elijah the Tishbite before the great day [p. 30] of the Lord comes…without coming, I shall smite the earth utterly.’ Now then, if this one, whom you expect as Christ [i.e., Messiah], is Elijah, one who is not coming to restore but to smite, then we must also find out this: How is it that he is not called Christ but Elijah?—and is the one who was begotten in Tishbe begotten [also] in Bethlehem, as your ancestors understood the prophet? For the one who said, ’I shall send to you Elijah,’ is different from the one who is sent, and since he said, ’Without coming, I shall smite the earth utterly’ through that man, he first calls his audience to witness and then does away with this structure [i.e., the earth]. What then? Is Christ’s birth then, or before that time? For whom would he be pleasing or useful?”

49. The Jews: ”Christ and Elijah are two different figures. For our prophet Daniel beheld a stone for the king of the Babylonians, and it became a great mountain.” 50. Aphroditianus: ”You have recklessly refuted yourselves, not understanding your own bulwark of protection. For this text was brought from Babylon to Persia, and I know it perfectly. It reads as follows: ’And in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will raise up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed’—and [p. 31] ’This [kingdom] shall never be destroyed’—and ’The king saw that a stone was cut without hands from a mountain, and the stone that crushed the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.’ So after those four kingdoms, the God of heaven raised a kingdom which he promised would be indestructible and without a successor—which is the stone that became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. Thus, you have cited this text against yourselves!”

51. The Jews: ”What four kingdoms?” Aphroditianus: ”The glorious and renowned ones, which came in succession one after the other: the Babylonians, the Medes, the Persians, and the fourth one, the bandit-like one that was difficult to attack, the Macedonian [kingdom]. These [first] three were powerful, and this [fourth] with its rashness has been added to the three. For it grew up after these [first] kingdoms. The Jews: ”We assert that the iron kingdom is that of Augustus and his successors.” 52. Aphroditianus: ”Whom did the kingdom of Augustus and the rest pulverize and subdue? They both defeated and were defeated. The ’pulverizing’ [kingdom] is undefeatable. How do these [i.e., the Romans] subdue anyone, when they themselves all also give tribute and gifts to this kingdom? And you should understand the statement, ’In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will raise up a kingdom,’ to mean that it appeared between them. If, then, you believe that there is a Christ, look for him at that point in time, for you will not find him afterwards. For just as your ancestors, keeping hold of their past expectation, missed its proper time, even so will it be with you as well. You should see the prophet’s

words, 'The stone, which the builders rejected, this has become the head [stone] of the corner,' not as still pointing to the future, but as already having taken place.

"Why should I unfold the Hebrews' prophecies and not our own? Ophianus [p. 32] Pertillaeus spoke in his 'Laws' as follows: 'Oh my! How the Caspian Gate has been adorned—it has received a mountain stone, which hands did not hew out, but rather grace discovered, and narrowed the whole Gate all around by means of it. Not only did it strengthen it, but it also opened it when it had been closed—the stone having become way and door. The door leads to an august door, and the way draws one to a pure way, as all those who see it shout: "Great is the dominion of the gods, whose will for action is more easily realized."' And Elibatus, who wrote down innumerable laws, when speaking On Eucles towards the end, says, 'A frightful cloud settled upon a mountain and cast a single stone upon the earth, and strengthened all its foundations. And how shall a single stone prevail over the entire [earth]? Did not one God alone create the universe?' And Trachelaphius, speaking Against the Falsely-Named, demonstrates his mastery also in the following solid reasoning: 'Who deceived those who trust in Dionysus so as to say about him that he, being forever without a beginning, was born from an unravished virgin? They clothe him with another's dignity. For the one without a beginning, being of the substance that is forever without beginning, takes hold of mortal substance without receiving it as a violation. For that which he formed, he shall not consider an violation, when he takes it up.

There, a virgin—[p. 33] unsullied in her body and having no falsehood in her tongue—supplies virginal flesh; [this process is the] activation of all grace dwelling within [her]. I marvel at the flux-bound taking hold of the flux-free—knowing this: that some have been deified on account of their promulgation of laws; others, because of their nobility of life and their conspicuous purity in other respects, because of which it is fitting to honor them; but to go after heavenly honors is beyond all audacity and above all blasphemy.'"

53. The Jews: "We are not familiar with these things, Lord, nor do we have them in our knowledge." Aphroditianus: "With your own prophets, you are not in agreement; your laws, you falsify. Produce for us simply your laws concerning women, if indeed you will obey them." The Jews: "Custom is law. It was established for us, and we are not able to overturn ancestral practices." Aphroditianus: "I too know that, as you hold fast to your own habits, you do not accept the true religion. For, as you safeguard your own glory, you do not subject yourselves to the glory of your God." 54. The Jews: "What, then, is your command? Are we to become Christians and fall into heresies?" Aphroditianus: "So you are not acting as heresiarchs in living by your own customs? But when the bishops themselves are sitting [nearby], why should I wish to give an account of them—in particular when having a discussion with you, who appear to magnify yourselves by your own defeat?"

The Jews said: ”Let the crowd of bishops speak to us! For we know that we will not be at a loss before them.” 55. The bishops: ”You have done well to come. We do not stand apart from the God who said, ’Take heart, for I have defeated the world.’” The bishops, again: ”We shall set before them a challenge which shall by all means vanquish them.” The Jews: ”Propose it with boldness!” 56. The bishops: ”In Jeremiah, he says: ’This is our God; there shall not be reckoned any other in addition to him. He searched out every path of knowledge and gave it to Jacob his servant and to Israel his beloved. After this, [p. 34] he appeared upon the earth and lived with humans.’” 57. Aphroditianus: ”What can Jacob and Pharas, the Rabbis of the priests, say in answer to this?” The Jews: ”It is fitting for them to make use of one other witness, as the Law says.”

58. The bishops: ”To whom was it said, ’Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies the footstool of your feet?’” The Jews: ”Christ sits at the right hand of God, until he makes his timely arrival—which he promised through the prophets.” 59. The bishops: ”To the one who is sitting, he says, ’Sit at my right hand’? And with whom were the enemies at enmity? With the one who was not yet there? Indeed, the word ’sit,’ which he says, refers to his going back up from earth to the heavens and sitting, as before, above his enemies—so that you are under the feet of his nation, being trampled until the last hour.” The Jews: ”You too should by all means expect to be trampled at the proper time.”

60. The bishops: ”After unjustly trampling, you are justly trampled. Hence, what will happen to you is just. The bishops, again: ”As for the time which you say is coming upon you—it is approaching, quite terrible to see; and with it, both you and the deceiver in whom you trust at that time will be handed over to the eternal embrace of fire. Nevertheless, we put before you your own witnesses, who understood Christ’s presence in the flesh. For indeed, you also have what we are going to say to you in your records: Your ancestors (who had suffered grave defeat and were recalling the defeat as an unconquerable victory) at that time commanded that no one possess or even look for these things, so that diligence would not procure knowledge for the many. But we say these things to those who know—even if you are compelled by your custom to conceal the truth. Did you not hear about the magi who crossed over from here to there, [p. 35] led by divine prophecy, in connection with whom your leaders at the time met with Herod and told him where [the Messiah] was [to be] born, such that Herod became jealous of the kingdom that had sprouted, and committed such a huge slaughter of children? Wasn’t John the Baptist of Jewish ancestry?—to whom you sent people to ask whether he was the Messiah, and he said, ’I am not’;

but he pointed him out and said, ’This is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.’” Futhermore, [what about] Nicodemus, your ruler, and Nathanael and Joseph from Arimathaea, and Bizes and Alexander, who dined with him at the

marriage of Simon of Galilee, where he turned the water into wine? [What about] the elders who were sent by those very men on an embassy on behalf of the centurion's servant—that he trouble himself on account of his salvation—they said: 'For he is worthy that you provide this for him; for indeed, he loves our people and he himself built the synagogue for us'? Basilicus the proconsul, the brother of Jairus the leader of the synagogue, whose son he made well? This man's brother, Jairus, who implored him [p. 36] and raised his daughter from the dead? Caiaphas, who counselled that a single man should die 'and the whole nation not perish'? Your own children who shout, 'Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,' 'King of Israel'? The disciple Judas, with whom you settled thirty pieces of silver, so that he would betray him to you? The soldiers, to whom you gave silver so that they would say, 'His disciples came at night and stole him away while we were sleeping'? Josephus your own writer of history, who spoke about Christ, who was demonstrated to be a righteous and good man by divine grace, by means of signs and wonders, one who bestowed benefits on many?

And as many other things as are recorded, which we do not bring forward now?"

61. The Jews: "We crucified a certain man, but not the Messiah." Aphroditianus: "Who was it that you crucified?" And they said: "A certain man who said that he was God, not indeed the Messiah." Aphroditianus: "You crucified, in short, the one you say was a man, the son of Mary?" They said: "Yes." 62. Aphroditianus: "And why did you crucify him?" "Because he said that he was God." "And for this reason," he said, "he was killed?" They said: "Yes." 63. Aphroditianus: "And which of those who claimed to be God have been killed, in all times? But this one, by contrast, did more good, and healed people." The bishops: "In reference to whom did they, according to the prophet David, 'divide my garments amongst themselves, and cast lots for my clothes'?" But they were silent. [p. 37] The bishops: "Concerning whom did Moses say, 'You will see your life suspended before your eyes, and you shall surely not believe'?"

64. Jacob and Pharas said: "Truly, a great mistake has occurred, even should those of our nation recoil from us in horror ten thousand times over. For as the hierophants proclaimed beforehand vinegar and gall and division of garments, we did these things because of great blindness, so that his blood would come upon the nation and the events would prove true. For, carried away by envy of his signs and wonders, which he did before them, they hurried to destroy him (because everyone followed him afterwards), so that the nation would stand firm—and not only did it not stand firm, but we were even handed over to multiple scatterings and we sang the song of the Lord in a strange land because of our power-hungry teachers at that time, whose minds Satan had blinded." 65. The bishops: "We urge, Lord, that all this be reported back to the divine hearing."

Aphroditianus: ”It shall be so reported. Dastikon labokétras; autíka pithígrisab lestrin—which means, We shall immediately make it known.” And he went off and made it all known to the king. And the king rejoiced, as did those under his rule, at the uprightness of Aphroditianus. 66. And now the rest of the Jews, and their leaders, learning of this, rose up against these two, Jacob and Pharas, and cast them out of the synagogue, saying to them: ”You have shamed us since you have become advocates for the Christians; you have begun to be Christians, you have scorned your ancestors, you have dissolved the Law. You have learned, in short, to worship a human being.” And straightway they went off to Mithrobades the son of Arrhinatus, agreeing to pay him 30 centenaria, [p. 38] so that those men would not lead them any longer, but instead be [cast] out of the priestly rank. But Arrhinatus said to his son: ”Why do you want money for such a reason, as though the Persian kingdom is in need? Count up its wealth: All the treasures of the Medes and Bactrians, the Scythians and Elymaeans and Semiramites, are in your hands. And you pay attention to this paltry sum, especially when it is provided for the sake of breaking the Law? Stand aside from this, child. Let the priests act in accordance with their consciences.”

67. Jacob and Pharas, when they found out what had been said, left and assembled all their households and their friends and those who were diligent for the truth, and they divided their people, such that their part was more than half. And in the other part were Simon and Barnaes and Scillas (this last had converted from paganism). And Jacob’s party implored Aphroditianus that they should have a decree not to be subject to any attack from the authorities—and ”we [will] defend ourselves also with the justification speeches that are available to us.” And the king did accordingly. [p. 39] Arríkês exaktoraklés—which means, ”I order each [group] to plead their cause.” 68. On the next day, both came in and did obeisance to Aphroditianus and the bishops; and they were commanded to sit down, the two groups separately, as they ought to do. And when they had sat down, Aphroditianus said to the bishops: ”Now the controversy is not between us, but between these people. Therefore, I urge you not to interrupt this debate, so that they themselves may persuade themselves. For if you stand in opposition, they themselves too [will] become more vigorous in opposition, and the audience-chamber [will] be thrown into confusion—and for such a thing to happen is especially contrary to your dignity.”

The bishops: ”As you command us, O pure and distinguished man, so shall we do.” 69. Aphroditianus: ”It is permitted to you, Simon and Barnaes and Scillas, to speak, if you have any speech of justification to make regarding your own Law. For subsequently, after this it will remain to ask also about your accusation of your teachers.” 70. Simon and his party: ”Your august and celestial will knows, as does that of the God-beloved priests here, that we all worship one single God and that God is the father of countless glories. Thus, each one worships him in accordance with his view of God’s glory.” 71. Aphroditianus said: ”God neither had nor will

have his glories divided. For since he is one, he also has a single, firm-standing glory, which everyone ought to know. For if he is the father of countless glories / opinions, which of them should one cling to, or how could one judge which of them one should grasp? If the glories are divided, then the one who is glorified is also divided."

72. Simon's party, again: "We implore your gentle and calm kindness not to inveigh against us [p. 40] in this way. For you have trained yourself with great diligence, and we have no great resources for speaking to you. But speak to us rather in a way that we can understand."

73. Jacob and Pharas: "Our dispute, surely, is not about the glory of God, but about Christ the Nazoraean, whom your ancestors—for [they are not] our [ancestors any more]—killed out of envy. For since you cannot bear the shame of this envy, you reject the whole thing, so that you are not condemned. This is the one about whom David said, 'The Lord said to me: You are my son; today I have begotten you,' and so on; and 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,' down to the words, 'For this reason, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions'; and 'The stone which the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner'; and 'Behold! a stone was cut without hands from a mountain, and the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole world'; and 'Behold! I place in Zion a corner-foundation-stone, choice and precious; and the one who believes in it shall be saved'; and 'Behold! the young woman shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel'; and 'He was led like a lamb to slaughter' and the rest; and 'Behold! there was coming with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man, and he proceeded as far as the Ancient of Days, and honor and kingship were presented to him, and all the peoples shall serve him. His kingdom is perpetual and his authority is for generations and further.' All these things, and the others, were said about Christ, whom your self-condemned ancestors crucified—and he rose again and is sitting with his holy Father in the unsullied heavens."

74. Simon and his party: "And why did you not say these things earlier, [p. 41] but instead you began to put forward such teachings by virtue of your antipathy." 75. Jacob and Pharas said: "Antipathy is able to procure good and profitable resources. And as our ancestral God knows, we kept all these things in mind and we condemned those who killed him—and we concealed the truth because of the dignity we possessed. And yet, we began to be Christians in our heart. Therefore, behold! we have come to the stage of completion with a good pretext. For indeed, even then, while because of our fear we preserved our outward appearance, we were different in our minds." 76. Aphroditianus: "The human being is unsettled, by virtue of both its own cogitations and those that come in from outside, and it inclines to many different things; one will not attain the truth in its entirety through

falsehood, nor will one find uprightness through its opposite. And even if someone comes across piety, how will he remain in it? Hence, both parties here should accomplish what is pleasing to them by their own examination."

77. Jacob's party said: "We know that Christ has come from heaven and we belong to his faith, no longer wishing to have a Jewish mindset." 78. Simon and the others: "The nation will not accept you even if you want them to. For how could they keep with them those who are against them?" Aphroditianus: "Do you then cast aside your teachers, if they choose to speak the truth?" Simon: "Neither shall they be at peace any longer with us, nor we with them; for we are at variance with each other and have become each other's enemies." 79. Aphroditianus: "Enough! (For this was his oath.) Your affairs are still at the stage of words, and you are bereft of all action. For I know that those people, who are agitated over action, are a chosen people, being in touch with heavenly things in a heavenly manner, and not boasting in a word only but strengthened by an eternal subject for boasting. [p. 42]

80. "I shall, however, present to you an example equal to the first. I once learned of a woman, a shepherdess, in the settlement of the Arigbanes. One Coatus, son of Coatus, fell in love with her and sent her gifts, so that she would come to an agreement with him. But she, seeing the gifts, laughed and said to the messenger, pointing to her sheep: 'Behold my gifts and my children, from which I am nourished by divine grace.' And he came away to her and with splendid promises he urged her to accept him. She said to him: 'Shall I defile the undefiled cloak which grace has given to me?' Coatus said: 'Miserable girl, this law has been established from above for the propagation of the race.' The shepherdess: 'A law has been established for me not to acquire more than I have.' After much pleading to no effect, he ordered that she be starved to death. And so, on the third day, when she was about to expire, she uttered cheerful words as follows: 'O heavenly Father of your genuine children, O unsullied bridegroom of those who are in the bloom of beauty, I come to you, thrice-desired Lord, giving back to you without complaint that which you gave to me—virginity, forgiveness of sins, an existence without property, a truthful tongue, a heart unacquainted with wickedness—ever intent on the hope that is to come, which I have honored and whose joys I am now by all means going to meet.' And thus she expired. [p. 43] His father, learning this, ordered that he be hung head-downwards on a tall post in the middle of the city, so as to be eaten by birds.

81. "And now, I speak to everyone regarding Christ. That which has happened already has happened. And as regards Philip the history-writer: I met him in Amida and in Ostra. And as regards all the pagans and Christians and Jews: We boast in a name only. And so, brothers, whether you live as Christians or live as Jews, do not destroy the common bond of peace. Let us honor each other with love, and strive after the uninterrupted good things of heaven; and let us hate the division

of opposites. Embrace each other, everyone, with a view to being brought to unity by divine grace." 82. And the man received grace to persuade both parties to be reconciled with each other, as the party of Simon and the others cast itself at the feet of the party of Jacob, asking them not to abandon their ancient friendship. But worship [of God should proceed] as any individual wished, with sincere love remaining [between all]. And after bidding each other farewell, as they ought, and kissing the bishops' feet, giving thanks to God, praising the king at length, and saying the Alleluia in Hebrew together, they departed from each other. And Jacob, Pharas, and 60 [other] souls were baptized. But the others remained in the section [p. 44] of Simon, and they were called "Christianomerites." Aphroditianus urged both to honor Providence, because "this [i.e., Providence] has greatly honored us."

83. Nakenátare. Rophóes. Meroréktaloi sisinnérôtoi. Medidókalla. Auxontêtora—which means, "The absolute authority orders this to be stored away on the tablets for their own witnesses and for those who wish to make exact copies." Arrhenatus, Baukogegédras; Pasargarus, Lexribonátus; Diocles, Bazeas; Aphroditianus, Meïmathlos; command, decision, success, judgment. The authoritative power of the four approved with knowledge the matters so judged. Naburicês, Mithrobadês, Tertulus, members of the gubernatorial class and the corresponding [military] command and satrapal [rank]—whose orders were published and made known to the farthest reaches of the Babylarchy. Let the agreements be published in both forms, as approved mutually. [p. 45] 84. This Philip was a presbyter and synkellos of John, the bishop of Constantinople; he divided the whole [of history] into stages—magnificently, such that not one of the wise writers of history of all time is comparable to him. And the same presbyter recounted that the day on which the star appeared in the temple—that same day, every year, until the Lord was taken up [into heaven], all the statues would produce their characteristic utterance, and so that entire city there was transfixed, beholding the great marvels and the yearly appearance of the star.

85. And it is amazing how Aphroditianus, who was nominally a pagan but in fact behaved as a Christian, surpassed the presbyter Philip in saying great things about Christ. And Dorus the Jew, the advocate of his own slanderous nation, said that the king conducted a competition in the temple, which had never taken place—and the statues have under their feet invisible "reed-nuts," and the craftsmen who operate these lie down secretly in them, and artfully contrive the particular voice of each form. And opposite these there stand women whom they call Th*****ae, singing, and by virtue of the technicians, the blocks of stone by their clever artifices defeat the living women. But this same thing [is true] in the case of [them] all. For he says that the reputation [of these marvels] advances in this way through these. And to those who read this it should be clear to see, whether that [interpretation] seems true.

This translation was commissioned by Roger Pearse and made public domain 19 March 2011. E. Bratke, Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch am Hof der Sasaniden, TU 19 (n. F. 4) 3a. Leipzig, 1899. Pauline Bringel, Une polémique religieuse à la cour perse: le De gestis in Perside. Histoire du texte, édition critique et traduction (diss. Sorbonne, 2007). Bringel selects a different variant: Arrhenatus—she suggests that it is meant to be seen as derived from Gk. ἄρρην (”male”). This character, like the majority of the characters in this story, seems to be entirely fictional, although Bratke cites an apocryphal list of Persian kings in cod. Paris. 1775 as a parallel. Alternatively, ”armed forces” (cf. Bringel’s translation, ”l’armée”); Gk. στρατηγίαι. Cf. Nabuzaradan in 2 Kgs. [4 Kgdms] 25—in effect, as Bringel points out, the highest functionary in the state. At a number of points, the text offers a sequence of non-Greek words--allegedly, the original language of official utterances (i.e., Persian, or pseudo-Persian). Here, the presence of recognizable Greek words is suspicious (διαλαλιά; μου; τοι), as is the fact that the apparent ”translation” is not introduced explicitly as such. Bringel does not include this particular sequence in her text.

”Pagans” here and elsewhere in this text is used to translate Gk. Ἕλληνες (originally ”Greeks,” but by the time period of this text, very commonly used as generic term for ”pagans”). Bringel points out that this number is roughly correct for the church in 6th-cen. Persia. I.e., leaders of monasteries, or abbots. Gk. εὐγλωττίαι, following Bringel. Bringel selects the reading εὐγλωττίας over γλώσσας (Bratke), and translates, ”les propos éloquents.” Gk. τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀριβῶς μοι εἴπατε (Bratke); Bringel prints a different variant: τὴν ἀκρίβειάν μοι εἴπατε. Bringel’s text reads somewhat differently: ”...unfolding every Law-learned [νομομαθής] book” (Bringel translates, ”Feuilletez...tout livre traitant de la Loi,” but notes the fact that the adjective is otherwise only used of people). Bringel’s text, quite a bit more simply: ”...report them to me.” Gk. πάντων ὑμῶν τὴν ἀπώλειαν αὐθωρὶ ποιήσω; Bringel’s Greek text is quite different here, although the purport is about the same: πάντας ὑμᾶς ἀναιρῶ.

Bringel’s text does not include any of the material marked here with a dotted underline. Gk. τὰ ὠμολογημένα; see Lampe, s.v. ὁμολογέω 1(a). Bringel’s text does not include any of the material marked here with a dotted underline. Gk. ἄχραντοι. Bringel translates, ”intègre.” But anomalous acc. Δίαν rather than Δία. Bringel’s text does not include this speech. Bringel rejects the reading οἱ σοὶ, on the assumption that σοὶ is a dative of the personal pronoun, and emends to οὗτοι. I take it rather as the possessive adjective, in which case it seems to make sense. As Bringel points out here, ”priest” (Gk. ἱερεύς) is frequently used as a synonym of ”bishop.” Alternatively, ”[sexual] unions” (Bringel: ”unions charnels”); Gk. συνουσίαι. Here again Bringel chooses a different reading from Bratke. I.e., no one could successfully argue against him. Gk. ...εἰς τὸ φυγεῖν ὄντων τὰς ἀλόγους αὐτοῦ μηχανὰς... So Lampe, s.v. οἰκτείρω. Bringel does not include this phrase in her text.

Bratke's text omits this name; it may be that the name did not appear in the original, but the allusion to the character of Daniel would be present regardless. Dan. 2.28, with some wording from the similar phrase in 2.22. I.e., "crossed themselves"; Gk. κατεσφραγίσαντο. Gk. προσρύεσθαι; Bringel translates, "se défendre." Bringel's text, slightly differently: "as though having been goaded..." Alternatively, "have confidence in the truth, then, and apply yourselves correctly to the matter..." Bringel's text does not include this designation of place. I.e., "like you, he is a pagan." Gk. ἐπὶ στόματος...φέρω. Bringel translates: "Je connais par coeur..." Gk. τὰ παρὰ Φιλίππου. Bringel prints a different variant, τὰ περὶ Φιλίππου, and translates accordingly: "ce qui concerne Philippe" ("the [facts?] concerning Philip"). The context, however, seems to require a reference to Philip's text here, not to information regarding Philip. Gk. τὰ καλούμενα βιβλία; as Bringel points out, the phrase implies that the word "book(s)" was understood as part of the title of the work in question; cf. "book" in the description of the work in §10.

The verbs here are plural. Gk. παραφθαρέντι. Lit., "I have in knowledge." The idea seems to be, "I know it well enough to detect any tampering"; as Bringel translates, "Je le connais assez pour savoir s'il y est fait quelque omission ou quelque ajout." Lampe, s.v. περιαγωγικός, citing only this passage, glosses the word as "prolix." Bringel interprets the word as another indication of the title—Περιαγωγή—which could have various implications. Lampe's interpretation chimes in with Photius' judgment on Philip of Side's wordy and digressive style, but a negative characterization of the book does seem odd at this point in the narrative. Bringel points out other works whose titles include the root ἄγω, and suggests possibilities such as "guide" or "cycle" for the meaning of this as a title. As Bringel points out, this may imply that "Greek Oracles" was the title of one section of Philip's work. Bringel's text does not include this "Persian" sentence and the translation thereof.

With the negative particle, as in Bratke's text, the sequence is obscure; perhaps, as Bringel suggests, the idea would be that Aphroditianus does not need any further examination of the book to be able to point out the portion he wishes to hear. Bringel's text, however, does not include the negative here; she translates, "Celui-ci tourna son attention vers le livre et commença aussitôt à le lire." Gk. ἐκ τοῦ λόγου τοῦ περὶ Κασάνδρου. Gk. τοῦ εἰς Ἑλλάδα ἀναιρεθέντος. Note the unclassical use of the preposition εἰς. Alternatively, following a variant reading (mss. FG): "of the Macedonians." Gk. φόβον ἐκτήσατο πολύν—not that she "had" fear in that she was afraid, but that she "acquired" the (respect and) fear of others. Gk. τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς κατέλαβε. Alternatively, "conquered the Achaeans." Gk. γνῶναι αὐτοὺς ἐφ' ᾧ παρῆσαν.

Bratke reconstructs plausible wording after the name "Philip" on the basis of mangled indications in the manuscripts and also the cues apparent in the context: namely, their response to the oracle shows that the oracle has mentioned a woman,

and a man from Macedonia; and Aphroditianus' comment in §14 (p. 9) makes clear that a prediction is made that can be taken as referring to "the Macedonian" and to Christ. Bringel, by contrast, marks the words following Philip as a crux, having little confidence in any reconstruction. In connection with this consultation of the oracle, there is a further major textual variant: In a couple of manuscripts, a fairly long sequence of text is either substituted for (ms. Q) or added to the end of (ms. N) the oracular response translated above; this additional text runs roughly as follows [minor discrepancies do exist in the witnesses]: "Late, a certain one will make his way to this much-splintered earth, and without a misstep will become flesh, and by the untiring bounds of divinity he will dissolve the destructive force of incurable passions / sufferings; and ill-will shall arise for this one at the hands of an unbelieving people, and he will be hung up to a height as one condemned to death. And having willingly suffered to bear all these things as well, at death he will be lifted up into eternal life." The supposed prophecy of Christ is much clearer in this additional text, which may well have been added specifically to alleviate the annoyace of a too-obscure prophecy.

Gk. ἀήττητοι καιροὶ; Bringel translates, "un empire invincible," but it is not clear why. Cf. Lampe s.v. ἀνακόλουθος. Bringel's text, with an additional word: "against the gods, who cannot be insulted." Bringel's text, using other variants: "a leader having the unconquerable power of the unconquerable God." Gk. ἀλῶν; the reading and its significance are debatable. This motif is odd; perhaps, as Bringel suggests, some magical / imprecatory power is envisaged. Gk. εὐάρεστοι; Bringel's text has ἄρευστοι ("unchanging"). The participle is in the nominative case—grammatically, then, it ought to be describing the gods; but the context seems to require a reference to the envoys and the occasion for their consultations. Some emendation is likely required. Bringel cites the Diccionario griego-español s.v. δῆλος for the LXX use of the word as a masc. noun connected with divination; cf. also (e.g.) Muraoka, Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint, s.v. Gk. πυθμεύει; the sense is obscure. Lampe (s.v.) glosses the verb as to "give the base of a series" and arguest that its appearance in this context implies that with this third oracle, the full understanding is revealed. Bringel translates, "va jusqu'au fond" ("goes to the bottom"—i.e., of the tripod / cauldron, to fetch the oracles).

Gk. παρείς; Bringel, printing a different variant (σπαρείς), translates, "une fois engendré" ("having once been engendered"—or "sown") The letters of Μαρία, when interpreted as numerals, add up to 152. Gk. πᾶν ἱερὸν ὑμῶν σέβας. Bringel translates, "toute votre majesté sacrée" ("all your holy majesty"). Gk. φιλοσοφία. Here the phrase doubles as a kind of honorific address: "Your Philosophy" (parallel to phrases like "Your Majesty" for a monarch) is a paraphrase for "you"—hence, "it was in doubt" is equivalent to "you were in doubt." I.e., "your love of wisdom." Here Bringel chooses a different reading: διὰ τὸ εἶναι ("because of the fact that…")

rather than τὸ εἶναι. This makes the overall architecture of this sprawling sentence marginally better: ”for this reason” a few lines later then reiterates / reinforces the logic of the preposition διά. Cf. Gen. 11.1. There is an unexpected switch to a masc. participle here (hence ”teachers” rather than ”teachings”).

Gk. ἐκ πρὶν (Bratke) / πρώην (Bringel) καὶ δεῦρο. Gk. ἀπειροθρήσκως; Lampe, s.v., renders this ”without experience of true religion”; cf. Bringel, ”sans expérience de la religion.” An alternative interpretation is possible: ”with boundless religiosity.” Something appears to be missing in this sentence. Bringel’s text is slightly expanded at the beginning of this sentence, with an explicit reference to disagreement, but still does not quite sit comfortably; and it omits any reference to Buddhists: ”Jews fight against Samaritans; Greeks likewise who live without experience of religion” [cf. previous footnote for this adverb]. Gk. δόξαι. Gk. χρήσεις; Bringel translates ”oracles.” Adapted from ANF translation (attributed to Julius Africanus). Gk. ἐκ Περσίδος ἐγνώσθη. Alternatively, this could be translated, ”became known [to others] from Persia.” ἐν ταῖς χρυσαῖς ἀρκλαρίαις—but this term which from the context must mean ”tablets” (cf. πτυχαί a little later) is not attested elsewhere. Bringel points out that an apparently related word, ἄρκλα (= Lat. arca [?]), is found in a number of late texts.

The order of the Greek words should mean, ”the holy palaces”—but perhaps emendation is in order. Bringel does not include the phrase, ”and the priests connected with them,” in her text. ”them” Bringel. The mss. give several different variants for this name. Lit., ”I rejoice with you.” Lit., ”rejoice with.” ANF translates a variant reading: ”How was she able…?” Urania means ”heavenly / celestial.” The re-naming seems to play on perceived etymological connections between Hera and ”earth” or ”aër” (i.e., the cloudy, thick lower atmosphere, as opposed to the higher, more rarefied ”ether”). Pege means ”spring,” ”source,” or ”stream.” Cf. the Tübingen Theosophy, pp. 26-27 Beatrice. Bringel, choosing a variant reading: ”You have well said, ’She espoused a carpenter’; for she has a carpenter…” Perhaps the quotation of the ”females” continues on to the end of the sentence. In any case, this does not quite reflect what they were reported as saying earlier—”she espoused a carpenter”—unless the variant chosen by Bringel is correct. Bringel translates the last part of the sentence, ”mais il ne vient pas de son lit, le charpentier qu’elle met au monde.”

Bringel, choosing a slightly different variant: ”framed…the triple-constructed sky as a roof.” I.e., land, sea, and sky (ANF). Bringel translates, ”ce firmament à trois habitations.” Bringel excludes this last sentence from her text. Or, ”statue.” Gk. στήλη. Gk. Ἥλιος. Bringel points out the parallel shining gem-stone described by Lucian, De dea Syria 32. Bringel, following a different variant: ”The king, having watched this, gave orders…” The name Karia is obscure; one textual variant at the next occurrence is ”Makaria” (blessed), which might make more sense. Variant

reading: ”kings.” I.e. (as Bringel points out by citing the parallel of Pilate’s words at Jn. 19.22), he is saying that their time of producing apparitions and of ruling is over. Gk. μὴ θροβάδει. This is Bringel’s text and interpretation. Bratke’s text, Μιθροβάδῃ, would introduce quite inexplicably a Mithrobades—the preceding verb then could be interpreted either as ”they said” or ”I said” or ”Say” [to Mithrobades], with the following words possibly still part of Dionysus’ speech.

As Bringel points out here, the last few phrases allude to Gen. 1.26, and Christ’s work in restoring the ”image” of God in human beings, and leading them to the ”likeness” of God. I.e., the Son of God (”heaven’s boast”) is now to be born on earth. Bringel has a slightly different text, and further imagines a supplement so that the first part of this sentence refers to the birth of Christ, not (as I have read it) to the prior birth of Pege (i.e., Mary). She translates as follows: ”Karia a le bonheur de voir Source mettre un enfant au monde à Bethléem. Source a la grâce d’être désirée par le ciel et de concevoir le bienfait de la grâce”—I have underlined the supplement she adds. Bringel’s reading, quite possibly correct, omits τὰ ἡμέτερα (”our affairs”) and leaves the verb ”is / are withering” to be connected to Judaea.

Instead of δέσποινα (”mistress”), Bringel’s text gives οὐρανία (”Urania / heavenly”). Bringel’s text, slightly more logically, here reads ”sent [some] magi of those under his dominion.” Here Bringel’s text reads ”by madness” (ὑπὸ μανίας) rather than ”by an oracle” (ὑπὸ μαντείας). Or rather: ”lest a revolt rise [against them] toward us”—that is, fearing that the people of Judaea would revolt against the high priests and convert to the good news of the Messiah announced by the magi. Or, ”we spoke to him until he was thoroughly disturbed.” I.e., the voice heard in §22, or the divine manifestations and their interpretations more generally. Bringel interprets this sentence differently: ”Il fut consacré dans le temple, où il se trouve avec l’inscription que voici.” See Bringel ad loc. for a long exploration of the term διοπετής and its significance. Bringel’s text reads: ”gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” Gk. ἀντάρτας. The ”rebels” would be rebellious / sinful humans in general.

Bringel’s text: ”a certain terrifying angel.” Bringel’s text includes a sentence at this point to conclude the account of the magi, and a further phrase to introduce Aphroditianus’ final comments: ”And those are the marvellous narrations of the inspired magi. And [here are] mine.” I would argue, however, that the account of the magi should be understood to have concluded either after the words, ”Christ has become our Savior”—or perhaps even after the statement, ”we reported all that we had seen in Jerusalem.” The address to ”you,” who are slandering and opposing Christ, seems to revert to Aphroditianus’ situation. Bringel’s text: ”…Christ, to whom every mouth acknowledges / gives thanks.” Gk. Ἕλληνες. Note that the first example is Cyrus the Great of Persia—demonstrating clearly that for the author, ”Hellenes” is not an ethnic term but refers to pagans. In the reading preferred by Bringel, the bodyguards are not female. This name (unknown otherwise) is the

reading favored by Bringel; Bratke does not choose between ms. variants here, printing simply an ellipsis in the middle of the name: C...encrates. Wirth, p. 200, reports Noeldeke's suggestion that the Cynic Crates may be the distant inspiration for this reference.

Gk. παροξυσμοί; the precise reference is obscure. At this point in the text, Bratke includes a few words which he seems to view as another example of "Persian": drô kai telo. Alternatively, with the Greek variant spelling chosen by Bringel, "Horicatus." Gk. ἀνδρεῖα. Gk. στηλῶν ἀξιοῦσαι. Bringel's text, following an alternate reading (τιμῶν ἀξιοῦσαι): "...worthy of honors." I.e., "greetings." The normal Greek salutation is the imperative, "rejoice!" Gk. καθεμάτιον...τρίγοργον. Bringel selects a different reading: ἱμάτιον...τρίγωνον ("a triangular cloak"). Gk. ἀνεπέτασεν; this ought to mean "opened" but the context seems to require the sense indicated. Gk. λύσεις. Here, Bringel's text has additionally: "of demons." Here, Bringel's text includes a further sentence: "They have not helped you at all." Here, Bringel's text has additionally: "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Here Bringel's text has additionally: "and white." As Bringel suggests, it seems likely that accidental transposition of material has occurred here: probably, the interaction with the demon here originally appeared before the references to his failure in the third trial.

Here Bringel's text has the additional words: "For if you go in there, you shall by all means not come out." As a parallel to this nasal gesture in the context of pagan cult, Bringel cites Sophronius of Jerusalem, Mir. Cyr. et Joh. 31, tr. J. Gascou (Paris, 2006); cf. also Lampe s.v. The Greek text does not specify "our" followers, which however seems the most likely reference in context. Bringel's text adds, "of heart." Bringel's text, somewhat differently: "By Hera and her great power, if the perfection of the fifth sign does not persuade me, I am not [i.e., will not be] persuaded." Bringel's text: "the truth of the true god." The mss. variants here cause Bratke to despair of finding the correct reading. Bringel's text gives the name as Sechthrantianus. In Bringel's text, the bishops are explicitly the subject here. Gk. κατὰ...πάσης τῆς οὐσίας αὐτοῦ ἐχώρησεν. For the verb, Bringel reads ἐχώρισε, and translates, "confisqua toute sa richesse" ("confiscated all his wealth").

Cf. 29 above: the "heaven-sent temple"—emend the previous? Here Bringel's text has additionally: "I take joy in this and..." Alternatively, "the Messiah." Bringel's text reads: Masthe dre delakornakykoêarerêande roinason. Gk. ἀλύπως; i.e., without causing (or receiving) pain. Mal. 3.22-23 LXX [= 4.5-6 MT]. The text, however, skips a number of words and presents the variant reading "coming" (ἐλθών) rather than "I come and..." (ἔλθω καὶ)—which licenses the unusual interpretation of the verse, as Bringel explains, following the Latin translation of Anastasius—which is cited by Bratke in his apparatus as β: non veniens percutiam terram totam. With the standard text, μή introduces a negative purpose clause ("so that I will not come

and smite the earth"); with the variant, μή simply modifies the participle and Elijah is understood as the instrument of God's destruction of the world ("not coming, I will smite"). Bringel's text has an additional "then" here. Gk. λίθον αὐτόν—perhaps the second word has demonstrative force as frequently in later Greek: "that stone."

Bringel's text: "You are...refuting." Gk. πρόβλημα. For the first two quotations, see Dan. 2.44; for the third, see Dan. 2.34-35. Bringel's text does not include the phrase, "and his successors." Cf. Dan. 2.34, 44-45. Bringel interprets this to mean "between the Macedonian rule and the Roman rule"—i.e., Christ's birth was under Herod, before Judaea was directly administered by the Romans, but after the remnants of Alexander's empire had disappeared. Ps. 118.22. Here I follow Bringel's text; Bratke's has an infinitive instead of a finite verb. Bringel: "Pertelaeus." Gk. τὸ θέλειν τὸ πρακτικὸν ἑτοιμότερον. Lit., "in those at the end"—it is unclear whether "those at the end" refers to particular "laws" in his collection (so Bringel), or generically to the end of his text. Gk. ἐπικρατεῖ καὶ στερεὰ ταῦτα. The text and precise sense are unclear. Bringel, with different accentuation, interprets the first word as a dative noun that could be interpreted as the addressee: "to Epicrates"; as a verb [with Bratke], the basic idea is to "prevail over"—which I am rendering, "demonstrates his mastery" since there is no object specified.

Here, Bringel's text has the additional word "progeny." This phrase is a sentence fragment added to the rest; I suspect that some words have fallen out in transmission. Gk. παραγράφεσθε. Jn. 16.33. Ba. 3.36-38. Bringel's text: "of the Jews." Ps. 110.1. Bringel's text: "of the Christian tribe." Gk. ἐν ὑπομνήμασι. Gk. εἶπαν τὸ "ποῦ γεννᾶται." Bringel's text additionally includes Χριστός as the subject of the question; but Bringel interprets this as direct quotation of the leaders ("...said, 'Where is the Christ born?'"). I understand it as an indirect question; they provide the answer to the question actually posed by Herod, in keeping with the Biblical text (Mt. 2.4-5). Jn. 1.21, 29-30. For the apparent use of apocryphal traditions on the wedding at Cana here, cf. Bratke, pp. 219ff. The connection of this phrase with the context is unclear; also, note that the verb ("trouble himself") appears in Lk. 7.6, paired with a negative: "Lord, do not trouble yourself further"—this partial parallel perhaps indicates a deeper corruption in the present passage.

Gk. βασιλικός; alternatively, "the royal official." Jn. 4.46ff. Mk. 5.22-23, 35-43. Jn. 11.49-50. Here the grammatical sequence seems to come loose from its moorings: "your children" is an expression in the accusative case (and indeed, "Judas" and "the soldiers" in the subsequent sentences are introduced in the dative case), whereas the previous figures mentioned have all been nominative [i.e., the subjects of the respective questions—were they not all Jews?]. Now, therefore, the implied supplement seems to be "consider" or "pay attention to" the next-listed characters. Mt. 28.12-13. Cf. Josephus, AJ 18.3; for this form of the testimonium Flavianum, cf.

John Malalas, Chronographia (ed. Thurn), p. 187.26, cited by Bringel and Bratke. Ps. 21[22].19[18]. Deut. 28.66. Originally, this term refers to initiatory priests (who ”show holy things”) in the Eleusinian mysteries; here, it is a reference to the Hebrew prophets. I.e., to the Persian king. Bringel’s version of the ”Persian” words is somewhat different, although it includes the same Greek word αὐτίκα (”immediately, straightway”) in the midst of otherwise non-Greek material.

A centenarium would be a unit of ”a hundred” (usually understood as a Byzantine measure of 100 pounds of gold). The precise import of this sentence is obscure. Bringel translates, ”Jacob et les siens firent appel à Aphroditien pour avoir un sauf-conduit leur garantissant qu’ils n’auraient pas à subir quelque attaque de la part du pouvoir. ‘Et nous nous protégerons par nous-mêmes et par les justifications qui sont à notre disposition.’” Bringel’s text does not include the last part of the sentence (from ”the two groups” to the end). Gk. ἡμῶν—lit., ”the controversy is not ours.” Bringel instead reads ὑμῶν (”yours,” but mistakenly translating ”de notre ressort”; this seems to be a misprint for ”de votre ressort”) on the grounds that Aphroditianus does not fully identify himself with the Christians; but the pronoun need not be understood in that way, even if ”ours” is the correct reading—rather, by ”our” controversy, Aphroditianus could easily refer to his discussion with the Christian bishops.

The Gk. word δόξα, translated here and in the next sentences for the most part as ”glory,” can also mean ”opinion” (as in compounds such as ”ortho-dox”). Hence, these sentences can equally be read as meaning that God is the ”father of countless opinions” and everyone worships in accordance with his view of the ”opinion one holds about God.” So Bringel translates throughout, but the wordplay depends on both meanings remaining available. Here Bringel’s text has the additional parenthetic phrase: ”Would that they had never been born!” I.e., since they have now embraced Christianity, they have also renounced their Jewish ancestors. Bringel’s text: ”murder” (reading φόνου rather than φθόνου). Ps. 2.7; cf. Heb. 1.5. Ps. 44[45].7-8; cf. Heb. 1.8-9. Ps. 117[118].22. Dan. 2.34-35. Isa. 28.16; cf. Rom. 9.33; 10.11. Isa. 7.14; note the use of the Gk. νεᾶνις (with Aquila etc.) rather than παρθένος (”virgin”—the LXX reading). Isa. 53.7. Dan. 7.13-14.

It is not clear which ”first” example is meant here. Bringel here cites E. Honigmann, ”Philippus of Side and His Christian History,” in Patristic Studies (Rome, 1953), pp. 90-91, for the idea that these details were meant to tie in with details of Philip of Side’s history—that is, that Philip of Side mentioned such a meeting, and presumably also said something about a controversy between himself and Dionysarus (cf. §1 above). Bringel’s text: ”...everyone, as the grace above asks of you.” I.e., ”partakers in Christianity.” Bringel’s text: ”Christianomerists” (reading Χριστιανομεριστάς rather than Χριστιανομερίτας, Bratke’s reading). In favor of Bringel’s reading would be the clear reflection of a verb stem, μεριζ-, denoting

”division” (thus, ”dividers of Christianity”) and thus working well with the narration of the establishment of a sect. Neither term is attested elsewhere. Here, the text includes what seems to present itself as the official decree concluding these discussions. In the next sentence, each name appears with another word, perhaps meant to be taken as an official title.

As usual, Bringel’s text of the ”Persian” is slightly different. Cf. §19 above. Bringel’s text: ”as a testimony.” Lit., ”sons.” I.e., the area whose capital was Babylon. (?) Gk. ἱστόρησε. Gk. ἀπετέλει. Gk. καλαμιοκάρυα. Bringel chooses the variant καλαμισκάρια, interpreting it to mean ”little pipes”; in either case, some sort of tubes through which the technicians supposedly produced the voice of the statues is clearly envisioned. Bratke does not decide among the variant readings here (including Tharaglinae, Thyagrilae); Bringel chooses Thyariglae. This text was commissioned by Roger Pearse, 2010. This file and all material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode.

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