


## A PROPOSAL: THREE REDACTIONAL LAYER MODEL FOR THE *TESTIMONIUM FLAVIANUM*

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*Abstract:* As the *Testimonium Flavianum* (TF) was quoted and misquoted throughout the generations, it becomes clear that we are dealing with at least three redactional layers. As we dig down deeper to the earliest layer, certain aspects of the earliest layer bring this passage into line with how Josephus describes other messianic figures.

*Keywords:* Josephus. *Testimonium Flavianum*. Eusebius. Model reconstruction. TF variants. Historical Jesus.

### Tres estratos redaccionales para el *Testimonium Flavianum*. Una propuesta

*Resumen:* A partir del modo como el *Testimonium Flavianum* (TF) fue citado y mal citado a lo largo de generaciones, se puede ver que se trata de al menos tres capas redaccionales. A medida que profundizamos hasta la capa más antigua, ciertos aspectos de ésta se asemeja más al modo en que Josefo describe otras figuras mesiánicas.

*Palabras-clave:* Josefo. *Testimonium Flavianum*. Eusebio. Modelo de reconstrucción. Variantes del TF. Jesús histórico.

## 1. The final redaction: the *Textus Receptus*

Ken Olson has cleverly put the TF in a Eusebian framework and compared it with the Eusebian use of language<sup>1</sup>. By putting the TF into a Euse-

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<sup>1</sup> OLSON, "Eusebian Reading, 97-114".

bian framework, Olson has successfully argued Eusebian tampering. His conclusion of a *creatio ex nihilo* by Eusebius has too many problems though. A major problem is that most of the arguments proposed by those who adhere to a *creatio ex nihilo* hypothesis are only testing their arguments against the *textus receptus* (the received text found in *Antiquities* written by Josephus) and we know through the indirect quotes and textual variants that there were earlier versions of the TF. But to play along with this hypothesis there are still major faults as all arguments should test both the Josephan and Eusebian framework for the TF. Briefly, I will raise the main points against a *creatio ex nihilo* hypothesis but to see a thorough disputation of it see Dave Allen's article on "What Josephus would have realistically written about Jesus"<sup>2</sup>.

One question to consider was asked by John Meier, "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?"<sup>3</sup> Under Ken Olson's hypothesis, Eusebius could have written anything.

Paget notes that it is odd for a wholesale interpolation to place the Jesus passage before the Baptist passage instead of the order found in the Canonicals<sup>4</sup>. This argues in favour of Josephus placing these two messianic figures in this order. This argues for the Josephan framework.

Bermejo-Rubio has observed "It is not really an internally consistent paragraph, but rather a kind of hybrid text, which betrays the presence of at least two distinct hands in its redaction. A wholly genuine text or a complete forgery would have probably resulted in a more homogeneous passage."<sup>5</sup> Paget has shown that this passage has both Josephan and Eusebian phrases and this shows a passage tampered with rather than a wholesale forgery<sup>6</sup>.

Even within the Eusebian framework Olson's *creatio ex nihilo* thesis still does not hold up. A study done by Sabrina Inowlocki has examined the way Eusebius uses quotations. Inowlocki has discovered that Eusebius did often manipulate quotations but did not find any case where he made them up wholesale<sup>7</sup> She provides examples from Plato and Plutarch and shows Eusebius has made theological changes. In one example in Phaedo 114c,

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<sup>2</sup> ALLEN, "A Model Reconstruction", 113-143.

<sup>3</sup> MEIER, *Marginal Jew*, 64.

<sup>4</sup> PAGET, "Some Observations", 600-601.

<sup>5</sup> BERMEJO-RUBIO, *Hypothetical Vorlage*, 329.

<sup>6</sup> PAGET, "Some Observations", 573-576.

<sup>7</sup> INOWLOCKI, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors*, 6-7.

she states that “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)”<sup>8</sup>. That was a clear-cut example as we have the actual manuscripts. There are other examples too where Eusebius changed for theological reasons:

...in *Historia Ecclesiastica* II. 10. 6, the bishop changed Josephus’ narrative of Agrippa’s death in order to adapt it to Luke-Acts [12:19–23]: Whereas Josephus claims that a rope announced Agrippa’s death, Eusebius turned it into an angel as told in Acts. It is worth noting that this change occurs in a passage which he claims to cite word for word which is presented in *oratio recita*, and which is referred to in a precise way<sup>9</sup>.

This argues for Eusebius as a textual manipulator but not as a wholesale forger of quoted passages as Olson’s thesis argues. It was a Eusebian practice to manipulate existing passages such as the TF. Inowlocki’s scholarship backs this up as she has examined every quote in *Proof and Preparation*. Let’s close out this section with the final redaction:

*Textus Receptus*

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of Greeks. He was the Christ. Pilate, on the accusation of the first men among us, condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day, he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvellous things about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared [*Ant.* 18.63–64].

## 2. Middle Redaction as redacted by Eusebius

In a response to Ken Olson, Whealey was under the impression that the original TF is only minimally different from the *textus receptus*<sup>10</sup>. Ironically it was from her brilliant scholarship that this minimally changed version was proved to be from the hand of Eusebius! In other words, this is the middle redaction by Eusebius. The *textus receptus* happens to be a later redaction from what Eusebius wrote. The *textus receptus* is at least the third redaction (redacted after Eusebius). How she proved this was by showing

<sup>8</sup> INOWLOCKI, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors*, 87.

<sup>9</sup> *Ib.*, 194

<sup>10</sup> WHEALEY, “Josephus, Eusebius of Caesarea”, 115–116.

more primitive recensions (namely the Arabic and Micheal the Syrians) of the *textus receptus* that were copied from the Syriac *Historia Ecclesiastica* (which happen to stem from the hand of Eusebius)<sup>11</sup>. So her argument of minimal change shows the more primitive version of the TF was the version copied from Eusebius' "improved" version. What Whealey does not seem to realize is the version of the TF that she is arguing against Olson originally came from the hand of Eusebius! In other words, Whealey examining Micheal the Syrian recension has merely got it back to what Eusebius wrote.

We can see three layers of redaction at play here, firstly from the original hand of Josephus, as Bardet has shown only an imitator as good as Josephus could have forged this and Bardet finds this highly unlikely<sup>12</sup>. Secondly, Eusebius: from Olson's scholarship yet his arguments only support Eusebian tampering, not a *creatio ex nihilo*. As Steve Mason said 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<sup>13</sup>.

And thirdly, a final redaction which happens to be the *textus receptus* was done by scribes who changed the TF after Eusebius' tampered. This is proved by Whealey's scholarship which shows more primitive recensions than the *textus receptus* that came from the Syriac *Historia Ecclesiastica* (HE) stemming from Eusebius."<sup>14</sup>

Whealey's scholarship builds on top of Shlomo Pines who in 1971 released a book on the Arabic recension written by Agapius. He thought that parts of the Arabic did go back to the original TF, or closer to it<sup>15</sup>. Shlomo Pines did track the evolutionary history of the TF in his book, *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and its implications*. Pines' monograph drew attention to a long-known tenth-century Arabic historical work, the "*Kitāb al-Únwān*" (Universal History) a chronicle of the history of the world up to the 10th century written by Agapius, who was the Melkite bishop of Manbij (Hierapolis). Pines also discovered a 12th-century Syriac version of the TF in the chronicle of Michael the Syrian. Although the Chroni-

<sup>11</sup> WHEALEY, "The *Testimonium Flavianum* in Syriac and Arabic", 573–590.

<sup>12</sup> BARDET, *Le Testimonium Flavianum*, 227–231

<sup>13</sup> MASON, "Nichtchristliche Texte", 165.

<sup>14</sup> ALLEN, "A Model Reconstruction", 128.

<sup>15</sup> PINES, *Arabic Version*.

cle of Michael the Syrian dates to nearly three centuries later than Agapius, he too reports a version of the TF that is more primitive than the received text of *Antiquities*. Michael was born in 1126 and was the Patriarch of Antioch from 1166 to 1199; he thus lived more than three centuries after Agapius.

Using Whealey's scholarship here will explain the middle redaction proposed in this paper<sup>16</sup>. Both Agapius' and Michael's chronicles have a common source, now lost, of the Syriac chronicle of the Maronite Christian, Theophilus of Edessa (d. 785). This contained a narrative account of the seventh- and eighth-century Muslim conquests of the Roman Near East. Agapius himself claimed that his chronicle was based on the Syriac chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa (d. 785). Michael the Syrian's chronicle broadly parallels Agapius' chronicle for the same period from creation to about 780CE, with the two chronicles being particularly close for the period from the first Muslim conquests of the Roman Near East to about 780CE. Michael the Syrian used the chronicle of Dionysius of Tellmahre (Monophysite patriarch of Antioch 818–848). Dionysius himself acknowledged that he drew on the work of Theophilus of Edessa (same source as Agapius).

Agapius' relatively brief chronicle is clearly an abbreviated paraphrase of a longer source, while the section of Michael's chronicle that parallels Agapius' chronicle, from creation to the eighth century, is much longer and it frequently quotes entire sources verbatim. This suggests that Agapius' *Testimonium* (the Arabic) was also a paraphrase rather than a verbatim quotation of its original Syriac source.

It has been observed that material in Michael's account of the first century was dependent on a source that had quoted excerpts of Josephus from the Syriac HE rather than translate them directly from Josephus' works.

Whealey argues that Agapius' *Testimonium* is a loose paraphrase of the *Testimonium* from the Syriac HE while Michael's *Testimonium* is a literal rendition. Whealey has proved this, using textual criticism between the Syriac HE and Michael the Syrian's recensions. The most significant common elements are that both Agapius and Michael qualify the *Testimonium*'s statement about Jesus being the Messiah and that both make a more explicit reference to Jesus' death than the *textus receptus*.

Michael the Syrian's recension is closer to Josephus's original as it is more primitive than the *textus receptus* found in all manuscripts of *Antiquities*. With both recensions having the same source and Michael's tendency to quote rather than paraphrase Whealey has found Michael's recen-

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<sup>16</sup> WHEALEY, "The *Testimonium Flavianum* in Syriac and Arabic", 573-590.

sion more valuable as it is a literal copy as opposed to Agapius which happens to be a paraphrase<sup>17</sup>.

According to Whealey, the Arabic and Michael the Syrian do stem from what Eusebius wrote (what Eusebius originally wrote we no longer have but is close to Michael the Syrians recension). So, we have some variants (Arabic, Michael the Syrians and some Latin variants) that are earlier than the *textus receptus*. This is still useful in my reconstruction of the TF because if we can get it back to what Eusebius originally wrote, we can take it from there using the other bits of evidence discussed here in this paper.

Michael the Syrian's recension is very important for my reconstruction because it at least gets us back to what Eusebius originally wrote. We will now close out this section of the paper with what was likely the TF after Eusebius' touch-up:

Michael the Syrians recension:

The writer Josephus also says in his work on the institutions of the Jews: In these times there was a wise man named Jesus, if it is fitting for us to call him a man. For he was a worker of glorious deeds and a teacher of truth. Many from among the Jews and the nations became his disciples. He was thought to be the Messiah [or perhaps he was the Messiah]. But not according to the testimony of the principal [men] of [our] nation. Because of this, Pilate condemned him to the cross, and he died. For those who had loved him did not cease to love him. He appeared to them alive after three days. For the prophets of God had spoken with regard to him of such marvellous things [as these]. And the people of the Christians, named after him, has not disappeared till [this] day.

This would be close to what Eusebius wrote except for a few translation issues, instead of nations, Eusebius would have written Greeks, "Both Michael and the Syriac *Historia Ecclesiastica* use 'nations' to translate the Greek *Testimonium's, tou Hellēnikou*<sup>18</sup>.

### 3. What Josephus realistically wrote

It was Pollard who once observed, "the Latin manuscripts are generally much earlier than the surviving copies of the Greek original, meaning that we need to know Latin before we can restore Josephus' Greek"<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> WHEALEY, "The *Testimonium Flavianum* in Syriac and Arabic", 573-590.

<sup>18</sup> *Ib.*, 579.

<sup>19</sup> POLLARD, *De Excidio*, 72.

Three redactional layers in the TF can be seen more easily from the Latin manuscripts. In the *textus receptus*, we have the phrase “He was the Christ”. Yet in Jerome’s Latin recension, it says “he was believed to be the Christ” which shows it is earlier than the *textus receptus* found in Josephus *Antiquities*. Jerome’s recension was known to have used Eusebius’ version as Jerome literally copied it from Eusebius’ *History* (HE). In this section, I show the original layer did not have “he was the Christ” or “he was believed to be the Christ”. This makes it more likely that it was Eusebius that interpolated “he was believed to be the Christ”. Jerome lets us know that it was Eusebius’ *History* that he copied it from as he says himself: “that Eusebius Pamphilus in the ten books of his *Church History* has been of the utmost assistance” (*De Viris Illustribus* 13). Interestingly in two manuscripts of Rufinus’ translation of Eusebius’s *History*, the same phrase is used. “By far the most interesting variant in the texts we are discussing is the reading *et credebatur esse Christus* (“he was believed to be the Christ”) for *Christus hic erat* (“he was the Christ) 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”<sup>20</sup>.

Another interesting Latin variant is the *De excidio Hierosolymitano* (“On the ruin of Jerusalem”), written by Pseudo-Hegesippus. This Christianised Latin adaptation of Josephus’ *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<sup>21</sup>.

*De Excidio* was created out of the Greek Jewish *War* circa 370 CE, but it is known that this author had direct access to *Antiquities*, not only from Paget’s points but also the report of pestilence which followed Herod’s execution of his wife Mariamne (1.38; *cf. Ant.* 15.7,9). This paraphrase does not mention 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

<sup>20</sup> LEVENSON and MARTIN, *The Latin Translations of Josephus*, 25.

<sup>21</sup> PAGET, “Some Observations”, 566-567.

acknowledged Jesus to be God”<sup>22</sup>. If the statement “he was the Christ” was in Ps-Hegesippus received text he would have used that exact phrase.

The importance of *De Excidio* usage of the TF is that his received text from *Antiquities* was before 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’s writings – he wrote that Josephus did not believe in the messiahship of Jesus either<sup>23</sup>.

To sum up: 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 Latin translation of Jerome is before the *textus receptus* and after Eusebius. The other Latin translation of Ps-Hegesippus is before both the *textus receptus* and before Eusebius tampering.

Another variant of the TF to consider is the Slavonic. Many scholars do not find any value in the Slavonic but then again most cannot explain why Christians dropped the name “Jesus” and title “Christ”. Kate Leeming in a study of the Slavonic has observed “Jesus is rarely referred to by name [...] elsewhere he is the wonderworker’ or the ‘king who did not reign’ or some other term. Why would a Christian be reticent about naming Jesus?”<sup>24</sup> Same as what happened to *De Excidio*, the Slavonic also tries to whitewash Pilate crucifying Jesus, and both try to the blame onto the Jews. Also, both recensions do not 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 such words as ‘Jesus’ and ‘Christ’.

Both *De Excidio* and Slavonic as like if they came from the same textual family and this particular transmission line could have gone East. It is most likely *De Excidio* worked off an earlier exemplar of the TF before

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<sup>22</sup> PAGET, “Some Observations”, 567.

<sup>23</sup> NUSSBAUM, *Das Testimonium Flavianum*, 72-82.

<sup>24</sup> LEEMING, *The Slavonic Version of Josephus’s Jewish War*, 395.



Eusebian tampering. The *De Excidio* is a paraphrase of a pre-Eusebian TF whereas the Slavonic is an expansion of a pre-Eusebian TF. John Curran believes 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”<sup>25</sup>.

So, to sum up, glimpses of the first layer written by Josephus is evidenced by the variants of *De Excidio* and Slavonic. The second layer or middle redaction is evidenced by Michael the Syrian (more “primitive” than the *textus receptus*) which stemmed from Eusebius. This is known as Michael the Syrian version originally came from a Syrian version of the *HE* written by Eusebius. This original Eusebius version is a version we no longer have but is probably accurately represented by Michael the Syrians version. To end this section, I will now reproduce my model reconstruction so that you can easily see the three redactional layers. Next section I will explain why we have reconstructed a negative model and in the final section I will analyse and show how this model was put together using the variants, indirect quotes, textual variants and also some anti-Christian polemicists who may have been using the TF. Note I only build a model as I believe recovering Josephus's original words are lost. It is still a very worthwhile exercise to build a model of what Josephus would have realistically written.

*The model reconstruction:*

And there was about this time a certain man, a sophist and agitator. 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 model reconstruction of *Ant.* 18.63-64

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<sup>25</sup> CURRAN, *The Testimonium Flavianum*, 93.

#### 4. The Negative Original

Various attempts have been made to reconstruct the original TF, such as Klausner have attempted to just cut out the Christian bits<sup>26</sup>. Yet what is left is not very convincing and does not fit with the flow of the passages that come before and after it. Much better attempts were made by those that adhered to a negative reconstruction, such as F. F. Bruce, whose reconstructed passage does fit in with what Josephus wrote about other messianic figures<sup>27</sup>. Better usage of the variants and indirect quotes does, in fact, improve most negative reconstructions as seen from my working model (see section 5). Van Voost made a worthwhile observation on the negative reconstructions:

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<sup>28</sup>.

Various scholars have argued that a negative passage would result in Christian scribes not copying the *Antiquities* at all<sup>29</sup>. Yet the passage's provenance was within Flavian circles so it wasn't preserved by Christians for the first few centuries. By the time Christians had full control over the books (during Eusebius' time), the passage was changed to a positive passage ensuring its preservation. Also, the passage being negative does not mean it was polemical, Josephus described Jesus as he would other sign prophets and this would explain why Origen did not protest. Another negative passage on Christians written by Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.44) was preserved by Christian scribes, so a negative TF is not a reason to stop its preservation. In comparison to Tacitus, there is something different about the TF, as Tacitus *Annals* did not prompt Christian scribes to alter the passage. Albert A. Bell, Jr. hit the nail on the head here:

Even Tacitus' statement that Jesus died per procuratorem Pilatum did not evoke the Nicene response et resurrexittertia die which one might expect from Christians determined to embellish any and all references to Jesus. His inoffensive, though accurate, statement was allowed to stand, as was Sue-

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<sup>26</sup> KLAUSNER, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 55.

<sup>27</sup> BRUCE, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 39.

<sup>28</sup> VAN VOORST, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 94.

<sup>29</sup> Examples of those advocating for the neutral position, Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 95-96; BOND, "Josephus and the New Testament", 154; BARAS, "The Testimonium", 340-341.

tonius' casual reference, while Josephus' was altered. The latter must therefore have been more anti-Christian than most of the proposed emendations<sup>30</sup>.

In the arguments Church fathers had with their anti-Christian polemicists, a clue is seen as to what was so bad as to initiate the amendments that the TF suffered from. Both Celsus and Sossianus Hierocles seemed to be under the impression that Jesus was some sort of rebel. Here in the following, Origen quotes from Celsus book *The True Doctrine*:

that a revolt was the original commencement of the ancient Jewish state, and subsequently of Christianity" (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.8).

that in the days of Jesus others who were Jews rebelled against the Jewish state, and became His followers" (*Contra Celsum* 3.7).

In 303 Sossianus Hierocles in a pamphlet entitled *The Lover of Truth*, was interested in humiliating Jesus and exalting Apollonius of Tyana to justify his persecution of Christians<sup>31</sup>. If the TF contained any hint of Jesus as a rebel, floating around for the anti-Christians to use, that would ensure that that was the first to get expunged.

One fragment of Hierocles pamphlet preserved by Lactantius a Christian writer and an advisor to the first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine I have the following:

But he affirmed that Christ, driven out by the Jews, gathered a band of nine hundred men and committed acts of brigandage (Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, V.3.).

Bermejo-Rubio noted, the TF "seems to have had a *Vorlage* in which a negative assessment of Jesus is glimpsed"<sup>32</sup>. This is played out by one variant that changes the whole tone of the TF. In codex A of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* 1.11.7. a pronoun *tis* is after *Iēsous* 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 *anēr tis* ("certain man")<sup>33</sup>. This derogatory expression argues against the TF being made up of whole cloth. No scribe would have interpolated the word *tis* but, this phrase could have escaped a copyist attempting to interpolate the original

<sup>30</sup> BELL JR., *Josephus the Satirist?* 18

<sup>31</sup> ULRICH, "Hierocles, Sossianus"; TONDERA, *Eusebius discussion*.

<sup>32</sup> BERMEJO-RUBIO, *La invención de Jesús*, 61.

<sup>33</sup> BERMEJO-RUBIO, *Hypothetical Vorlage*, 358; PAGET, "Some Observations", 565; ELSLER, *The Messiah Jesus*, 38-41.

TF<sup>34</sup>. This also argues that the original TF was similar to other negative passages about messianic figures that Josephus wrote about.

Other similar passages written by Josephus had a *tis* (certain) qualification, as in Theudas, *goēs tis* (“certain imposter/sorcerer”) (*Ant.* 20.97) or a certain Judas the Galilean (*War* 2.118). This *tis* derogatory qualification brings the tone of the TF into line with how Josephus described Jesus’ comparative messianic contenders. Other similar passages had a ‘certain man’ (reconstructed TF from the evidence of codex A Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* 1.11.7 and the Slavonic) ‘certain imposter’ (description of Theudas), ‘a man who made light of mendacity’ (the ‘Samaritan’) or a ‘certain Judas’ (the Galilean) – all this fits in with the textual variant in one of the manuscripts of Eusebius’ *History*.

Of course, this *tis* (“certain”) qualification works much better in a Josephan framework; *tis* makes the original TF very similar to the way Josephus described Jesus’ comparative apocalyptic prophet figures. And we know what Josephus thought of these other prophet types as Bermejo-Rubio explains:

Now, we know what he [Josephus] thought of those who harboured or encouraged messianic pretensions, namely, that they were nothing but a band of fanatics who broke riots and the seeds of war. In fact, Josephus went so far as to affirm (in *War* VI § 313) that the Messianic oracles contained in the prophetic books of Israel referred to Emperor Vespasian<sup>35</sup>.

Schwartz has observed that Josephus often kept disparate narratives and sources in unity, he did this by 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, 18.62, 18.65, 18.85, 18.88). 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”<sup>36</sup>.

Of course, the TF not being *ex nihilo* argues that this word tumult must have been expunged from the original TF. As reported in the TF, Jesus

<sup>34</sup> EISLER, *Messiah Jesus*, 47.

<sup>35</sup> BERMEJO-RUBIO, *La naturaleza del texto original*, 273.

<sup>36</sup> SCHWARTZ, “Many Sources”, 45.

was leading two groups and this led to his crucifixion. As crucifixion is a punishment usually reserved for seditionists, it stands to reason that Jesus leading two groups in a tumult would actually fit the circumstances of his execution. The following line of the TF is a perfect fit for the word tumult:

many Jews, and also many of the Greek element, he led to himself (*Ant.* 18.63).

In section 5 I suggest the following could have been the original line:

Many of the Judaeans, and also many of the Galilean element, he led to himself in a tumult (Proposed original of *Ant.* 18.63).

This will be discussed in section 5. Paget sums up the argument of the original TF containing the word tumult while countering Norden:

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), sometime before Pilate's tenure of office in Judaea. Rather they are united by the fact that they all conform to disturbances or *thorubos* ("tumult"), that is disturbances of a particular kind (either the noun *thorubos* or the verb *thorubein* is found in the description of each incident) Such a bunching together of *thorubos* 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 *thoruboi* ("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 *thorubos* did in fact appear. Such an observation would also serve to counter Norden<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> NORDEN, "Josephus und Tacitus uber Jesus Christus", 637-66; PAGET, "Some Observations", 579-80. And this is from PAGET, "Some Observations", 579-footnote 162: "Pilate threatens to punish those protesting against the legionary standards 'unless they ceased to cause a disturbance (*thorubein*) AJ 18.58), those who participate in what Josephus calls an insurrection (*stasis*) connected with Pilate's use of temple revenues are referred to as *thorubountas* (18.62), Tiberius' suppression of the cult of Isis and expulsion of the Jews from Rome is introduced with the words 'About the same time another evil disturbed (*ethorubei*) the Jews' (18.65), and the uprising connected with a Samaritan and which brings Pilate's tenure to an end is introduced with the words 'Meanwhile not even the Samaritans were without unrest (*thorubos*)' (18.85)".

## 5. The Model reconstruction is based on indirect quotes, textual variants and anti-Christian polemicists that seem to be working off of the TF.

And there was about this time a certain man, a sophist and agitator.

I have used the word ‘certain’ in the reconstruction, but instead of a ‘certain Jesus’, which is found in the manuscript of codex A of Eusebius’ *History*, I have used a ‘certain man’ in agreement with what the Slavonic has. 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 was featured in both *Antiquities* and *War* yet Josephus could only call him the ‘Egyptian’. The 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).

Josephus has only used the expression *sofos anēr* (“a wise man”) for two people: King Solomon (*Ant.* 8.53) and the prophet Daniel (*Ant.* 10.237). Usually, for messianic figures it is not *sofos* (“wise”) but *sofistēs* (“sophist”). One reason to suggest that *sofistēs* was the original word in the TF is a several of anti-Christian polemicists used it in relation to Jesus, such as Justin Martyrs’ interlocutor:

He was no sophist, but His word was the power of God [1 *Apol.* 14].

And here is the satirist Lucian:

Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have transgressed once, for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws [Lucian, *Peregr. Proteus* 8].

The following lines in the *textus receptus* are suspicious, “if indeed it is necessary to say that he is a man;” Meier has concluded that this line was interpolated along with the line that he was the Messiah<sup>38</sup>. Also, this line is suspicious – “for he was a doer of miraculous works”.

Olson argues that this phrase *paradoksōn ergōn poiētēs* (“doer of incredible deeds”) is Eusebian and not Josephan<sup>39</sup>. Therefore I will cut these lines as Eusebian additions.

For the next line in my reconstruction:

<sup>38</sup> MEIER, *A Marginal Jew*, 60.

<sup>39</sup> OLSON, *A Eusebian Reading*, 103; PAGET, “Some Observations”, 573.

A teacher of men who worship him with pleasure.

I have gone with a witness manuscript of *Proof* which has the variant “with pleasure”.

Some sections of the model reconstruction I gave put in brackets such as

[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.]

The portions that are in brackets [ ] are outside the evidence available 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’<sup>40</sup>. 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’ claims 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 as the evangelists plausibly report that Jesus said, may have been a peshet (commentary finding meanings in the scriptures for today’s events), on the first Temple destruction in Dn. 9:26 or Jer. 7 and restoration 1 En. 91:12–13. When the Temple got destroyed, this was a memorable prophecy, preserved in the gospel of 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)<sup>41</sup>.

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.

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 Greeks and Jews 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 (Judaeans and Galileans being the two most likely groups). Why was Jesus viewed as a criminal of one sort or another (Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 29) and Sossianus Hierocles in 303 was under the impression that Jesus did lead a group of bandits

<sup>40</sup> MASON, *Use of the Testimonium Flavianum*, 75-76.

<sup>41</sup> SANDERS, *Jesus and Judaism*, 61-76.

(Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 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” (*Contra Cels.* 3.7). All this information seemed to be floating around and could have stemmed from the original TF. In agreement with Helen Bond, “The original version may well have included an account of a riot (perhaps the incident in the temple?), which was quietly deleted”<sup>42</sup>. We know this line of the TF of Jesus leading two groups and getting crucified for his troubles has been corrupted as Jews and Greeks joining together in any sort of movement from the time of Herod the Great to the Jewish Roman War 66-70, is extremely unlikely. Steve Mason observed in the run-up to the war, the era was marked by “the appearance of charismatic prophets, militants, and sicarii; ... [and] deteriorating relations with Greek cities.”<sup>43</sup>

A more likely scenario is that Eusebius swapped out *Galilaiou* (“Galilean”) for *Hellēnikou* (“Greek”). Having ‘Greeks’ makes this movement sound universal. Jesus leading the Gentiles and Jews is a Eusebian theme throughout Proof (Examples: *Dem. Ev.* 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 nations (*H.E.* I.13.1)<sup>44</sup>. The word *epēgageto* means the source of, the spring of, suggesting two groups. One from Jesus’ area of Galilee came down for the Passover, joining with those more local from the south, the Judaeans. As we have seen from Norden’s arguments in section one of this paper, the passages surrounding the TF had disturbances or *thorubos* (“tumult”) of one kind or another.

I found that a derivative of the word *thorubos* best fitted here as the Greek says Jesus led two groups and the term *epēgageto* can also apply to “leading an army”<sup>45</sup>. The Christian polemics that were used against the anti-Christians and their claim that Jesus was a criminal ensured that the words in between the asterisks, in the following hypothetically restored original passage, would be the first to get expunged.

<sup>42</sup> BOND, “Josephus and the New Testament”, 154.

<sup>43</sup> MASON, *Judean War* 2, Preface, xv.

<sup>44</sup> OLSON, *A Eusebian Reading*, 105-108.

<sup>45</sup> “ἐπιγάγετο” can also apply to “leading an army” – Per LSJ – “b. lead on an army against the enemy, “*arnē tini*” A.Pers.85 (lyr.); “*tēn stratiēn*” Hdt. 1.63, cf. 7.165; “*to deksion kepas*” Ar. Av. 353; “*stratopedon*” Th.6.69; “*tina epi tina*” Id.8.46: intr., march against, “*tisi*” Plb. 2.29.2: abs., dub. in Luc.Hist.Conscr. 21: metaph., Diph. 44 (nisi leg. *epētte*).”



*Kai pollous men loudaious, pollous de kai tou Galilaiou epēgageto \*en thorubō\**

“...and he led many of the Judeans, along with many of the Galilean (element) in a tumult.”

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 messianic group would explain 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, 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 a 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* [“Law of Treason”]) (cf. *The Digesta* 48.1,3)<sup>46</sup>.

The historical Jesus served as a political threat to Roman rule. Bermejo-Rubio did not see Jesus as being crucified alone<sup>47</sup>. My model reconstruction realistically sees Jesus leading two groups of people into a revolt. Bermejo-Rubio observes Josephus’ “link between messianic pretension and political subversion – made all the clearer since Josephus mentions the crucifixion by Pilate’s order – everything indicates that the historian could only have referred to Jesus in negative terms<sup>48</sup>.

It is obvious “he was the Christ” was not in the original TF, this is played out by *De Excidio*, the Slavonic and *Contra Cels.* 1.47. As Baras observed on the statement he was the Christ: “Eusebius is clearly contradicted by the statement of Origen (185-254), the revered church father who preceded Eusebius at the school of Caesarea”<sup>49</sup>.

The Slavonic probably preserved this line from the original TF:

Many were roused, thinking that thereby the tribe could free themselves from Roman hands.

For the next line, Josephus always uses the expression, “on the accusation of the first men among us” so that was from the original TF. Josephus often refers to the Jewish leaders as “first men” or “leading people” (for example, *Ant.* 20.191).

<sup>46</sup> MONTERRAT TORRENTS, *Jesús El Galileo Armado*, 92-93.

<sup>47</sup> BERMEJO-RUBIO, *(Why) Was Jesus the Galilean Crucified Alone?*, 127-154.

<sup>48</sup> BERMEJO-RUBIO, *La invención de Jesús*, 40.

<sup>49</sup> BARAS, “The *Testimonium Flavianum* and the Martyrdom of James”, 339-340.

For the following line, I use Tacitus who may have used the TF:

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.

Even though F. F. Bruce notes that Tacitus' information best aligns with Greco-Roman polemical sources on Jews, he also noted that the Balaam prophecy being applied to Vespasian had been taken from Josephus: "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, *Histories* 5.13 to Josephus, *War* 6.312-313 cf. Suetonius, *Vespasian* 4.5)<sup>50</sup>. Tacitus had multiple sources such as Pliny, other Greek and Roman sources and Josephus (a polemical original TF would have also served Tacitus' purposes well). Having multiple sources would explain why Tacitus would contradict Josephus on certain points. I found the word repression in *Annals* interesting.

"Repression (*Ann.* 15.44.3): 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"<sup>51</sup>. 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.

I use a quote from Celsus for the following line as the second half of the TF seems to be overwritten by Christian creeds:

Those that followed him at first did not cease to worship him, their leader in sedition

Origen answers against Celsus disagreeing with him: "Jesus is, then, not the leader of any seditious movement, but the promoter of peace." (*Contra 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.

On the 'tribe of Christians' in the *textus receptus*, Fieldman gives his reasons why this was not in the original, "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

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<sup>50</sup> BRUCE, *Tacitus on Jewish History*, quoted at 42.

<sup>51</sup> GRANGER COOK, *Roman Attitudes*, 50-51.

found nowhere else in the works of Josephus”<sup>52</sup>. The phrase ‘still to this day’ is Eusebian, yet originally Josephus could have used his idiosyncratic way of phrasing – *eti kai nyn* (“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”<sup>53</sup>.

## Conclusion

This paper with the use of the variants of the TF has put forward a new *Three redactional layer model* proposal for the TF. This is the model that best explains all the seemingly contradictory quotations (such as Origen and Eusebius). In the exploration of the earliest layer this paper has found that the passage is similar to other passages Josephus wrote about other messianic figures. This is especially true with the textual variant *tis* (“certain”) found in a manuscript of Eusebius’ *History*. This brings this passage into line with how Josephus described other messianic figures from this period. This is exactly what is expected as Josephus would describe Jesus’ comparative figures, that is sign prophets such as Theudas and the Egyptians in a similar way.

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<sup>52</sup> FELDMAN, *On the Authenticity of the Testimonium*, 25.

<sup>53</sup> PAGET, “Some observations”, 34-35 and fn. 143. In a footnote 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.”

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