

Philo of Alexandria at New College

Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BC–c. 50 AD), a member of a wealthy Jewish family, was well-educated in Greek literature and philosophy, and wrote in Greek. His many books dealt with biblical interpretation (based on the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible), philosophy, and the contemporary history of the Jewish citizens of Alexandria. About three dozen of his works survive in Greek, but as is true of almost all ancient authors, quite a few others have been lost in their original language. Copying extensive texts by hand was an onerous task, and many writings were not so fortunate as to be copied repeatedly enough to survive to our times. It happens, though, that about twenty of Philo's books were translated into Armenian about 575 AD, most of which do not survive in Greek. For the works found in Armenian but not in Greek we are least able to understand the substance of what Philo wrote. There is also a Latin translation from around 400 AD of two books, both of which survive in Armenian, and one of which survives in Greek as well. Of Philo's books that do not survive in Greek, there are often quotations in Greek found in various sources that preserve (at least more or less) Philo's original words. And many of these can be located by means of these ancient Armenian or Latin translations. We will come across an example of this later on.

As part of my own research into the textual transmission of Philo's works, I had the opportunity in December 2019 to examine two manuscripts in New College Library, Oxford, namely MSS 58 and 143, i.e., to use the Latin designations, which one finds in the literature, Oxoniensis Collegii Novi 58 and Oxoniensis Collegii Novi 143. Here is a brief report.

MS 143

This is a Greek manuscript, consisting of 396 folios and dating from 1533, that contains 38 works (or portions of works) of Philo. Its first appearance in Philo studies was in 1742, when the learned scholar Thomas Mangey of Durham published an edition, in two large volumes, of Philo's works in Greek.¹ This edition is not at all a critical edition by current standards. But Mangey knew Philo extremely well, and recognized the importance of studying the manuscript tradition of his works. Accordingly he obtained collations by others of some important manuscripts in Europe, and he personally examined several manuscripts at Oxford. Among these was MS 143, and he reported some of its readings in his many discussions of textual problems in Philo.

On the other hand, the now standard critical edition of Philo's works, edited by Leopold Cohn and Paul Wendland in six volumes (1896–1915), does not cite MS 143 in its textual apparatus at all.² In the years leading up to their edition, Cohn and Wendland undertook a much more systematic examination of the manuscript tradition of Philo than Mangey had. And their study seemed to show that MS 143 was dependent on existing manuscripts of Philo, and thus could be ignored as providing no independent evidence.

I am especially interested in MS 143 because I am now in the process of producing a new edition of a third-century papyrus codex in Paris, which contains two of Philo's works, namely, *Her.* and *Sacr.*, each of which is, as noted above, also in MS 143. By the way, besides being an invaluable early witness to what Philo wrote, this Paris manuscript (suppl. gr. 1120/1) is famous for two other reasons. First, it is, as it seems, the oldest book in the world that was found with its original cover, which is still preserved in Paris. Second, found within it were some fragments of an early New Testament codex (suppl. gr. 1120/2), which are known as \mathfrak{P}^4 .

¹ *Philonis Judaei opera quae reperiri potuerunt omnia*, 2 vols. (London: William Bowyer, 1742).

² Cohn and Wendland (and Siegfried Reiter for the last two books in vol. 6), eds., *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, 6 vols. (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1896–1915). I will cite this edition as 'PCW'.

Now, much of the importance of such an early manuscript of Philo is that it may (and indeed frequently does) preserve a different wording of Philo's text. And we often see that this earlier wording is probably Philo's original wording, or at least closer to it than what we find in the later manuscripts. In order to understand as far as possible, then, the value of the text of this papyrus, I have been comparing its text to that of later manuscripts. And I have come across some clues in the editions of Mangey and of Cohn and Wendland that suggested to me that the latter's characterization of MS 143 might not be completely accurate. In general, in studying manuscripts one learns not always to trust what one reads, and there is no substitute for actually seeing a manuscript and finding out for oneself what it contains. And so I decided to examine MS 143 at these two books that are contained in the Paris papyrus. Fortunately, I was allowed to take photographs of the relevant pages of MS 143, so that I could study its text at leisure. I have not yet completed this study, but I can give here a very preliminary report.

However, in order to understand why Cohn and Wendland thought that MS 143 could be ignored, we need to look more closely at the contents of MS 143. The manuscript was written by two different scribes, and the two portions that they copied have different textual relationships. The first part consists of 181 folios, and contains 14 works or sections of works, including Philo's *De sacrificiis* ('On the Sacrifices of Cain and Abel', i.e., *Sacr.*; see the first illustration below). The second part consists of 212 folios, and contains 24 works or sections of works, including *Quis heres* ('Who is the Heir of Divine Things', i.e., *Her.*; see the second illustration below), as well as *De vita contemplativa* ('On the Contemplative Life', i.e., *Contempl.*) and *De opificio mundi* ('On the Creation of the World', i.e., *Opif.*). As we will see, these latter two works play a role in our analysis; of course, *Sacr.* and *Her.* are the two books that I am especially interested in.³ Other manuscripts of Philo that are relevant to our investigation, and which are cited by Cohn and Wendland, have the sigla: A (Monacensis gr. 459), B (Marcianus gr. Z. 41 (= 366)), H (= Marcianus gr. Z. 40 (= 365)),⁴ and O (Laurentianus Pluteus 10.23).⁵

As part of his studies leading up to the Cohn-Wendland edition, Cohn gave attention to MS 143. In 1889 he edited *Opif.*, and reported on his collation of MS 143 in that one work of Philo. According to him, MS 143 is simply a copy of MS B.⁶ In 1892 he presented a more detailed analysis.⁷ Noting that the manuscript consists of two parts, Cohn looked at *Contempl.* and some additional material in the second part, and found that all these works were, like *Opif.*, copied from MS B. Turning to the first part, Cohn argues that MS 143 was copied from MS. H or a related manuscript. He concludes that MS 143 does not need to be cited in the critical apparatus, given that the manuscripts from which it derives are cited. These points are also made by Cohn in 1896 in his prolegomena to the first volume of the critical edition,⁸ and accordingly Cohn and Wendland ignored the evidence in MS 143 as being superfluous, and simply cited the earlier manuscripts.

But there are some complications with this view. In an 1895 study of the text of *Contempl.*, Conybeare stated that MS 143 was 'it would seem, practically copied from B'.⁹ But he then qualifies this assertion by citing the example of *Contempl.* 14. There, instead of the usual text *πληχθέντες*, MS 143 and Philo MS A have *πλησθέντες*. According to Conybeare the two latter manuscripts 'have retained the peculiar corruption of the family', whereas Philo MS B as well as Coislinianus 43 'are free

³ Photographs below show the opening pages of these two books. Note the difference in handwriting by the two scribes.

⁴ Cohn and Wendland use the terms 'Venetus gr. 41' and 'Venetus gr. 40' for B and H, respectively. I have cited the current official shelfmarks.

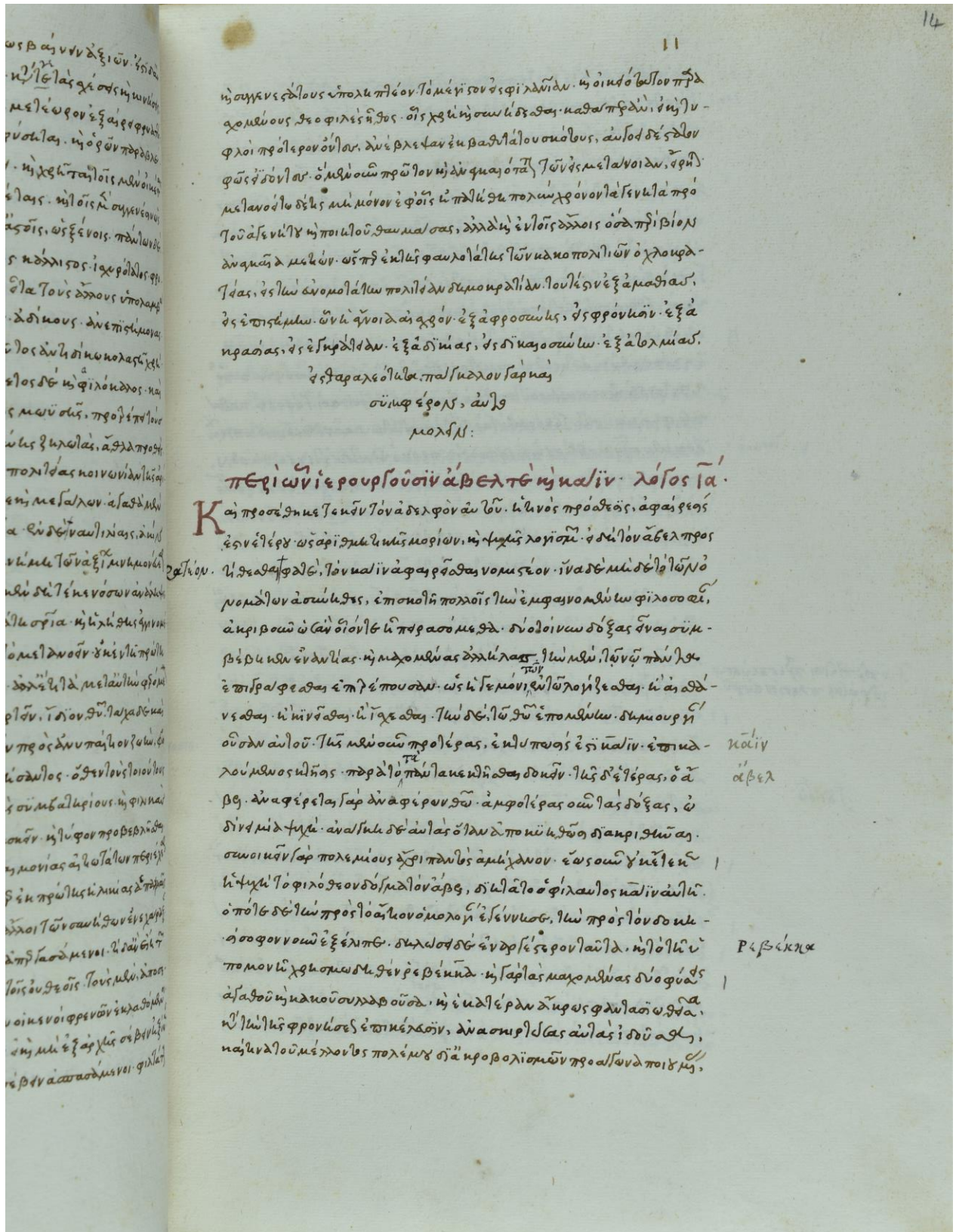
⁵ Again, '10.23' is the current official shelfmark in Florence; the older designation was 'X 23'.

⁶ Cohn, ed., *Philonis Alexandrini libellus de opificio mundi* (Bratislava: Koebner, 1889), xiii.

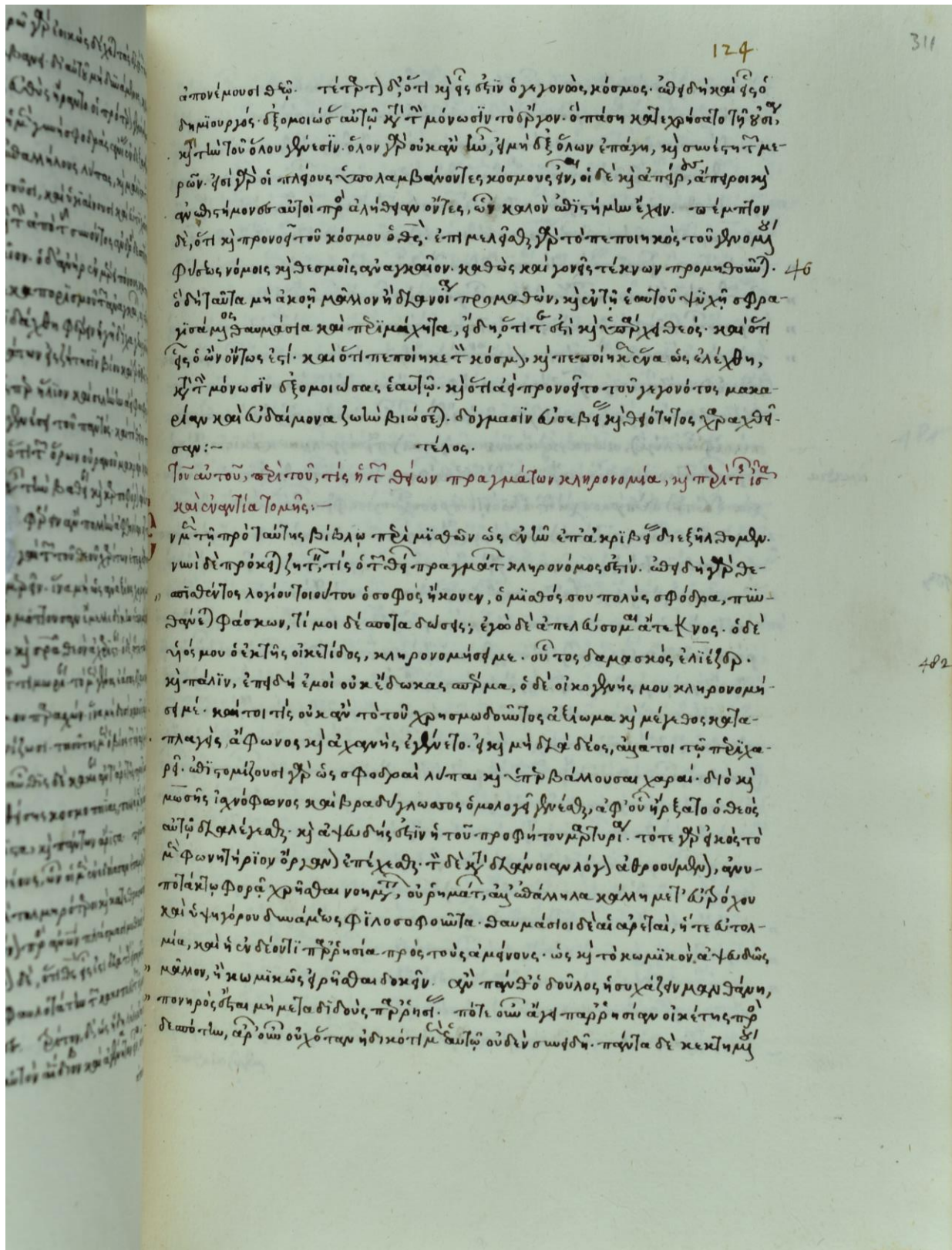
⁷ 'Die Philo-Handschriften in Oxford und Paris', *Philologus* 51 (1892), 266–75, (p. 272).

⁸ Cohn, PCW 1:xix.

⁹ Frederic C. Conybeare, *Philo about the Contemplative Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), p. 6.



New College Library, Oxford, MS 143, f. 14r
Beginning of Philo, *De Sacrificiis*

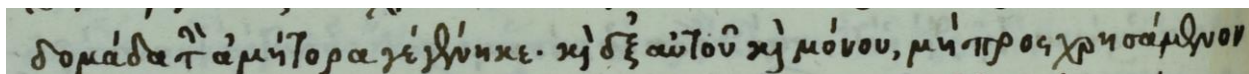


New College Library, Oxford, MS 143, f. 311r
Beginning of Philo, *Quis heres*

from it, having probably been corrected'. Conybeare adds that MS 143 'has often been corrected from MSS. of other families'.¹⁰ One can thus account for the occasional difference between MS 143 and B by appealing to corrections made to one of those manuscripts from a manuscript of another family. But, of course, such examples contradict the assertion by Cohn that the second part of MS 143 is simply a copy of B. (Conybeare's work appeared after Cohn's article of 1892, but Cohn has a brief mention of Conybeare's work in his 1896 discussion of MS 143. Curiously, though, he cites Conybeare's study as simply confirming the view that the second part of MS 143 derives from B,¹¹ whereas in fact Conybeare adopts that position only with the qualifications mentioned here.)

Further, one of the readings of MS 143 that are cited by Mangey in 1742 occurs at *Her.* 216. There Philo presents some arithmological speculation relating to the golden candlestick as found in the Holy of Holies: 'For the One, alone and absolutely pure, has begotten the Seven, whom no mother bore, begotten her by himself alone, and employing no other medium whatsoever'.¹² Fortunately, for our purposes we do not need to master the nuances of this statement. Our concern is with the Greek of the second occurrence of 'alone'. The text as found in most manuscripts is: καὶ μόνου. That was what Mangey found in earlier editions of Philo. But he edited simply μόνου (without the καὶ), and states in a note that he is following MS143.¹³ Looking at the apparatus in the Cohn-Wendland edition (vol. 3), we find that MS H has καὶ μόνον. But μόνου (without καὶ) is cited from the Paris papyrus (as is correct), and that is the text that Wendland prints in his text. Presumably, the insertion of καὶ is due to the influence of the phrase καὶ μόνον καὶ καθαρὸν ὄντως earlier in the sentence; and that phrase would also account for the presence of μόνον in MS H.

In any case, putting the two reports of Mangey and Wendland together, I thought that MS 143 agrees with the Paris papyrus in having μόνου (without καὶ), and that Wendland fails to cite MS 143 simply because that manuscript is systematically ignored in the apparatus. However, looking at MS 143 (f. 323v, line 7 up, photographed below) I found that in fact it has here καὶ μόνου with the other medieval manuscripts except H. (Note that καὶ is written, as usual, in a slightly abbreviated form.) So, this reading is consistent with the view that MS 143 is following MS B (at least at this point). The problem is with Mangey's report. Perhaps he confused his notes, and the reading without καὶ is found in some other manuscripts; but the simplest explanation is probably correct: he simply misread what MS 143 has. In any case, this example of an interesting reading found in MS 143 disappears.



New College Library, Oxford, MS 143, f. 323v [detail]

Before looking at some other texts, let us first note that three existing manuscripts form a closely related family:¹⁴ A, B, and O. As noted earlier, Cohn's view (presumably adopted by Wendland also) is that MS 143 derives from B in *Quis heres*. But an examination of MS 143 does not quite confirm that position. Here are a few details from the opening pages of *Quis heres*.¹⁵

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ PCW 1:xix: 'postea codice [i.e., MS 143] aliis locis inspecto eundem ubique cum codice B consensum repperi atque eundem in libro *de vita contemplativa* exstare confirmavit Conybeare'.

¹² Translation by F. H. Colson, *Philo* 4 (Loeb edition, 1932), p. 391.

¹³ Mangey, *Opera*, 1: 503 n. s: 'Sic MS. Coll. Nov. Editi καὶ μόνου'.

¹⁴ See Wendland, PCW 3: i–iii.

¹⁵ Fortunately, there are digital images of A and O available online, and so I have confirmed my citations of those two mss. For B I have had to rely on Wendland's reports. I have cited the other manuscripts (GHP) collectively as 'codd'.

Her. 1 (PCW 3:1 l. 3): ἤγουσε OB codd. : ἤγουεν A MS 143

Her. 2 (PCW 3:1 l. 6): μου OB codd. : om. A MS 143

Her. 9 (PCW 3:3 l. 3): δὲ OB codd. : om. A MS 143

This is an exceedingly small set of readings, yet they seem adequate to show that MS 143 was not copied from B (or O). On the other hand, we have a reading that seems to show that MS 143 was not copied from A (or O).

Her. 12 (PCW 3:3 l. 15): ἐν OA codd. : om. B MS 143

And here are two readings that confirm that MS 143 falls within the OAB family.

Her. 12 (PCW 3:4 l. 1): ἀνδριᾶσιν codd. : ἀνδράσιν OAB MS 143

Her. 15 (PCW 3:5 l. 1): φερομένων codd. : φερομένων OAB MS 143

And just to show that MS 143 can on occasion go its own way (perhaps simply through scribal error), here is a reading where it seems to differ from all other mss.

Her. 6 (PCW 3:2 l. 11): ὑπὲρ τοῦ OAB codd. : om. MS 143

What can we conclude from all this? It seems that MS 143 is not a straightforward copy of either A or B, although it clearly belongs to the OAB family. Perhaps the fluctuation in its support for A and B can be explained as the result of mixture that derives from its having been corrected to related manuscripts, as Conybeare suggested. But a more precise evaluation will have to await more systematic study.

MS 58

This manuscript is not a manuscript of Philo's works at all. Rather, it is a manuscript of Acts and the Catholic Epistles (i.e., James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude) of the New Testament.¹⁶ How it plays a role in the transmission of the text of Philo, a devout Jew who most likely never heard of Christianity and who certainly knew nothing of any books of the New Testament, requires a bit of background information.

There are, of course, many manuscripts of some or all of the books of the New Testament in Greek, as well as many others that contain some or all of the books of the Old Testament in Greek. At some point, perhaps around 500 AD, someone had the idea of adding to such manuscripts comments that would explain or illuminate the biblical text itself. Eventually many biblical manuscripts were copied with extensive sets of such comments, along with the names of the authors and sometimes the names of the works from which they taken, with various methods used to relate a comment to a precise verse. These comments were known as a *catena*, which is Latin for 'chain', since we have a chain of remarks, and such a manuscript became known simply as a *catena* (plural *catenae*).

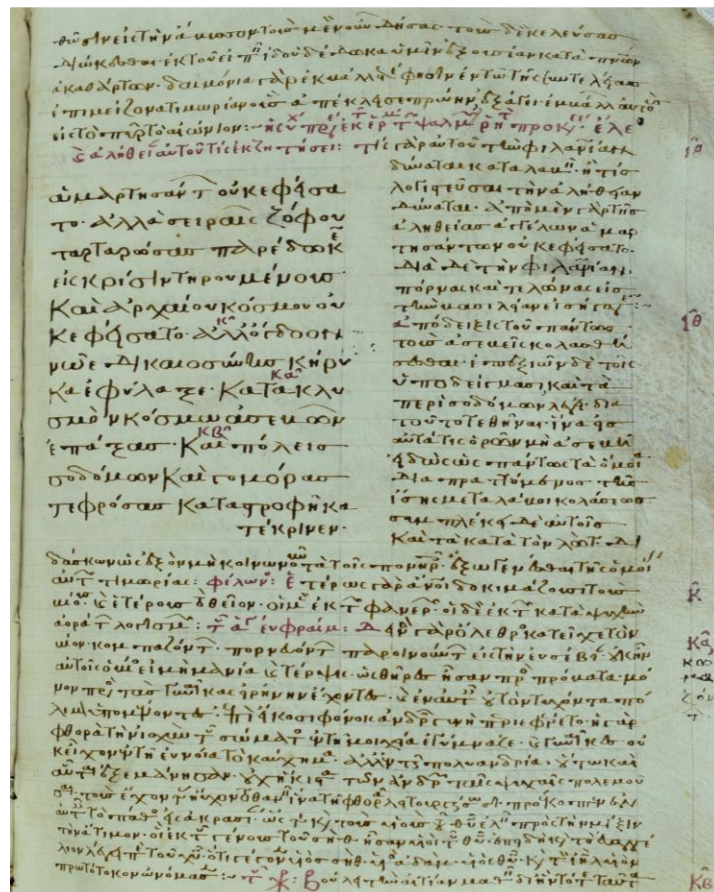
Now, many different *catenae* were constructed on various books or sets of books of the Bible. In particular, there are *catenae* on Genesis and Exodus, on the Psalms, on the various Gospels, and so on, each one originally constructed by some ancient scholar on the basis of his reading of the

¹⁶ The two portions of this manuscript were edited from MS 58 by J. A. Cramer, *Catenae Graecorum patrum in Novum Testamentum* 3 and 8 (Oxford: University Press, 1838 and 1840 [repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1967]). MS 58 is New Testament MS 2818.

various sources. These were copied, and comments were added or deleted. Thus, the interrelations among all the catenae on a specific book are often very complex.

The sources of these comments were varied. The Bible itself furnished many of them, and many more were drawn from early Christian writers. But what may seem strange is that comments were also taken from two Jewish writers, Philo and Josephus. The latter (37 AD–c. 100 AD) was a younger contemporary of Philo, and wrote about Jewish history, in particular about the Jewish War (66–70 AD). Philo was quoted extensively, since many aspects of his thinking were very congenial to early Christian writers.

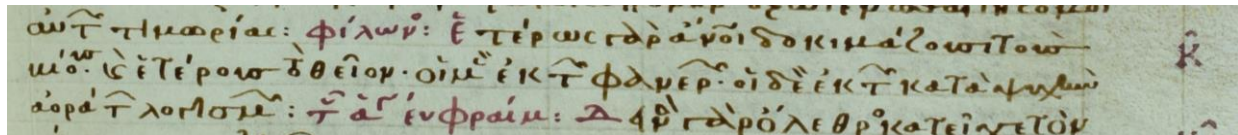
But let us look more closely at MS 58, and in particular at f. 216r (photographed below), where Philo is cited. We find there the biblical text, 2 Pet 2:4–6, written in larger letters and placed in the inner portion of the page, slightly above the centre. The comments, i.e., the catena proper, is then written in the margins of the page, surrounding the biblical text.¹⁷ And the comments are keyed to the details of the text by means of numerals. These are written in red within the text itself: κ*, κα*, and κβ*, which are the Greek numerals for 20, 21, and 22. Then one finds these numerals written in red in the outer margin of the page where the comments on the corresponding portion of the biblical text are found. (The numerals ιη* and ιθ*, i.e., 18 and 19, relate to comments that are carried over from the text on the preceding page.)



New College Library, Oxford, MS 58, f. 216r
Catena on 2 Pet 2:4–6

¹⁷ This is a fairly common arrangement, although the text and catena sometimes occupy different positions in other manuscripts.

Now, if we look at comment κ*, we see written in red to the left of that a slightly abbreviated form of φίλωνος (see the photograph below). This is the genitive form of the name of Philo, meaning ‘of Philo’ or ‘from Philo’. And then we have a text whose capital letter has also been written in red.¹⁸ The text reads (with a few common abbreviations): ἐτέρως γὰρ ἄνθρωποι δοκιμάζουσι τοὺς βίους, καὶ ἐτέρως τὸ θεῖον· οἱ μὲν ἐκ τῶν φανερῶν, οἱ δὲ ἐκ τῶν κατὰ ψυχὴν ἀοράτων λογισμῶν. We may translate this as: ‘For in one way do men judge the lives (of men), and in another way the Deity judges; the former by visible things, and the latter [literally ‘they’] by the invisible thoughts of the soul’. There is an obvious error in the Greek, where we have the plural pronoun οἱ for both ‘men’ and ‘the Deity’. We will return to this point later on.



New College Library, Oxford, MS 58, f. 216r [detail]

This comment is related to 2 Pet 2:5b, which reads (RSV): ‘(if he did not spare the ancient world,) but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness [Greek δικαιοσύνης], with seven other persons (, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly)’. Exactly how these are connected is not immediately clear, although the thought expressed by Philo would seem to be a general one, not confined to Christian or Jew.

And where does this comment come from? In fact, it comes from one of those works of Philo that are lost in Greek but survive in Armenian translation. This is a series of six books that seek to explain the text of Genesis by means of question and answer: the *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, i.e., *QG*. (There is a similar series on Exodus, i.e., *QE*.) There Philo went through the biblical text of Gen 2:4–28:9 in order, and discussed various problematic places.¹⁹ The Greek text in its original form has been lost, but what survives is the Armenian translation of the work (although, unfortunately, with some lacunae).²⁰ And we there find (at book 2, section 11) a question about the meaning of Gen 7:1: ‘Then the Lord said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous [δικαιον in the Greek translation, which Philo was reading] before me in this generation.’’ As part of his explanation of the latter part of this verse, Philo presents the thought as found quoted on 2 Pet 2:5 in order to emphasize that God’s judgment of such matters is superior to that of men’s. So the connection between the New Testament text and Philo’s comment is that they both deal with the character of Noah, namely that he is just or has righteousness.

But this is not the end of story. We find, as we examine yet further manuscripts, that *QG* 2.11 is also quoted in the catenae on Genesis, of which there are many manuscripts. Indeed, this is only one of many dozens of quotations from Philo’s *QG* that are found within the catenae on Genesis. And there the quotation is significantly longer than in MS 58.²¹ What happened, it seems clear, is that whoever first constructed such a catena had available a manuscript that contained the Greek text of *QG*, and read along in Philo’s text, choosing here and there some words that were viewed as

¹⁸ This can be found at Cramer, *Catenae* 8:92. The presence of this Philo citation is duly noted by Cramer in his index (598).

¹⁹ See Ralph Marcus, *Philo, Supplement 1* (Loeb edition, 1953).

²⁰ The original book 6 (i.e., *QG* 4.154–245 according to the Armenian) also survives in the ancient Latin translation, but this is not relevant to our present discussion.

²¹ See the standard edition of the Greek fragments of Philo’s *QG* and *QE*: Françoise Petit, *Quaestiones in Genesim et in Exodum: fragmenta graeca* (Les oeuvres de Philon d’Alexandrie 33; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978), 86–87.

appropriate insights into the meaning of the biblical text. Eventually such Greek manuscripts of Philo's *QG* ceased to exist, and what survived are the Armenian translation along with all the quotations found in the catenae on Genesis and in other sources.

So, what is the relation between the fuller quotation in the catenae on Genesis and the shorter quotation in MS 58? It seems unlikely that two Christian scholars would have independently had available the Greek text of *QG* 2.11 and just happened to select overlapping texts to illustrate their different biblical texts. Rather, it seems more likely (to me, at least) that the compiler of the catena on the Catholic Epistles, seeing that 2 Pet 2:5 deals with Noah, looked at a catena on Genesis that had the fuller quotation from Philo and selected the one sentence that seemed especially fitting for the New Testament verse.

It may well seem that I have spent a lot of time on one sentence. This is what those of us who investigate textual issues tend to do. But this sentence is also interesting in that the evidence of the catena on the Catholic Epistles is overlooked in the editions of Philo's Greek fragments. The fuller quotation as found in the catenae on Genesis was identified over a hundred years ago, and then further cited in the most recent edition of the Greek fragments of *QG* and *QE*.²² However, the fragment found in the catenae on the Catholic Epistles has remained virtually unknown. In a survey of the catenae from over a hundred years ago, the existence of a citation from Philo in the catenae on the Catholic Epistles is mentioned, but no details are given.²³ This reference was picked up in a standard bibliography of Philo that was published in 1938, in which four manuscripts (including MS 58) are cited, but again with no details.²⁴ In fact, besides MS 58, the sentence is found in catenae of the Catholic Epistles located in Paris, Venice, Vienna, the Vatican, and in two libraries in Rome. (These are, in order, Coislinianus 25, Marcianus Gr. I 63, Vindobonensis theol. gr. 79, Barberinianus gr. 582, Casanatensis 1395, and Vallicellianus F 9.)

As a final point, we find that the fragment cited in the catenae on Genesis avoids the error of using the plural pronoun *oi* to refer to God. Rather, we find *o*, i.e., 'he' in reference to 'the Deity'. So we see, as one might expect, that the text deteriorates as it is repeatedly copied.

Thus we find that a line written by a devout Jew, meant to help explain a remark in Genesis, is adapted for use by a Christian in understanding a comment in 2 Peter, and eventually finds its way into a manuscript at New College, Oxford.

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²² The larger fragment of *QG* 2.11 that is found in the catenae on the Octateuch was edited by Wendland, *Neu entdeckte Fragmente Philos: Nebst einer Untersuchung über die ursprüngliche Gestalt der Schrift De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1891), p. 48; Marcus, *Philo, Supplement 2* (Loeb edition, 1953), 194–95; Petit, *Quaestiones: fragmenta graeca*, pp. 86–87.

²³ Georg Karo and Hans Lietzmann, 'Catenarum graecarum catalogus', *Nachrichten der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Philologisch-historische Klasse, 1902), 596. One finds a further reference in Robert Devreesse, 'Chaînes exégétiques grecques', *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément 1* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1928), pp. 1084–1233 (p. 1225): 'Une rapide scolie de Philon sur II Petr., II, 5 (Cramer, 92) semble se rapporter à ses *Questions sur la Genèse*'.

²⁴ Howard L. Goodhart and Erwin R. Goodenough, *A General Bibliography of Philo Judaeus* (in *Politics of Philo Judaeus: Practice and Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938)), p. 171, MSS 249–252. Goodhart and Goodenough did not examine any of these manuscripts, but relied on Karo and Lietzmann.