

A MODEL RECONSTRUCTION OF WHAT JOSEPHUS WOULD HAVE REALISTICALLY WRITTEN ABOUT JESUS

David Allen

UCC, Cork, Ireland

1. *A General Sweep of Scholarship on the Original Testimonium Flavianum*

Ken Olson put the *Testimonium Flavianum* (TF) into a Eusebian framework and compared it with the Eusebian use of language.¹ Eusebius cited the TF in chronological order in his books: *Dem. ev.* 3.5.102-103; *Hist. eccl.* 1.11.7-8; and *Theoph.* 5.44.562.² In the words of James Corke-Webster, Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica*

1. Ken Olson, 'A Eusebian Reading of the *Testimonium Flavianum*', in Aaron Johnson and Jeremy Schott (eds.), *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations* (Hellenic Studies Series, 60; Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2013), pp. 97-114.

2. Eusebius quoted the TF in three of his works: *Historia ecclesiastica*, *Demmonstratio evangelica* and *Theophania*. Corke-Webster (*Eusebius and Empire, Constructing Church and Rome in the Ecclesiastical History* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019], pp. 42, 44) explains: 'The *History*, a narrative of early Christian experience in its first three centuries under Rome, the *Preparation* [of the gospel] (*Praep. ev.*) an introduction to the interpretation of Christian texts and their (superior) relationship to Greek equivalents, and the *Proof* [of the gospel] (*Dem. ev.*) a demonstration, for the more advanced, of how Christians should approach the Hebrew scriptures and their (inferior) relationship with Christian writings ... He also produced an abbreviated version of his *Preparation* and *Proof*, the *Theophany*, datable only broadly to the 320s or early 330s. While largely similar, the book explores God's encounter with humanity by focusing on New Testament materials.'

provided a new generation of elite Christians with a Christian past better suited to Graeco-Roman mores than the problematic reality. To achieve that, he had to answer the conservative critiques of earlier pagan commentators; not simply Porphyry's recent, reasoned barbs, but the deeply rooted, lingering suspicions of the Roman elite expressed from numerous quarters, but perhaps loudest by Celsus.³

Eusebius used the *TF* specifically in his propaganda fights against Porphyry of Tyre, Hierocles and Celsus. This is the reason Olson puts forward the idea that the *TF* was created by Eusebius *ex nihilo*, yet his own arguments only support the following premise, as he put forward himself. It seems that the 'most likely hypothesis is that Eusebius either composed the entire text or rewrote it.'⁴

I show that Eusebius mostly overwrote it, which puts my position close to that of Olson. On most phrases in the *TF*, I agree with his arguments, but they do not support an overall *creatio ex nihilo*. As I will show, there are too many niggling problems for this to be called a *creatio ex nihilo*. Paget has shown a distinct hand of both Josephus and Eusebius, creating an aggregate passage, a sign of tampering rather than wholesale forgery.⁵ As Bermejo-Rubio notes, a complete forged passage would be homogeneous, which is not the case in the *TF*.⁶ Just because the passage does 'not divide easily into Christian and non-Christian sections on the basis of either language or content' does not mean we should stop putting the *TF* in both a Josephan framework and a Eusebian framework.⁷ Olson's refusal to test a Josephan framework given the large amounts of Josephan phrases and words is a major flaw because the aggregate passage appears to contain bits from both Josephus and Eusebius.⁸ As will be seen in this paper, we have indirect quotations that used a version of the *TF* that pre-dated Eusebian tampering. Later in this paper, I will show a negative original version that was already in *Antiquities*, waiting

3. Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*, p. 84.

4. Olson, *A Eusebian Reading*, p. 100.

5. J. Carleton Paget, 'Some Observations on Josephus and Christianity', *JTS* 52 (2001), pp. 539-624 (573-76).

6. Fernando Bermejo-Rubio, 'Was the Hypothetical *Vorlage* of the *Testimonium Flavianum* a "Neutral" Text? Challenging the Common Wisdom on *Antiquitates Judaicae* 18.63-64', *JSJ* 45 (2014), pp. 326-65 (329).

7. Olson, *A Eusebian Reading*, p. 100.

8. Olson, *A Eusebian Reading*, p. 111 n. 50.

to be reworked by Eusebius. Quoting a non-existent passage to fight the anti-Christian polemicists is not very effective; domesticating an existent passage is much more potent. After examining the *TF* in a Josephan framework, Steve Mason says it is

easier to believe that Josephus himself wrote much of this, and that it was adjusted from the fourth century onward, than that a (Eusebian?) forger was diligent enough to search out Josephus' style and apply the traits of *Ant.* 17-19, in particular, to this passage—while carelessly leaving a couple of tell-tale Eusebianisms in the passage.⁹

Eusebian tampering is much more likely than a *creatio ex nihilo*.

Olson's interesting scholarship shows that Eusebius is quite capable of making up a speech for Licinius.¹⁰ Yet Eusebius making up a speech for propaganda purposes is what all the ancient people did; all historians from that time and earlier made up speeches in their historical accounts, including all the Greco-Roman historians such as Josephus. In other words, this is nothing new. Wassen and Hägerland say, 'Modern historiography, with its requirements of objective and corroboration of facts simply did not exist in ancient times. It was common, for example, for an author to attribute speeches composed by him to his characters.'¹¹ Eusebius was trying to make this speech realistic by using fake witnesses—also a common trope in Greco-Roman writings—which was just another ploy of this common practice. For this reason, equating the *TF* with a speech is not necessarily accurate. What Eusebius did with a speech does not compare to what he did with a passage in *Antiquities*.

To make a quick summation of the arguments, those who propose a *creatio ex nihilo* fail to tackle adequately the evidence of the more primitive variants of the *TF*, still extant in various indirect quotations. One such variant in one of the manuscripts of Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica* has τῆς ('certain') which escaped the censorship editors. A 'certain Jesus' changed the whole tone of the *TF* bringing it in line with how Josephus describes other messianic figures (see section 2 below). As Bermejo-Rubio noted, the *TF* 'seems to have

9. Steve Mason, 'Nichtchristliche Texte', in Jens Schröter and Christine Jacobi (eds.), *Jesus-Handbuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), pp. 159-64 (164).

10. Olson, *A Eusebian Reading*, pp. 97-98.

11. Cecilia Wassen and Tobias Hägerland, *Jesus the Apocalyptic Prophet* (trans. Cian J. Power; London: T. & T. Clark, 2021), p. 13.

had a *Vorlage* in which a negative assessment of Jesus is glimpsed'.¹² This is much better suited to a Josephan framework.

Paget notes that it is odd for a wholesale interpolation to place the Jesus passage before the Baptist passage instead of following the order found in the Canonicals.¹³ This also argues for the placement of the *TF* in a Josephan framework; it argues in favor of Josephus placing these two messianic figures in this order. If 'the Christians had written the paragraph from scratch, they might have been expected to give Jesus a little more space than John, and to use language that was more emphatically Christian.'¹⁴ John Meier questions, 'What would be the point of a Christian interpolation that would make Josephus the Jew affirm such an imperfect estimation of the God-man? What would a Christian scribe intend to gain by such an assertion?'¹⁵ Eusebius could have written anything under Olson's hypothesis; we suspect that Eusebius would have done better than this.

It is more likely that Eusebius simply *improved* an already existing passage. 'Some creedal elements are clearly present.'¹⁶ Goldberg's study shows that the Emmaus narrative in Luke resembles the *TF*.¹⁷ It is reasonable to see

12. Fernando Bermejo-Rubio, *La invención de Jesús de Nazaret Historia, ficción, historiografía* (Madrid: Siglo, 2018), Kindle edition, 'Introduction'.

13. Paget, 'Some Observations', pp. 600-601.

14. Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), p. 171.

15. John P. Meier, *Rethinking the Historical Jesus: A Marginal Jew. Volume I: The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (5 vols.; Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 64.

16. Paul J. Hopper, 'A Narrative Anomaly in Josephus: Jewish *Antiquities* xviii:63', in Monika Fludernik and Daniel Jacob (eds.), *Linguistics and Literary Studies / Linguistik und Literaturwissenschaft: Interfaces, Encounters, Transfers / Begegnungen, Interferenzen und Kooperationen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), pp. 147-69 (160). Compare in Greek the similarities: the Apostles creed (σταυρωθέντα τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, καὶ παθόντα, καὶ ταφέντα, καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ κατὰ τὰς γραφάς ...); the *TF* (παρ' ἡμῖν σταυρῶ ἐπιτετιμηκότος Πιλάτου ... ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῶν τῶν θείων προφητῶν ...).

17. Gary J. Goldberg, 'The Coincidences of the Emmaus Narrative of Luke and the *Testimonium* of Josephus', *JSP* 13 (1995), pp. 59-77. Both the creedal statements and the rewritten *TF* are so similar to Luke 24.19-21, 25-27, that you can see the Emmaus narrative being used as a framework for the rewrite of the *TF*.

this as the source of the rewrite; a paraphrase of the Emmaus passage would explain it.¹⁸ One of the options explored by Goldberg is very likely. He says, “I observed that they might signify that an inventive Christian forger of the *Testimonium* was influenced by the Gospel of Luke.”¹⁹

Carrier’s argument that the *TF* was created *ex nihilo* using the Emmaus narrative is moot.²⁰ The Emmaus narrative is only like the *TF* found in the manuscripts of *Antiquities* and we know through textual variants, indirect quotations and even paraphrases that there were earlier versions of the *TF*. Since there is an earlier version, it cannot be dismissed over the Emmaus narrative (as this narrative would not match an earlier version).

Contra Feldman’s *argumentum ex silentio*, Trypho never claimed ‘Jesus had not lived’; Trypho was denying Jesus was the ‘Christ’ by saying a messiah was not born yet, not that Jesus was not born yet.²¹ Justin could not have used the original *TF* in his argument against Trypho (*Dial.* 8); as I show later, the statement that ὁ Χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν (‘he was the Christ’) was not in the original *TF*—the evidence is from Origen and some variants that will be discussed in section two.

To do another test case on the *argumentum ex silentio*, church fathers before and after Eusebius would have had both histories of Jesus, the Gospels and the passage found in *Antiquities*. The Gospels painted Jesus in the best

18. This paper sees a two-stage interdependence of the *TF* and Luke. First stage is during the compositional stage of Luke, where Luke has used Josephus as per Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (see ch. 6) and Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2006). Second stage takes into account that a later redactor could have used the Emmaus narrative in Luke (i.e. that has nothing to do with what happened centuries earlier of Luke using Josephus).

19. Gary J. Goldberg, ‘Josephus’s Paraphrase Style and the *Testimonium Flavianum*’, *JSHJ* 20 (2022), pp. 1-32 (2).

20. Richard Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reasons to Doubt* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014), pp. 332-37.

21. Louis Feldman, ‘The *Testimonium Flavianum*: The State of the Question’, in Robert F. Berkey (ed.), *Christological Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Harvey K. McArthur* (New York: Pilgrims Press, 1982) pp. 179-99 (182); Feldman, ‘On the Authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum* Attributed to Josephus’, in Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schacter (eds.), *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 13-30 (15). For Paget’s counter arguments to the *argumentum ex silentio*, see Paget, ‘Some Observations’, pp. 555-61.

possible light. The original negative *TF* would have portrayed him badly—even the tampered *TF* was not of much use. Put yourselves into the shoes of these church fathers and ask yourself, if you were discussing Jesus, would you use those histories that painted Jesus in the best possible light or would you use the *TF* (especially as I argue the original *TF* was negative)? When P.R. Coleman-Norton examined John Chrysostom's use of Josephus, for all his reports of Jesus, he went to the Gospels.²² As Paget noted, 'Indeed, in contrast to Christian interpolations of the LXX, it is difficult to see within an ancient context to what obvious use the *TF* could have been put. Any suggestions that the passage could be used to support a particular doctrinal position are unconvincing.'²³ The *TF* passage *before and after* Eusebius was not much use in any particular arguments church fathers had with their interlocutors. Looking at it makes it obvious why this passage was not used by 'Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Minucius Felix, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Tertullian, Hippolytus, John Chrysostom, Basil of Caesarea, Augustine, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret, and, slipping the centuries a little, Photius',²⁴

Photius is disgusted that Justus of Tiberias does not mention Jesus, but not by the fact that Josephus did not mention Jesus. Since Justus was Josephus's opponent, we could infer that Photius knew about Josephus's reference to Jesus—of course, Justus would not mention Jesus in his book *Chronicle of the Jewish Kings* because Jesus was not an actual king, but this logic escapes Photius (*Bibliotheca* 33). *Bibliotheca* 76 indicates a preoccupation with the high priesthood and political administration interference with the high priesthood. As the *TF* had the high priest co-operating with Pilate, it contradicted Photius's arguments. Therefore it is not expected he would mention the *TF* and water down his argument in this passage. *Bibliotheca* 238 is similar to 76, and Photius makes a mention of Jesus without quoting the *TF*. Because of this, some scholars think that Photius's copy of *Antiquities* did not have the *TF*, but that conclusion is not necessary. Unlike Justus's case, Photius is not astonished by the fact that Josephus did not mention Jesus and says, 'It was under his reign [Antipas] also that the Passion of the Saviour took place.' We simply do not know what version of the *TF* Photius had. John Curran be-

22. P.R. Coleman-Norton, 'St. Chrysostom's Use of Josephus', *CP* 26 (1931), pp. 85-89.

23. Paget, 'Some Observations', p. 602.

24. Paget, 'Some Observations', p. 555.

lieves that Photius had Josephus's original version of the *TF*—'Copies of Josephus' original continued to circulate in the East where they failed to make an impression on a succession of Christian readers from Chrysostom to Photius.'²⁵ This evidence, taken together with *Bibliotheca* 33, fails to demonstrate that the *TF* was absent from Photius's copy of *Antiquities*.

The *TF* being absent from the *argumenta* ('table of contents') simply meant that Josephus did not consider Jesus important. It has been shown that those things—which were not already mentioned generally in Josephus's earlier book *War*—did not make it into his table of contents.²⁶ So it is entirely expected that the *TF* also would not make it in.

Olson claims, 'Eusebius of Caesarea ... is the first author to show any knowledge of the text'; yet most scholars argue that Origen knew of some form of the *TF*. Origen's observation that Josephus did not believe Jesus as the Christ—an assertion that weakened Origen's own argument against Celsus—would not have been brought up unless Origen had a version of the *TF* that did not mention Jesus was the Christ. Origen more than likely knew a version of the *TF* that existed before Eusebius tampered with it. So the claim that Eusebius was the first to show any knowledge of it ('Now this writer, although not believing in Jesus as the Christ', *Cels.* 1.47) cannot be made.²⁷

The argument of pre-Eusebian knowledge of the *TF* is more likely when taken together with two witnesses of the *TF*—*De excidio* and the *Slavonic*—which were prior to Eusebian tampering. Neither recension names Jesus or calls him 'Christ'. So, it is more likely that they used a version of the *TF* before Eusebius added the title Christ, as will be discussed in the next section.

25. J. Curran, "'Be or to Be Thought to Be": The *Testimonium Flavianum* (Again)', *NovT* 59 (2017), pp. 71-94 (93).

26. Heinz Schreckenberg and Kurt Schubert, *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1992), p. 58; Etienne Nodet, 'Josephus and Discrepant Sources', in Jack Pastor *et al.* (eds.), *Flavius Josephus: Interpretation and History* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 259-77 (266-69). Peter Kirby tested this premise statistically by comparing material from *Ant.* 18 and *War* 2. The result supported the premise. Peter Kirby, 'The Greek Table of Contents to *Antiquities* 18' (see online: <http://peterkirby.com/table-of-contents-josephus.html>).

27. Alice Whealey, 'Josephus, Eusebius of Caesarea, and the *Testimonium Flavianum*', in Christoph Böttrich and Jens Herzer (eds.), *Josephus und das Neue Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), pp. 73-116 (83-84).

Contra Celsum 1.47 contradicts the *TF* statement ‘he was the Christ’, showing that that statement was not in the earlier version of the *TF*. So, it is unlikely that the statement was written by Josephus.²⁸ These taken together with Origen’s assertion are much stronger arguments that these recensions used an earlier pre-Eusebian version of the *TF*. If we take it that Origen referenced the *TF*—and it is more likely that he did—in *Cels.* 1.47, it looks like Origen cites three passages from Josephus’s *Antiquities* in that chapter: first, he cites the Baptist passage; secondly, he could have seen the *TF* passage as he asserts (regretfully) that Josephus did not believe Jesus as the Christ and they put Jesus to death; and thirdly, he cites what he thinks is the James passage, saying James’s death was the cause of the fall of Jerusalem.

Another reason to indicate Origen was aware of the *TF* was his remark, ‘For the Jews do not connect John with Jesus, nor the punishment of John with that of Christ’ (*Cels.* 1.48). In *Antiquities* it does not connect the Baptist movement with the Jesus movement. Also in *Antiquities*, the execution of John (beheading) is different from the execution of Jesus (crucifixion). Therefore, these two passages taken together (*Cels.* 1.47, 48) show that Origen used *Antiquities* in his fights with Celsus.

Eusebius and Quotations

Sabrina Inowlocki has examined the way Eusebius cites and uses his sources and has successfully challenged the traditional understanding of Eusebius being a mere compiler of texts. In her careful study of *Demmonstratio evangelica* and *Praeparatio evangelica*, she has shown that the modern concept of quotation is anachronistic. Eusebius made extensive use of citations to give the impression of authority and objectivity.²⁹ Inowlocki showed in many cases that Eusebius used a quotation as an ‘ideological weapon’.³⁰ Yet Eusebius is merely a man of his time, and quotations were used for apologetic purposes rather than for the primary meaning that was intended. Ancient authors would ‘appropriate someone else’s text to establish that which they thought

28. For those who wish to reread Origen, *Cels.* 1.47, see online: http://amitay.haifa.ac.il/index.php/Origen,_Contra_Celsum_1.47.

29. Sabrina Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors: His Citation Technique in an Apologetic Context* (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, 64; Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 6-7.

30. Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors*, p. 13.

was the correct meaning'.³¹ She provides examples from Plato and Plutarch and shows Eusebius made theological changes. In one example on *Phaed.* 114c, she states, 'Plato's manuscripts read that these souls will live without bodies whereas Eusebius' manuscripts read without sufferings, preserving the dogma of the resurrection of the bodies (Eusebius, *P.E.* 11.38.6).'³² As Eusebius is the earliest author to quote the *TF* and I suspect him of having *improved* the *TF*, this example is important in showing that 'Eusebius was at least able to tamper with the text.'³³

Other than speeches and letters—for example, the letters between Jesus and Abgar V (*Hist. eccl.* 1.13.1)—Eusebius generally uses passages from books that are in circulation rather than just making them up. Inowlocki, after examining Eusebius's quotation practices, has the following to say of the *TF*:

All the manuscripts from Josephus' Antiquities briefly mention Jesus at XVIII. 63-64. The first author to mention and cite the famous *Testimonium* is none other than Eusebius, who inserts it in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, his *Demonstratio evangelica* and his *Theophany*. Most scholars now accept that the *Testimonium* in Josephus' manuscripts is partly an interpolation. Yet some still consider it a forgery. Olson, e.g., has recently suggested that Eusebius might have been the author of the entire passage. I disagree with this hypothesis, since the creation of a whole passage appears too remote from Eusebius' common practice.³⁴

A Negative Original

Van Voorst summed up the arguments for a negative original as follows:

A main argument for this negative construction of the *Testimonium* is based on the context of the passage, which does seem to portray a series of foiled rebellions during Pilate's tenure led by people Josephus views negatively. In this context, Josephus means to say that Jesus led a movement of revolt against Rome.³⁵

31. Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors*, pp. 71-72.

32. Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors*, p. 87.

33. Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors*, p. 89.

34. Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors*, p. 207.

35. Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 94. I argue that Jesus not just led a movement of revolt but that it ended in an ignominious failure.

Van Voorst then opted for the neutral original option using Geza Vermes's argument as his main objection. Vermes claims that if Josephus's witness to Jesus had been negative, it would have been unlikely for Christian scribes to copy the *Antiquities* at all.³⁶ But Christians did not copy the *Antiquities* at first. 'Josephus' reputation in the early period was surely much greater among pagan audiences than among Christians.³⁷ 'Josephus was known to ... probably Tacitus (given *Hist.* 2.101 and the close similarities of 5.1-2, 10-13); ... Even the Epitome of the second-century Aelius Herodian cites Josephus about thirty times for place names in Syria.'³⁸ So Christian scribes did not preserve it exclusively until the time of Eusebius and by then it was changed to a positive passage. The *TF* was already out in the open, preserved in Roman libraries; its origin was during Flavianum patronage. As it was a *fait accompli* that the passage was already out there, it had to be domesticated by Eusebius and scribes after him. As Whealey shows, Christians did not pay any attention to *Antiquities* until the end of the second century:

It is not even clear that any Christian writer before Origen had even read *Antiquities*, and no extant work from this period cites material from *Antiquities* 18 ... No Christian apparently found it worthwhile to cite Josephus as a relevant authority on anything in the New Testament including figures such as John the Baptist, King Herod or indeed Jesus.³⁹

Van Voorst was also not happy with the reconstructions of the negative original by some proponents (F.F. Bruce, Bammel, etc.) as they mostly cut out the Christian bits and understandably had to add what would have been in the place of the cut-out bits.⁴⁰ But like Eisler, potential lacunae must be taken into account. That is why I opted for a reconstruction *model* as opposed to any attempt to recover the actual words. As any objections against a nega-

36. Van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament*, pp. 95-96.

37. Alice Whealey, 'Josephus on Jesus: Historical Criticism and the Testimonium Flavianum Controversy from Late Antiquity to Modern Times' (PhD diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1998), p. 12.

38. Steve Mason, *A History of the Jewish War A.D. 66-74* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 49 n. 186.

39. Whealey, 'Josephus on Jesus', pp. 7, 13.

40. Van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament*, p. 95.

tive reconstruction do not stand up to scrutiny, I will now proceed to a positive case for a negative original.

The best argument that the *TF* was originally negative inadvertently came from a scholar that had dismissed the *TF*. It is worth quoting Paget in full here:

Norden noted that the section running from *Ant.* 18.55-90 was united not by chronology—the two events reported after the *TF*, the expulsions of the Isis cult and of the Jews from Rome, concern events traditionally held to have taken place in AD 19 (Tacitus *Annales* 2.85), some time before Pilate's tenure of office in Judaea. Rather they are united by the fact that they all conform to disturbances or *θόρυβος* ('tumult'), that is disturbances of a particular kind (either the noun *θόρυβος* or the verb *θορυβεῖν* is found in the description of each incident). Such a bunching together of *θόρυβος* was, Norden noted, a well-known ancient historical ploy, and it is possible that Josephus had access to a source which characterized Pilate's tenure of office as a succession of *θόρυβοι* ('tumults') ... Norden appeared to exclude arguments that assumed some tampering with an originally more negative passage which would have fitted more easily into the 'thorubic' context he outlined ... If one adopts the view entertained, amongst others, by Thackeray and Eisler, that in the original account of the *TF* the word *θόρυβος* did in fact appear. Such an observation would also serve to counter Norden.⁴¹

This is exactly what I argue, and I have found where the word tumult fits within *TF* discussed in section three of this paper. Significantly, the *TF* is to be found right in the middle of the tumult passages. It implies that Josephus originally thought that Jesus was justly crucified by the Romans for the very typical reasons that Romans crucified people. The historical Jesus served as a political threat to Roman rule. Bermejo-Rubio did not see Jesus as being crucified alone.⁴² My model reconstruction realistically sees Jesus leading two groups of people into some sort of tumult resulting in Jesus' execution, gathering a crowd was dangerous at those times after all.

41. Eduard Norden, 'Josephus und Tacitus über Jesus Christus und eine messianische Prophetie', *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur* 31 (1913), pp. 637-66; Paget, 'Some Observations', p. 579-80.

42. Fernando Bermejo-Rubio, '(Why) Was Jesus the Galilean Crucified Alone? Solving a False Conundrum', *JSNT* 36 (2013), pp. 127-54.

2. Some Commentary on the Indirect Quotes,
Paraphrases and Variants of the TF

Pseudo-Hegesippus, *De excidio* 2.12: This Christianised Latin adaptation of Josephus's *War* is independent of Eusebius. As Paget states,

The importance of this reference lies in the fact that Pseudo-Hegesippus writes independently of Eusebius. This is made clear by the fact that he refers to Josephus' account of John the Baptist after the *TF*, following the Josephan order and not the Eusebian order as we find it in *HE*, and at an earlier point in the same book (2.4) (cf. *Ant.* 18.3.4) refers to the Paulina incident which Eusebius never mentions.⁴³

De excidio was created out of the Greek *War* in c. 370 CE, but it is known that this author had direct access to *Antiquities*, not only from Paget's points but also from the report of pestilence which followed Herod's execution of his wife Mariamne (1.38; cf. *Ant.* 15.7, 9). This paraphrase does not blame Pilate crucifying Jesus (which could be explained by the general trend of Pseudo-Hegesippus taking the blame off the Romans and placing it onto the Jews) nor does it state that Jesus was the Messiah. 'It is not easy to see why he should have omitted any reference to Jesus as the Messiah if it was in his version of the received text. After all, he appears to exaggerate the significance of the *TF*, most blatantly in his claim that even the leaders of the synagogue acknowledged Jesus to be God.'⁴⁴ If the statement 'he was the Christ' was in Pseudo-Hegesippus's received text he would have used that exact phrase. Jerome's recension had 'he was believed to be the Christ' which shows it is earlier than the *TF*. Jerome's recension was known to have used Eusebius's version as Jerome literally copied it from the *Historia ecclesiastica*.⁴⁵ Interestingly, in two manuscripts of Rufinus's translation of Eusebius's *His-*

43. Paget, 'Some Observations', pp. 566-67.

44. Paget, 'Some Observations', p. 567.

45. Jerome used Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica* when he reproduced the *TF*: 'that Eusebius Pamphilus in the ten books of his *Church History* has been of the utmost assistance' (*Vir. ill.* 13). This recension is earlier than the TR. Jerome's recension has 'he was believed to be Christ,' which is what Eusebius wrote into the *TF*. The other Latin translation *De excidio* is a paraphrase but what makes this interesting is that he took from a copy of *Antiquities* before Eusebius tampered with it. It means that one translation of Jerome is before the *TF* but after Eusebius. The other translation of Ps-Hegesippus is before both the *TF* and before Eusebius tampering.

toria ecclesiastica, the same phrase is used.⁴⁶ Pollard observed, ‘the Latin manuscripts are generally much earlier than the surviving copies of the Greek original, meaning that we need to know the Latin before we can restore Josephus’ Greek.’⁴⁷ The importance of the *De excidio* usage of the *TF* is that his received text from *Antiquities* was prior to Eusebian tampering. As Nussbaum states,

In *De excidio Hierosolymitano* 2.12, Pseudo-Hegesippus paraphrases the *TF*, omitting the statement that Jesus was the Christ. He then vehemently criticises Josephus that he testified of Jesus but did not believe in him as the Christ. It can be concluded that Pseudo-Hegesippus must have read a kind of *TF*, otherwise he would not have screamed that Josephus did not believe despite his report on Jesus. The situation is reminiscent of Origen writings—he wrote that Josephus did not believe in the messiahship of Jesus.⁴⁸

The Slavonic: Most scholars recognize that the *Slavonic* version of the *TF* has been destroyed with Christian gloss as explained by Van Voorst:

The *Slavonic* Josephus reflects the growing Christian tendency to excuse Pontius Pilate for Jesus’ death and to blame the Jews, even to the point of saying that the Jews themselves crucified Jesus. To make this point, the *Slavonic* version has to ignore Josephus’s original statement that Pilate crucified him ... The *Slavonic Testimonium* uses the New Testament extensively at several points to develop its story.⁴⁹

46. See David B. Levenson and Thomas R. Martin, ‘The Latin Translations of Josephus on Jesus, John the Baptist, and James: Critical Texts of the Latin Translation of the *Antiquities* and Rufinus’ Translation of Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* Based on Manuscripts and Early Printed Editions’, *JSJ* 45 (2014), pp. 1-79 (25), who say, ‘By far the most interesting variant in the texts we are discussing is the reading *et credebatur esse Christus* for *Christus hic erat*, which is found in two manuscripts of Rufinus currently in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: Clm 6383 from the late eighth century and Clm 6381 from the early ninth century.’

47. Richard M. Pollard, ‘The *De excidio* of “Hegesippus” and the Reception of Josephus in the Early Middle Ages’, *Viator* 46 (2015), pp. 65-100 (72).

48. Johannes Nussbaum, ‘Das Testimonium Flavianum: Ein authentischer Text des Josephus’, *NovT* 52 (2010), pp. 72-82.

49. Van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament*, pp. 87-88.

But then Van Voorst goes on to say that the *Slavonic* does ‘not provide an authentic textual alternative to the main *TF* in *Antiquities*’.⁵⁰

Yet Christians were trying to bolster up the *TF*, so Van Voorst fails to explain why they dropped his name Jesus and title Christ. Like what happened to *De excidio*, Pilate is also left out of the *Slavonic*. They also both do not name Jesus or call him Christ. Same as in *De excidio*, this would not have happened if the *Slavonic* had come from the *textus receptus* found in the manuscripts of *Antiquities* that were post Eusebian tampering. Of course it is easier to explain if the *Slavonic* came from a Greek exemplar that existed before the editing of Eusebius. It would explain it perfectly if it came from an exemplar that existed before Eusebius added the words Jesus and Christ. There is evidence it came from an early Greek exemplar as a number of Greek words were taken over literally by the Russian.⁵¹ The *Slavonic* has the same attributes as the *De excidio*—not having Pilate crucify Jesus, not naming Jesus or calling him Christ—as if it came from the same textual family of a pre-Eusebian Greek exemplar. The *De excidio* is a paraphrase of a pre-Eusebian *TF* whereas the *Slavonic* is an expansion of a pre-Eusebian *TF*.

Codex A: Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 1.11.7

There is a variant found in a manuscript (Codex A) of the fifteenth century Codex *Parisinus Graecus*. This witness offers the pronoun τις after Ἰησοῦς referring to ‘a certain Jesus’. Similarly, ‘The *Slavonic* offers a trace of the same pronoun: the phrase *muzi nekij* retroverted into Greek would correspond to ἀνὴρ τις (‘certain man’).⁵² This derogatory expression argues against the *TF* being made up of whole cloth. No scribe would have interpolated the word τις, but this phrase could have escaped a copyist attempting to interpolate the original *TF*.⁵³

50. Van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament*, p. 87.

51. Examples include *igemon, metropolja, archierei, skinopigja, katapetasma* or *aramatji* (Robert Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist: According to Flavius Josephus’ Recently Rediscovered ‘Capture of Jerusalem’ and the Other Jewish and Christian Sources* [trans. Alexander Haggerty Krappe; New York: Dial Press, 1931], p. 130).

52. Bermejo-Rubio, ‘Hypothetical Vorlage’, p. 358; Paget, ‘Some Observations’, p. 565; Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, pp. 38-41.

53. Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, p. 47.

Other similar passages written by Josephus had a *τις* ('certain') qualification, as in Theudas, *γόης τις* ('certain imposter/sorcerer') (*Ant.* 20.97) or a certain Judas the Galilean (*War* 2.118). This *τις* derogatory qualification brings the tone of the *TF* in line with how Josephus described Jesus' comparative messianic contenders. Of course, this *τις* ('certain') qualification works much better in a Josephan framework; *τις* makes the original *TF* very similar to the way Josephus described Jesus' comparative apocalyptic prophet figures.

Arabic and Michael the Syrian Recension

Both Agapius and Michael the Syrian recensions are more primitive than the *TF*, yet both hark back to Eusebius as tracked by Whealey. Pines's monograph drew attention to a tenth-century Arabic historical work called the *Kitāb al-Únwān* ('universal history') by Agapius, which chronicles the history of the world up to the tenth century.⁵⁴

Yet it was Michael's recension that was more valuable despite the fact that he lived more than three centuries after Agapius. Michael did a literal copy whereas Agapius seems to have done a paraphrase. Whealey tracked both recensions back to the same source.⁵⁵ This source had quoted excerpts of Josephus from the Syriac *Historia ecclesiastica* rather than directly from Josephus's *Antiquities*. Whealey argues that Agapius's *Testimonium* is a loose paraphrase of the *TF* from the Syriac *Historia ecclesiastica* while Michael's *Testimonium* is a literal rendition that also stemmed from the Syriac *Historia ecclesiastica*. Both of these are important as they come from versions earlier than the *TF*. They are also important for proving an additional redactional layer after Eusebius.

54. Shlomo Pines, *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and its Implications* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Science and Humanities, 1971), which is a useful book for reproducing all the different recensions.

55. Agapius drew from Theophilus of Edessa (d. 785). Michael the Syrian used the chronicle of Dionysius of Tellmahre who himself drew from the work of Theophilus of Edessa. Theophilus in turn used the Syriac *Historia ecclesiastica*. This means both Agapius and Michael had the same source. See Alice Whealey, *The Testimonium Flavianum in Syriac and Arabic* (New Testament Studies, 54; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 573-90.

Some Commentary on the Indirect Quotations, Paraphrases and Variants of the TF

We can see three layers of redaction at play here: first, from the original the hand of Josephus as per Paget's arguments; secondly, Eusebius—from Olson's scholarship yet his arguments only support Eusebian tampering, not a *creatio ex nihilo*; thirdly, scribes who changed the *TF* after Eusebius's tampering. Whealey shows more primitive recensions than the *TF* that came from the Syriac *Historia ecclesiastica* stemming from Eusebius.

The *De excidio* follows *Antiquities* directly. This gives a significant role to *De excidio* in interpreting Josephus's original *TF*. It is a link to a version of the *TF* before any tampering by Eusebius. The *Slavonic* has the same attributes working off a very early Greek exemplar and has preserved some fascinating points despite the major Christian gloss. I use the *Slavonic* lightly, but it is a witness preserving and backing up the 'certain Jesus' variant in one of the manuscripts of Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica*. The variant τις found in Codex A of Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica* gives us a very important indication of what type of passage the *TF* was; it brings the *TF* into line with how Josephus described other apocalyptic prophets.

3. *Analysis and Commentary on the Model Reconstruction of the Testimonium Flavianum*

What follows in this section is only a model reconstruction of what Josephus might have realistically written. This is a test case and does not claim that these are the original words. Here is the first line of the *TF*:

And there was about this time Jesus, a wise man
(Γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον Ἰησοῦς σοφὸς ἀνὴρ)

And here is the proposed change:

And there was about this time a certain man, a sophist and agitator.
(Γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον ἀνὴρ τις παραχτικὸς τε σοφιστῆς)

Here are the reasons:

First, Γίνεται: For the first word in the passage γίνεται ('there arose'), Robert Eisler has observed, "The verb γίνεται (*ginetai*) does, however, occur quite frequently in Josephus, particularly at the beginning of paragraphs; but the subject of the sentence is then almost without exception a word such as

θόρυβος ('tumult'), or στάσις ('rebellion'), or παραχή ('trouble'), or some such term ...⁵⁶ For this reason, I have included the word παραχτικός ('agitator') in the reconstruction.

Secondly, Ἰησοῦς τοῦ ἀνὴρ τις ('certain man'): As discussed in section two, both the *Slavonic* and Codex A of Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica* argue in favor of ἀνὴρ τις ('certain man') being in the original. The phrase, 'a certain Jesus', contained in Codex A of *Historia ecclesiastica*, is an indication that the word τις ('certain') most likely belonged to the original *TF*. I have used this word 'certain' in the reconstruction, but instead of a 'certain Jesus', I have said a 'certain man' in agreement with the *Slavonic*. The most telling part of the *Slavonic* is the fact that it says so much about Jesus, but it does not state his name. It refers to him as 'there appeared a certain man' (*Slavonic War* 2.9.3-4). This suggests that this particular line of transmission has preserved the notion that Jesus was not named in the original *TF*. Of course Jesus not being named is not unusual for Josephus: cases such as the 'Egyptian' (*War* 2.261-263; *Ant.* 20.169-172) who led a revolt of thousands, and he was featured in both *Antiquities* and *War* yet Josephus could only call him the 'Egyptian'. Same goes for the 'Samaritan' who was also not named and was described as 'a man who made light of mendacity'. In that passage his mob 'appeared in arms' (*Ant.* 18.85-87)!

Thirdly, σοφὸς ἀνὴρ ('wise man') to παραχτικὸς τε σοφιστής ('sophist and agitator'): Josephus usually uses the expression σοφὸς ἀνὴρ as his highest praise for people. There are only two cases where he uses it: King Solomon (*Ant.* 8.53) and the prophet Daniel (*Ant.* 10.237). It is not a phrase he uses for the messianic leaders he reports. Usually it is not σοφός ('wise') but rather σοφιστής ('Sophist'). One reason to suggest that σοφιστής was the original word in the *TF* is that a number of anti-Christian polemicists use it in relation to Jesus:

He was no Sophist, but His word was the power of God (Justin Martyr, *I Apol.* 14).

Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have transgressed once, for all by

56. Eisler (*Messiah Jesus*, p. 50 n. 2) then goes on to give many examples: *War* 1.85, 99, 171, 216, 236, 648; 4.208; *Ant.* 18.310; 19.366; 20.51, 118, 173.

denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified Sophist himself and living under his laws (Lucian, *Peregr.* 8).

Now let us examine Josephus's use of the word σοφιστής. In *War* 2.118, Judas the Galilean is described as σοφιστής ἰδίας αἰρέσεως ('a Sophist of his own sect'): In the meantime one Menahem, the son of Judas that was called the Galilean (who was a very cunning Sophist, and had formerly reproached the Jews under Cyrenius, that after God they were subject to the Romans), (*War* 2.433 [cf. 2.118]). As Steve Mason says,

Josephus will continue to call both Judas (*War* 2.433) and his son Menachem (*War* 2.445) sophists (σοφισταί). This is significant because he uses the word sparingly, reserving it with Platonic associations (cf. the *Gorgias*) for teachers who incite the young to rebellious action: *War* uses it otherwise only of the teachers who instructed their disciples to topple Herod's golden eagle (1.648, 650, 655, 656; 2.10; cf. *Ant.* 17.152, 155).⁵⁷

Now, here is the next section:

if one may properly call him a man
εἶγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρῆ

Meier has concluded that this line was interpolated along with the line that he was the Messiah.⁵⁸ Olson evaluates this phrase in the wider context of where Eusebius made use of it in an argument contained in the *Demmonstratio evangelica*.⁵⁹ Here Olson says, 'Eusebius is carrying on an extended defence of the incarnation and answering the charges of critics of Christianity. One of these is Porphyry's argument against the divinity of Jesus.'⁶⁰ What makes us suspicious of the claim that Eusebius interpolated this phrase is that he needed to show both the human and divine nature of Jesus. A Jewish hand could never have written this. Therefore we will cut this section out of our reconstruction.

The next phrase:

57. Steve Mason (ed.), *Judean War 2: Volume 1B* (Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, 1B; Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 83.

58. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, p. 60.

59. Olson, *A Eusebian Reading*, pp. 101-103.

60. Olson, *A Eusebian Reading*, p. 101.

He was one who wrought surprising feats

ἦν γὰρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής

To:

For he was a deceiver and an imposter

ἦν γὰρ πλάνος ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἀπατεῶν

Geza Vermes argued in 2009 that the expression *παραδόξων ἔργων* ('surprising feats', e.g. *Ant.* 12.63) is repeatedly used by Josephus in his works to describe many miracles associated with the Tanakh (e.g. the burning bush and the miracles of Moses and Elisha). Eusebius would have known this and, in order to replace an offending sentence Josephus originally wrote, he would have used a phrase Josephus generally used for miracles.⁶¹ The word *ποιητής* literally means 'doer, creator' and metaphorically, Josephus uses it to mean 'poet'. Josephus would have used this word to refer to poets but would not have used it here. Olson argues that this phrase *παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής* ('doer of incredible deeds') is Eusebian and not Josephan.⁶² As we saw from section one of this paper, the Emmaus passage (from Luke) may have been used as a framework for the rewrite of this passage, and Eusebius could have easily picked out the word *παραδόξων* ('incredible') that is also used in Lk. 5.26. For my model reconstruction, I will leave this open and leave this line out.

Here is the second line of the *TF*:

A teacher to those who receive the truth with pleasure

διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῆ τάληθῆ δεχομένων

To:

A teacher of men who worship him with pleasure

διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν σεβομένων αὐτὸν ἡδονῆ

The second line is witnessed by the recension found in Eusebius's *Demmonstratio evangelica* (which is later than the manuscript of the *Theophania* but that does not follow which is the later reading).

61. Geza Vermes, 'Jesus in the Eyes of Josephus' (December 2009), see online: <https://standpointmag.co.uk/jesus-in-the-eyes-of-josephus-features-jan-10-geza-vermes>.

62. Olson, *A Eusebian Reading*, p. 103; Paget, 'Some Observations', p. 573.

Josephus usually uses the words διδάσκαλος ('teacher') and σεβομένων ('who reveres or worships') in a sarcastic and negative way. A Christian copyist noticed this and replaced σεβομένων with δεχομένων ('who receive'). We saw the same thing when another Christian copyist deleted the derogatory τις.

The next section is in brackets:

[He claimed the Temple would be destroyed and that not one stone would be standing on another and that it would be restored in three days]

[ὁ δ' ἔφη ὅτι καταλυθῆ ὁ ναός τ' οὐ μὴ ἀφεθῆ ὥδε λίθος ἐπὶ λίθον τ' οἰκοδομήσῃ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις]

The portions that are in brackets are beyond the available evidence but without their inclusion, the *TF* reconstruction would be vacuous. Jesus making the claim of the Temple being destroyed and restored miraculously fits the type of claims other messianic figures made. Many messianic figures made crazy claims to gather crowds as seen from Josephus such as the 'Egyptian', 'Theudas' and the 'Samaritan'.⁶³ The Samaritan promised to show the crowds 'sacred vessels which were buried [at Mt. Gerizim], where Moses had deposited them' (*Ant.* 18.85-87). The Egyptian claimed to make the 'walls come tumbling down' at Jerusalem (*Ant.* 20.170) and Theudas to divide the Jordan river (*Ant.* 20.97-99). This claim by Jesus may have been a pesher—commentary finding meanings in the Scriptures for today's events—on the first Temple destruction in Dan. 9.26 or Jer. 7 and restoration in *I En.* 91.12-13. When the Temple really got destroyed, this was a memorable prophecy, preserved in Mark with a qualifier that it was a false report. As E.P. Sanders says, the Gospels are uncomfortable with a failed (and crazed) prophecy of Temple destruction (Mk 13.1-31).⁶⁴

Next line:

and many Jews, and also many of the Greek element, he led to himself
καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ ἐπηγάγετο

63. Dave Allen, 'The Use of the *Testimonium Flavianum* by Anti-Christian Polemicists', *JHC* 16 (2021), pp. 42-105 (75-76).

64. E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 61-76.

To:

and many of the Judaeans, and also many of the Galilean element, he led to himself in a tumult

καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τοῦ Γαλιλαίου ἐπηγάγετο ἐν θορύβῳ

Paula Fredriksen says that Josephus

is the only one of our early sources to name gentiles (those ‘of Greek origin’) as among Jesus’ original followers. No New Testament source corroborates this claim ... the movement that formed after Jesus’ death seems to have involved gentiles only eventually and tangentially, and not from its very initial stages.⁶⁵

Fredriksen thinks that this was written anachronistically by Josephus. But Rosen-Zvi and Ophir notice that the syntactic construction is playing on the Jew/Gentile binary, which is not a feature of Josephus’s language anywhere else.⁶⁶ In fact, having Jews and Greeks join in any sort of movement from the time of Herod the Great to the Jewish–Roman War (66–70 CE) is extremely unlikely. Mason observed regarding the run-up to the war that the era was marked by ‘the appearance of charismatic prophets, militants and sicarii ... [and] deteriorating relations with Greek cities’.⁶⁷

A more likely scenario is that Eusebius swapped out *Γαλιλαίου* (‘Galilean’) for *Ἑλληνικοῦ* (‘Greek’). The word *ἐπηγάγετο* means the ‘source of, the spring of’, suggesting two groups. The *textus receptus* shows that Jesus led two groups before his execution. It is possible that one of those groups led by Jesus were from the area of Galilee who came down for the Passover. Joining with these Galileans Jesus may have attracted a group of Judaeans from Jerusalem. These were the two groups that Jesus led into some kind of tumult. From Schwartz we know Josephus used the word tumult in the *TF*. This is the line of the *TF* that the word ‘tumult’ fits. Schwartz had observed that Josephus often kept disparate narratives and sources into a unity, he did this by

65. Paula Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 80.

66. Ishay Rosen-Zvi and Adi Ophir, ‘Paul and the Invention of the Gentiles’, *JQR* 105 (2015), pp. 1-41.

67. Mason, *Judean War 2*, p. xv.

use of a leitmotif. Schwartz gave many examples of other leitmotifs but here is what he had to say of Pilate's tenure:

... of Josephus's reports about the days of Pontius Pilate use verbs or nouns of the Greek root *thoryb-*, thus characterizing the events as 'tumults' (18.58, 62, 65, 85, 88). This creates a chapter with that theme, and as if to make sure it is noted Josephus begins the last of the episodes by introducing it as follows: 'The Samaritan nation too was not free from tumult (*thorybos*)' (18.85). The use of this leitmotif both creates unity among materials that are quite diverse, including some that have nothing to do with Pilate and apparently come from what has been termed a Roman 'scandal-chronicle'.⁶⁸

Norden's arguments, in section one of this paper has shown the passages surrounding the *TF* had disturbances or *θόρυβος* ('tumult') of one kind or another.

I found that a derivative of the word *θόρυβος* best fitted here as the Greek says Jesus led two groups and the term *ἐπηγάγετο* can also apply to 'leading an army'.⁶⁹ The Christian polemics that were used against the anti-Christians and their claim that Jesus was a criminal ensured that the words in italics (see below), in the following hypothetically restored original passage, would be the first to get expunged:

and he led many of the Judeans, along with many of the Galilean (element) *in a tumult*
καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τοῦ Γαλιλαίου ἐπηγάγετο ἐν
θορύβῳ.

A failed revolt consisting of two groups would see one side blaming the other. Judas Iscariot, whether a literary construction or not in the Gospels, represents the Judean element being at fault for the failure. The size of this mes-

68. D. Schwartz, 'Many Sources but a Single Author Josephus's Jewish Antiquities', in H.H. Chapman and Z. Rodgers (eds.), *A Companion to Josephus* (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), p. 45.

69. *ἐπηγάγετο* can also apply to 'leading an army' ('b. *lead on an army against the enemy*, "Ἄρη τινί" *A.Pers.*85(lyr.); τὴν στρατιήν *Hdt.*1.63, cf.7.165; τὸ δεξιὸν κέρασ *Ar. Av.*353; στρατόπεδον *Th.*6.69; τινὰ ἐπὶ τινα *Id.*8.46: intr., *march against*, τισὶ *Plb.*2.29.2: abs., dub. in *Luc.Hist.Conscr.*21: metaph., *Diph.*44 (nisi leg. ἐπῆγτε) (LSJ, s.v. 'ἐπάγω').

sianic group explains that the Jesus movement was big enough to make it into Josephus. Jesus leading two groups led to his execution. The Romans used the crucified to quell sedition, and crucifixion was the main deterrent to rebellion:

Jesus was condemned to aggravated death. If we look at the ten chapters [*Roman Law*], by which this type of death was inflicted on individuals of pilgrim and humble status, we will see that only two of them can be taken into consideration: popular uprising and crime of lesa-majesty (*lex maiestatis*; cf. *Dig.* 48.1.3).⁷⁰

There was a two-fold advantage in Eusebius replacing the word ‘Galileans’ with the word ‘Greeks’. First, he would get rid of a negative rebellious connotation by getting rid of a Galilean reference. Secondly, having Greeks would make this movement sound universal. Jesus leading the Gentiles and Jews is a Eusebian theme throughout *Demmonstratio evangelica* (e.g. 3.5.109; cf. 4.20.14; 8.2.109). One example of how Eusebius found this universal theme handy was in a report of a letter by Jesus to King Agbar, showing Jesus is famous to all the nations (*Hist. eccl.* 1.13.1).⁷¹ This was all to prove that Jesus evidently must have had some extraordinary power beyond that of other men.⁷²

The early followers of Jesus were known as Galileans as attested by Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.7.6 (c. 110-15 CE; cf. Lk. 13.1-2; Mk 14.70):

Well then, if madness can cause people to adopt such an attitude towards these things [not being scared at the swords of tyrants] and habit too, as in the case of the Galileans, can’t reason and demonstration teach people that God has made all that is in the universe, and the universe itself as a whole, to be free ...

This passage shows that Christians were known to be persecuted by the emperor Nero, and Epictetus had been within close proximity to the emperor’s household. Furthermore, Epictetus’s opprobrious mention of the Galileans means they could just as easily have been messianic rebels. The Gospel of Mark may also have preserved the fact that this movement was Galilean (see

70. José Montserrat Torrents, *Jesús El Galileo Armado* (Madrid: Edaf, 2011), Kindle edition, ch. 7.

71. Olson, *A Eusebian Reading*, pp. 105-8.

72. Paget, ‘Some Observations’, p. 562.

Mk 14.70 ‘Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean”’).

Josephus views the Galileans as a separate *ethnos* (*War* 3.42). He views them condescendingly; they mainly reside in the urban centers of Galilee. Thiel says that Josephus described them as a ‘restive and emotional mob ready to ignite at the slightest indignation’.⁷³ This, together with what the *TF* says ‘of the Greek (nation)’ and not ‘Greeks’ in the plural sense, which is how Josephus usually refers to the Greeks, suggests that Eusebius was working with something that was already there. Josephus refers to the Galilean *ethnos* (nation) elsewhere.

Next section:

He was the Christ
ὁ χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν

To:

He was believed to be a King
ἐνομίζετο βασιλεὺς εἶναι

De excidio, the *Slavonic* and *Cels.* 1.47 all make it likely that the phrase ‘he was the Christ’ was not in the original *TF*. Josephus preferred to reserve that title for Vespasian in his Roman propaganda, citing the Balaam prophecy (*War* 6.312-313). Many messianic figures reported in Josephus’s works were usually described as a βασιλεύς or diadem wearer (e.g. Simon of Perea), a slave of Herod the Great (*Ant.* 17.273-276) or Athronges the shepherd (*Ant.* 17.278-284). This is a common theme throughout Josephus: ‘And now Judea was full of robberies. And as the several companies of the seditious light upon any one to head them, he was created a King immediately, in order to do mischief to the public’ (*Ant.* 17.285).

This theme of popular messianic figures expected to lead the disgruntled has Gospel tradition, too (e.g. ‘Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself’ [Jn 6.15]).

Also, the *Titulus Crucis*, where Jesus’ crime was stated as ‘King of the Jews’, points to sedition. Therefore I replaced ‘he was the Christ’ using Jerome’s Latin recension found in his book (*Vir. ill.* 13) with the more primi-

73. Nathan Thiel, ‘The Use of the Term “Galileans” in the Writings of Flavius Josephus Revisited’, *JQR* 110 (2020), pp. 221-44 (221).

tive phrase ‘he was believed to be the Christ.’ The variant reading converting the Latin back to the Greek is supposedly ὁ χριστὸς λεγόμενος οὗτος ἦν, which is awkward in Greek. For the Greek I used the verb νομίζω (‘consider’, i.e. ἐνομίζετο). I also replaced χριστός (‘Christ’) with King (βασιλεύς) as Josephus did not use this term for all the other messianic figures.

Next section:

[For he opposed paying the tax to Caesar]

And many souls were roused, thinking that thereby the tribe of Judaeans could free themselves from the Romans

[ἀντεῖπε γὰρ τὸ διδόναι κῆνσον Καίσαρι]

πολλὰ δὲ ψυχὰι συνεχύθησαν ὡς οὕτως τὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων φύλον ἐλευθερώσῃ ἑαυτὸ ἐκ τῶν Ῥωμαίων

This line is added and bracketed as there was no reason given for Jesus’ crucifixion. ‘Even in a writer as sloppy as Josephus, one would expect at least a hint of why some leading Jews delated Jesus to Pontius Pilate.’⁷⁴ In the absence of a reason I add a tax issue in my model. Many of the Gospels have a controversy over paying tribute to Caesar (Mt. 22.15-22; Mk 12.13-17; Lk. 20.20-26; Papyrus Egerton 2.3). As for Lk. 23.2 (‘We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be a King Messiah’), there could have been a mention of this in the original *TF* that was cut out. If Josephus had originally described Jesus as a messianic rebel—in particular, one who had advocated tax resistance, there would have been a strong motive to eliminate that from the record.

The following sentence contained in the *Slavonic* could have come from an original *TF*: ‘And many souls were roused, thinking that thereby the Jewish tribes could free themselves from Roman hands.’ The word ‘tribe’ is also in the last sentence of the *TF*.

Next section:

And, on the accusation of the first men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross

καὶ αὐτὸν ἐνδείξει τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν παρ’ ἡμῖν σταυρῶ ἐπιτετιμηκός
Πιλάτου

74. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 75.

This phrase is also Josephan. Josephus often refers to the Jewish leaders as ‘first men’ or ‘leading people’ (e.g. *Ant.* 20.191). Paul Winter writes,

The balanced distinction between ἐνδείξει (verb ἐνδείχνυμι) writ of indictment, attributed to Jewish leaders, and the act of awarding sentence (ἐπιτιμᾶν σταυρῶ) is not likely to be the work of a Christian interpolator ... such an interpolator would scarcely have been content with reproaching Jewish leaders for drawing up an indictment against Jesus whilst stating that the imposition of sentence by crucifixion was an act of Roman justice.⁷⁵

John reflects the collaborating High Priest’s fear of the danger posed by a messianic figure:

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. ‘What are we accomplishing?’ they asked. ‘Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation’ (Jn 11.47-50).

This is also backed up in Thessalonians:

For you, brothers, became imitators of God’s Assemblies in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those Assemblies suffered from the Judeans ... (1 Thess. 2.14-15).⁷⁶

75. Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), p. 40.

76. Most of the arguments proposed for interpolation were done on theological grounds. Most of Carrier’s analyses are only applicable to the passage when ‘But wrath has come upon them at last!’ is applied to the Temple destruction (see Richard Carrier, *Hitler Homer Bible Christ: The Historical Papers of Richard Carrier 1995–2013* [Scotts Valley, CA: CreativeSpace, 2014], pp. 203-11). Yet that is only a retrospective fallacy as Jewett has shown many local catastrophes (see Robert Jewett, ‘The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation’, *NTS* 17 [1971], pp. 198-212 [205 n. 5], who writes, ‘Furthermore, Paul’s statement in I Thess. ii. 16, “but God’s wrath has come upon them at last”, may refer to the disturbance which occurred in Jerusalem during the Passover of 49 when twenty to thirty thousand Jews were supposed to have been killed. Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.112 and *War* 2.224-7. Since this disturbance was instigated by Zealots [*War* 2.225], Paul could well have interpreted the massacre as punishment for the persecution against the Chris-

The Dead Sea Scrolls mention an earlier high priest, seen as a collaborator, whom they dubbed the *cohen resha* ('wicked priest') mentioned in 1QpHab (cf. 4QpPsa, which shows one need not read the Josephus passage about priestly involvement in Jesus' execution as a product of vilification by Christian interpolators).

Next section:

those who had first loved him did not cease
οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο οἱ τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαπήσαντες

To:

Many of his followers, the Galileans and Judaeans, were slain and thus repressed for the moment
πολλοὶ τῶν αὐτὸν ἀγαπήσαντων, τῶν Γαλιλαίων τε καὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἀπώλοντο. οὕτως δ' αὐτίκα κατέσχοντο

It is likely that Tacitus got his information about Christians from his friend Pliny the Younger, but that was not his only source.⁷⁷ F.F. Bruce notes that Tacitus's information best aligns with Greco-Roman polemical sources on Jews, yet he also said, 'It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that both Tacitus and Suetonius depended here, directly or indirectly, on Josephus', in regards to the oracle applied to Vespasian (compare Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13 to Josephus, *War* 6.312-313; cf. Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4.5).⁷⁸ Tacitus most probably read Josephus given the similar comments on Vespasian as the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy. Tacitus had multiple sources such as Pliny, other Greek and Roman sources and Josephus—a polemical original *TF* would have also served Tacitus's purposes well. Having multiple sources would explain why Tacitus would contradict Josephus in certain points. For the sake of my model reconstruction I will examine the following line from *Annales*: 'And the pernicious superstition was repressed for a moment' (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44.3 [*repressaque*

tians in Judea'). This is not the only disaster as Judea also suffered famine in 45-47 CE (*Ant.* 20.49-53). For a full set of the arguments, see Matthew Jensen, 'The (In)authenticity of 1 Thessalonians 2.13-16: A Review of Argument', *CBR* 18 (2019), pp. 59-79.

77. Richard Carrier, 'The Prospect of a Christian Interpolation in Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44', *VC* 68 (2014), pp. 264-83 (266-67); Helen K. Bond, *The Historical Jesus: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 38.

78. F.F. Bruce, 'Tacitus on Jewish History', *JSS* 29 (1984), pp. 33-44 (42).

in praesens exitiabilis superstitio]). As for ‘repression’ in *Ann.* 15.44.3, Cook writes, ‘It would be interesting to know how precisely Tacitus pictured Christianity’s being “repressed” at the outset ... It is possible Tacitus thought that Pilate had put some of Jesus’ followers to death.’⁷⁹ Tacitus is under the impression Jesus died as a criminal, sentenced by a Roman official and his execution carried out by Roman soldiers, all this information could have been easily got from the *TF*.

Next section:

For he appeared to them on the third day living again
ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῶν

To:

The movement again broke out with great abundance, when it was believed he appeared to them living again
αὐθις ἐνεωτερίσθη εἰς ἀφθονίαν, πιστευσάντων ὅτι ἐφάνη αὐτοῖς πάλιν ζῶν

Again, *Ann.* 15.44 comes into play here with the following line: ‘then broke out again, not only through Judea’ (*rursum erumpebat, non modo per Iudaeam*). Also ‘when it was believed he appeared to them living again’ is close to the *TF*.

Next section:

the divine prophets having said both these things and myriads of other wonders concerning him
τῶν θείων προφητῶν ταῦτά τε καὶ ἄλλα μυρία περὶ αὐτοῦ θαυμάσια εἰρηκότων

To:

Those that followed him at first did not cease [worshipping] only Him, who is their leader in sedition
οὐκ [ἄν] ἐπαύσαντο [σέβειν] οἱ τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαπήσαντες, εἰ μὴ καὶ τοῦτον, ὅσπερ ἐστὶν αὐτοῖ τῆς στάσεως ἀρχηγέτης

This section is an obvious Christian gloss, a Christian creed to overwrite and hide what was originally written. So, I am going to make use of Celsus to

79. John Granger Cook, *Roman Attitudes toward the Christians from Claudius to Hadrian* (WUNT, 261; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), pp. 50-51.

build my model reconstruction here. This paper is to show what Josephus would have realistically written rather than attempt to recover Josephus's original words. As Celsus was under the impression that Jesus was some type of 'brigand chief' (*Cels.* 2.12), 'that in the days of Jesus others who were Jews rebelled against the Jewish state and became His followers' (*Cels.* 3.7), the *TF* could have been the source of this information rather than an invention by Celsus, thus I used *Contra Celsum* here for my model reconstruction. We have seen the word *σεβομένων* in line two of my model reconstruction as attested in one of the indirect quotes by Eusebius (*Dem. ev.* 3.5.102-103). We also see this word when Origen is quoting Celsus's book *The True Doctrine* (*Λόγος Ἀληθείας*):

If you should tell them that Jesus is not the Son of God, but that God is the Father of all, and that He alone ought to be truly worshipped, they would not consent to discontinue their worship of him who is their leader in the sedition (Origen quoting Celsus in *Cels.* 8.14).

The church fathers are all denying what was common knowledge to the ancients (especially the church fathers' interlocutors) about Jesus. Origen answers against Celsus disagreeing with him: 'Jesus is, then, not the leader of any seditious movement, but the promoter of peace' (*Cels.* 8.14). Origen was denying what Celsus could have picked up as common knowledge that could have been contained in an original *TF*, that Jesus was the leader of a seditious movement.

Next phrase:

And even still to this day the tribe of Christians, named from this man, has not been lacking
εἰς ἔτι τε νῦν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ τοῦδε ὀνομασμένον οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τὸ φύλον

To:

And this tribe has until now not disappeared
ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦδε οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τὸ φύλον τοῦτον

Eusebius used his own phrase for *εἰς ἔτι τε νῦν* ('still to this day') when he was interpolating the word 'Christians'. It was Louis Feldman who noticed

this and saw this as evidence of Eusebius's tampering.⁸⁰ Feldman writes, 'The passage refers to "the tribe of the Christians", but it is unlikely that Josephus referred to the Christians as a new nation, distinct from Jews and gentiles. The word "Christians" is found nowhere else in the works of Josephus.'⁸¹ The phrase 'still to this day' is Eusebian, yet originally Josephus could have used his own idiosyncratic way of phrasing—ἔτι καὶ νῦν ('until now'). It's a minor change but shows tampering by Eusebius, of which Olson's scholarship has left no doubt. Eusebius could have used the phrase 'still to this day' in place of Josephus using the phrase 'until now'.⁸²

Here is the model reconstruction: And there was about this time a certain man, a sophist and agitator. For he was a deceiver and an imposter. A teacher of men who worship him with pleasure. [He claimed the Temple would be destroyed and that not one stone would be standing on another and that it would be restored in three days.] Many of the Judaeans, and also many of the Galilean element, he led to himself in a tumult; he was believed to be a King: [For he opposed paying the tax to Caesar.] Many were roused, thinking that thereby the tribe could free themselves from Roman hands. And, on the accusation of the first men among us, Pilate condemned him to be crucified. Many of his followers, the Galileans and Judaeans, were slain and thus repressed for the moment. The movement again broke out with great abundance when it was believed he appeared to them alive. Those that followed him at first did not cease to worship him, their leader in sedition and this tribe has until now not disappeared (Proposed original model of *Ant.* 18.63-64).

80. Louis H. Feldman, 'On the Authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum*', in Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schacter (eds.), *On the Authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum Attributed to Josephus: New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations* (Brill Reference Library of Judaism, 33; Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 11-30 (26).

81. Feldman, 'On the Authenticity', p. 25.

82. Paget, 'Some Observations', pp. 34-35 and n. 143, where Paget attests all the places Josephus used this phrase: '*Ant.* 1.160, 203, 212; 9.290; 10.267; 12.119; 14.188. See in particular *Ant.* 3.3, 299 where the phrase is used in a passage in which the derivation of a particular place name is given.'

Conclusion

For those that propose a *creatio ex nihilo* of the *TF* by Eusebius, they fail to test this passage in a Josephan framework. It is most likely *De excidio* worked off an earlier exemplar of the *TF* before Eusebian tampering. The *De excidio* is a paraphrase of a pre-Eusebian *TF* whereas the *Slavonic* is an expansion of a pre Eusebian *TF*. The variant τῆς found in Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica* manuscript gives a glimpse at an earlier negative version of the *TF*. These are the arrows that strike at the *ex nihilo* Achilles heel. The most interesting line that was corrupted in the *TF* is 'many Jews, and also many of the Greek element, he led to himself' (*Ant.* 18.63). Both Greek and Jew had deteriorating relations in the lead up to the Roman–Jewish War (66–70 CE). Examining this line critically offers the most intriguing prospect that Jesus led two groups into a tumult (Judeans and Galileans being the two most likely groups). Why was Jesus viewed as a criminal of one sort or another? (Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 29) Did Jesus lead a group of bandits? (Lactantius, *Inst.* 5.3) Celsus also seems to be under the impression 'that in the days of Jesus others who were Jews rebelled against the Jewish state and became His followers' (*Cels.* 3.7). All this information seemed to be floating around and could have stemmed from the original *TF*. What ties the *TF* to the Jesus of Christianity is the fact that the anti-Christians could use it and that Eusebius had to change it. Nobody bothered to make adjustments to the other similar apocalyptic prophet passages found in Josephus, just this one.