

# Bayesian Josephus: How Likely Fake?

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# BAYES' THEOREM

(ODDS FORM)

$$\frac{\mathbf{P}(h | e.b)}{\mathbf{P}(\sim h | e.b)} = \frac{\mathbf{P}(h | b)}{\mathbf{P}(\sim h | b)} \times \frac{\mathbf{P}(e | h.b)}{\mathbf{P}(e | \sim h.b)}$$

# BAYES' THEOREM

(ODDS FORM)

$$\text{Final Odds} = \text{Prior Odds} \times \text{Likelihood Ratio}$$

# BAYES' THEOREM

(ODDS FORM)

What Usually  
Happens in  
Similar Cases

Given Everything  
We Know  
about the World  
Then and Now

$$\text{Final Odds} = \text{Prior Odds} \times \text{Likelihood Ratio}$$

How Likely is  
the Evidence in  
Each Case

“This evidence is more likely if that’s what happened”

**Bayes’  
Factor**

“That’s implausible”

**The  
Odds  
That H  
Is True**

**=**

The Prior  
Odds That  
**H** Is True

**×**

The  
Likelihood  
Ratio

“That requires too many assumptions”

(Likelihood of the Evidence on **H** vs. **~H**)

“This evidence is unlikely unless that’s what happened”

# Josephus

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- ❖ **Jewish War:** Published **76 AD**. No mention of Jesus (but an entire chapter on Pilate).
- ❖ **Jewish Antiquities:** Published **93 AD**. Now two mentions of Jesus: **TF** (18.63–64) & **James** (20.200)
- ❖ See: “**Josephus on Jesus? Why You Can’t Cite Opinions Before 2014**” and...
- ❖ My update on the scholarship (more skeptical) in ***Obsolete Paradigm of a Historical Jesus***.

**The  
Testimonium  
Flavianum**

## Findings Since 2014

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- ❖ **Ken Olson:** verbal style is closer to Eusebius than Josephus. Either Eusebius forged it, or Pamphilus did, his tutor and predecessor at the same library.
- ❖ **Paul Hopper:** discourse style is entirely unlike Josephus, which proves all proposed reconstructions are *even less* like Josephus.
- ❖ **G.J. Goldberg** it is entirely derived from the Gospel of Luke. This entails it is not independent.  
*It is therefore useless as evidence.*

# Findings Since 2014

- ❖ **Ken Olson:** very similar to Josephus. Either he did, his tutor and
- ❖ **Paul Hopper:** Josephus, which reconstructions
- ❖ **G.J. Goldberg** it is entirely derived from the Gospel of Luke. This entails it is not independent. *It is therefore useless as evidence.*

**Many agree now** (e.g. Margaret Williams, Nicholas Allen, Chris Hansen)

**Attempts to rebut them fraudulent** (ignoring, omitting, faking data):

**See survey of critiques: “Exposing T.C. Schmidt’s Oxford Apologetics”**

At this same time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if it is appropriate to call him a man.

For he was a performer of miraculous deeds and a teacher of such men as take pleasure in truth.

And he was followed by many Jews and also by many Gentiles.

He was the Messiah.

On the indictment of the leading men among us Pilate sentenced him to the cross.

But those who had loved him before did not cease.

Because he appeared to them restored to life on the third day.

And the divine prophets foretold such things and many other thousands of miracles concerning him.

Even up to the present day the tribe of Christians named after him has not ceased to exist.

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On the indictment  
him to the cross.

But those who had

Because he appeared

And the divine power  
thousands of miracles

Even up to the present  
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**Line by line: *Historicity of Jesus*, §8.9**

**Plus: *Obsolete Paradigm*, 49 – 56**

**Vocabulary:** Olson

**Grammar / Narration:** Hopper

**Paraphrasing Luke:** Goldberg

# The Fact That Nixes Most Salvage Ops

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**All** extant mss. (**including** all quotations & paraphrases) of the *Antiquities* derive from Eusebius (**3x**) or the **same** ms. used / produced by Eusebius at Origen's Library:

**“Origen, Eusebius, and the Accidental Interpolation in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.200,”** *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20 (2012), now available in ***Hitler Homer Bible Christ***.

## Eusebius “Corrected”

## Vocabulary: Olson

At this same time there lived Jesus, **a wise man, if it is appropriate to call him a man.**

For **he was** a **performer of miraculous deeds** and **a teacher of** such men **as take pleasure** in **truth.**

**He was followed** by **many Jews** and **also many Gentiles.**

**HE WAS THE MESSIAH.**

On **the indictment** of **the leading men** among us Pilate **sentenced him to the cross.**

But those **who had loved him before** did **not cease.**

**Because he appeared to them restored to life on the third day.**

**And the divine prophets foretold such things and many other thousands of miracles concerning him.**

Even **up to the present day** the **tribe of Christians** **NAMED AFTER HIM** has **not ceased to exist.**

Messiah  
not a  
name —  
not in  
original  
— not  
explained  
— but  
always  
avoided

**Story:** Hopper

**Consensus  
Interpolations**

# Eusebius "Corrected"

# Vocabulary: Olson

At this same time there lived Jesus, **a wise man who was called him a man.**

For **he was** a **performer of miracles** and **men as take pleasure** in **truth.**

**He was followed** by **many Jews** and **HE WAS THE MESSIAH.**

On **the indictment** of **the leading** **him to the cross.**

But those **who had loved him before** **Because he appeared to them** **rest**

**And the divine prophets foretold** **thousands of miracles concerning**

Even **up to the present day** the **tribe** has **not ceased to exist.**

## Luke

24:18–19

24:19

24:19

24:26

24:20

24:21

24:21–25

24:25–27

( Acts 11:26, 19:20, 28:30 )

**appropriate to**

**teacher of such**

**s.**

**he sentenced**

**third day.**

**many other**

**HE DIED AFTER HIM**

Messiah  
not a  
name —  
not in  
original  
— not  
explained  
— but  
always  
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# Story: Hopper

# Consensus Interpolations

Eusebius "Corrected"

Vocabulary: Olson

Luke

24:18-19

appropriate to

At this same time there lived Jesus, a wi  
call him a man

For h  
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And

thousands of miracles concerning

Even up to the present day the trib  
has not ceased to exist.

such

Goldberg: there are "nineteen unique correspondences between Luke's Emmaus account and the Testimonium Flavianum, all nineteen in exactly the same order," and a twentieth out of order but intentionally centered (the title "Christ").

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Messiah  
not a  
name —  
not in  
original  
— not  
explained  
— but  
always  
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( Acts 11:26,  
19:20, 28:30 )

IED AFTER HIM

Story: Hopper

Consensus  
Interpolations

# Example of Olson Vocabulary Issue

- Josephus uses hyperbole of “ten thousand other” things only twice, as *alla te muria*.
  - TF has *kai alla muria*, a Eusebianism.
  - And in Josephus we find one *alla te [x] muria* whereas in Eusebius & TF only *[x] kai alla muria* or *kai alla muria [x]*. A telltale different style.
- *Demonstration of the Gospel 1.Proem.3: kai alla muria*
  - *Demonstration of the Gospel 1.7.4: kai alla muria*
  - *Demonstration of the Gospel 5.16.3: kai alla muria*
  - *Ecclesiastical Theology 1.20.18: kai alla muria*
  - *Commentary on Isaiah 1.62.81: kai alla muria*
  - *Commentary on Isaiah 1.98.56: kai alla muria*
  - *Commentary on Isaiah 1.98.58: kai alla muria*
  - *Commentary on Psalms 1080.21: kai alla muria*

# Another Example of Olson Vocabulary Issue

- “Doer of magical deeds” = *poiêtên paradoxôn ergôn*
- Never in Josephus. Constantly in Eusebius.

3. EUSEBIUS Scr. Eccl. et Theol. <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> (2018.002) (A.D. 4) Book 1 chapter 2 section 23 line 16	↔   🔍
ταῖς προφητείαις ἀκόλουθα ἦν, ἄνθρωπον ὁμοῦ καὶ θεὸν ἐπιδημήσειν τῷ βίῳ <b>παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητῆν</b> καὶ τοῖς πᾶσιν ἔθνεσιν διδάσκαλον τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς εὐσεβείας ἀναδειχθῆσθαι τό (15)	
4. EUSEBIUS Scr. Eccl. et Theol. <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> (2018.002) (A.D. 4) Book 1 chapter II section 7 line 4	↔   🔍
«γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον Ἰησοῦς, σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, εἶγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρή. ἦν γὰρ <b>παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητῆς</b> , διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τάληθῆ δεχομένων, καὶ πολλοὺς (5)	
5. EUSEBIUS Scr. Eccl. et Theol. <i>Demonstratio evangelica</i> (2018.005) (A.D. 4) Book 3 chapter 5 section 103 line 6	↔   🔍
αὐτοῦ μὴ παρόντος ἐδόκουν; τί δ' ἄρα; οὐκ ἦν σεμνότερον τοῦ πλάττεσθαι, ... καὶ τῶν τοιῶνδε <b>ποιητῆς ἔργων παραδόξων</b> γέγονεν, τὸ γράφειν ὅτι μηδὲν μὲν ἀνθρώπινον μηδὲ θνητὸν περὶ αὐτὸν (5)	
6. EUSEBIUS Scr. Eccl. et Theol. <i>Demonstratio evangelica</i> (2018.005) (A.D. 4) Book 3 chapter 5 section 105 line 2	↔   🔍
(105) «Γίνεται δὲ κατ' ἐκείνον τὸν χρόνον Ἰησοῦς, σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, εἶγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρή. ἦν γὰρ <b>παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητῆς</b> , διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τάληθῆ δεχομένων. καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν τοῦ Ἰου-	

7. EUSEBIUS Scr. Eccl. et Theol. <i>Commentarius in Isaiam</i> (2018.019) (A.D. 4) Book 2 section 57 line 62	↔   🔍
ματος παντὸς ἐπέκεινα ὑπάρχον «οὔτε ὀφθαλμὸς ἐώρακε πώποτε οὔτε ἤκουσε.» τούτων δὲ αἴτιος ἐγὼ κύριός φησιν, ὁ τῶν <b>παραδόξων ἔργων</b> πῶς ἐντεῦθεν σοι ἤδη τὴν προσδοκίαν ταύτην ἔδωκα, προαπαγγε	
8. EUSEBIUS Scr. Eccl. et Theol. <i>Commentaria in Psalmos</i> (2018.034) (A.D. 4) Volume 23 page 541 line 55	↔   🔍
αὐτὸς ὁ πάντων ἔφορος κριτὴς οὐ μόνον ἤκουες τὰ τοιαῦτα ὑλακτοῦντα εἰς. Καὶ πῶς γὰρ οὐκ ἦσαν, καταγέλαστοι οἱ νομίζοντες δύνασθαι τὸν τῶν <b>ποιητῆν</b> τῆ ἐαυτῶν νικήσειν κακία; Καὶ ἐν τῷ β' δὲ εἴρηται ψαλμῷ· Ὁ καλᾶσεται αὐτοὺς, καὶ Κύριος ἐκμνησθήσεται αὐτούς. @1	
9. EUSEBIUS Scr. Eccl. et Theol. <i>Commentaria in Psalmos</i> (2018.034) (A.D. 4) Volume 23 page 984 line 57	↔   🔍
διαβαλλομένους οὐκ ὤκνει θεοὺς ὀνομάζειν, τὸν τῶν τοσοῦτων <b>παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητῆν</b> , τὸν τὴν κρίσιν @1 (985) παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς εἰληφότα, πῶς οὐ δικαιοτάτον τῆ	
10. EUSEBIUS HIERONYMUS Hagiogr. <i>De viris illustribus</i> (fort. auctore Sophronio) (3389.001) (A.D. 4-5) Chapter 23 line 20	↔   🔍
οὕτως· «Γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον Ἰησοῦς σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, εἶγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρή· ἦν γὰρ <b>παραδόξων ἔργων</b> (20) <b>ποιητῆς</b> , διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τάληθῆ δεχομένων, καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ ἐπη-	

# Hopper's Deviant Discourse Style

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- Does not match how Josephus tells Pilate stories.
- Nor how Josephus tells messianic pretender stories.
- Nor how Josephus tells stories of Jewish sects.
- Nor Josephan grammar (use of tenses, aspects, participles, nominalizations, and conjugations).
- Does not connect to its narrative context (causes of war)
- Does not explain anything it says.
- **Yet in all these respects, the TF matches the discourse style of Christian creeds.**

# Survey of Evidence: All Negative

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- **All agree:** The TF is implausible from a Pharisaic Jew (e.g. calling Jesus the messiah; saying he fulfilled prophecy). So must have been *edited* or *faked entire*.
- **Doesn't fit the context** of JA 18.62 and 65 (it does not describe “a disaster befalling the Jews” nor explain rising tensions between Jews & Romans leading to war).
- **Improbably brief** (contrast religious controversy immediately after: 8 times longer, yet far more trivial).
- **Unknown to Origen** (even in another form, despite explicit search of Josephus) & **all other** Christians before 4th century.
- **Plus the distinct evidence we now have from Olson** (vocabulary), **Hopper** (grammar, storytelling), and **Goldberg** (it all paraphrases Luke).

## Bayes' Factor

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{The} \\ \text{Odds} \\ \text{That } \mathbf{H} \\ \text{Is True} \end{array} = \begin{array}{l} \text{The Prior} \\ \text{Odds That} \\ \mathbf{H} \text{ Is True} \end{array} \times \begin{array}{l} \text{The} \\ \text{Likelihood} \\ \text{Ratio} \end{array}$$

(Likelihood of  
the Evidence  
on  $\mathbf{H}$  vs.  $\sim\mathbf{H}$ )

**H**: It is either authentic or “edited” (either adding or omitting material, or both).

$\neg$ **H**: It is entirely fake.

The  
Odds  
That **H**  
Is True

=

The Prior  
Odds That  
**H** Is True

×

The  
Likelihood  
Ratio

(Likelihood of  
the Evidence  
on **H** vs.  $\sim$ **H**)

**Bayes’  
Factor**

# Prior Odds on Interpolation

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“Spanning the first three centuries the number of non-Christian references to Jesus numbers fewer than 10 and the number of interpolations among them numbers at least 1, for a base rate of interpolation equal to more than 1 in 10. The apparent rate is actually an astonishing 1 in 3, but I will assume that this evident rate is highly biased by the small sample size, and conclude instead that the highest rate of fabrication reasonably possible was 1 out of every 10 references to Jesus in non-Christian sources.”

— “The Prospect of a Christian Interpolation in Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44,” *Vigiliae christianae* 68 (2014), now available in ***Hitler Homer Bible Christ***

# Prior Odds on Interpolation

“Spanning the first three centuries the number of non-Christian references to Jesus numbers fewer than 10 and the number of references to interpolation equal to or more than them numbers at least 10. The apparent rate of interpolation is actually a rate of 1 in 300. We will assume that this evidence is not biased by the small sample size and that the highest rate of interpolation possible was 1 out of every 10 references in non-Christian sources.”

— “The Prospect of a Christian Origin for Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 68 (2014), now available in ***Hitler Homer Bible Christ***

Rate of interpolation in Christian literature (and thus in anything suspiciously favoring Christians) is approximately 1 in 300 (over any comparable 250 year period).

This gives us a prior odds of around **1/300** (favoring authenticity) and **1/10** (favoring interpolation). We'll stick with ***a fortiori***.

H: Passages “like this” are usually authentic, at an empirically observed rate of around 300/1.

**Bayes’  
Factor**

**The  
Odds  
That H  
Is True**

**=**

The Prior  
Odds That  
**H** Is True

**×**

The  
Likelihood  
Ratio

**300 / 1**

(Likelihood of  
the Evidence  
on **H** vs. **~H**)

# Independent Likelihoods on Forgery

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- On  $\neg H$  all the evidence is 100% expected.
  - Even Eusebius's "clean up" to make the TF sound more like Josephus. Anything that sounds "like" Josephus is expected by a forger attempting it. What isn't uniquely expected on **H** are *deviations* from Josephan style, not agreements.
- **Context:** concluding Pilate's crimes before a contrasting pagan religious scandal is exactly where a forger would put the TF.
- **Brevity:** Scroll length mandates brevity of insertions. And Christians assume the Gospel story is known and behind everything they are asserting.
- **Origen Etc.:** Would not even be aware of an alternative version to quote, paraphrase, cite, or rebut. *And would have to rebut.*
- **Only a Christian** would write a creedal summary based on Luke.

# Independent Likelihoods on Forgery

- On  $\neg H$  all the ev
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- **Context:** concluding religious scandal i
- **Brevity:** Scroll len Christians assume everything they ar
- **Origen Etc.:** Wou to quote, paraphra
- **Only a Christian**

$$P(E | \neg H) = 100\% = 1$$

There is no evidence for any edit.

Every proposed deletion or addition or retention is entirely *speculated*, with no *evidence* it happened.

So there is nothing unexpected on  $\neg H$ .

Only if something is unexpected on  $\neg H$  would it count as evidence for changes from a lost original.

# Independent Likelihoods on Authenticity

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- On H a lot of the evidence is *unexpected*.
- **Being out of context without explaining why:** How often does that happen in any authentic text, much less Josephus? Could it happen even 1 in 1000 times? Or as remarkably often as 100? I do not believe any survey would find it happening more than once for every twenty story units in Josephus
  - Therefore *a fortiori*  $P(E_c | H) = 1/20$ .
- **Improbable brevity:** How often, per story unit, is Josephus this inexplicably brief in telling any story? (Compare even the James passage for what Josephus story telling looks like). Same?
  - Therefore *a fortiori*  $P(E_b | H) = 1/20$ .

# Independent Likelihoods on Authenticity

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- **Unknown to Origen Etc.:** How often would Origen and all other Christian authors overlook, miss, or entirely ignore a passage like this from a Jewish author? Same?
  - Therefore *a fortiori*  $P(E_u | H) = 1/20$ .
- **Eusebian / Non-Josephan style (Olson):** How often does Josephus so egregiously violate his own vocabulary preferences so many times in such a small space of text? Same?
  - Therefore *a fortiori*  $P(E_v | H) = 1/20$ .
- **Unjosephan Grammar & Discourse (Hopper):** How often does Josephus break all his own patterns in grammar and storytelling?
  - Also no more often than *a fortiori*  $P(E_d | H) = 1/20$ .

# Independent Likelihoods on Authenticity

- **Paraphrasing foreign scripture (Goldberg):** How often would Josephus just slavishly paraphrase a bizarre, supernaturalist, anti-Pharisaic religious propaganda text?
  - Surely no more often than *a fortiori*  $P(E_L|H) = 1/20$ .

That all gets us  $P(E|H) =$

$$P(E_c|H) \times P(E_b|H) \times P(E_u|H) \times P(E_v|H) \times P(E_d|H) \times P(E_L|H)$$

$$1/20 \times 1/20 \times 1/20 \times 1/20 \times 1/20 \times 1/20$$

$$= 0.0000000156 = \mathbf{1 \text{ in } 64 \text{ million}}$$

(that's millionths of a percent)

# Independent Likelihoods on Authenticity

- **Paraphrasing foreign scripture (Goldberg):** How often would Josephus just slavishly paraphrase a bizarre, supernaturalist, anti-Pharisaic religious propaganda text?
  - Surely no more often than *a fortiori*  $P(E_L|H) = 1/20$ .

**Even if we absurdly replace every 1/20 with 1/10**  
(claiming these things happen twice as often as is already implausible to suppose)

$$1/10 \times 1/10 \times 1/10 \times 1/10 \times 1/10 \times 1/10$$

$$= 0.000001 = \mathbf{1 \text{ in } 1 \text{ million}}$$

(still a millionth of a percent)

# Bayes' Factor

The Odds That **H** Is True

=

The Prior Odds That **H** Is True

×

The Likelihood Ratio

300 / 1

(Likelihood of the Evidence on **H** vs.  $\sim$ **H**)

At the falsely low likelihood ratio:

$$300/1 \times 1/1,000,000 =$$

$$300/1,000,000 =$$

$$3/10,000 \approx$$

3,333 to 1 odds that H is false

**Bayes'  
Factor**

**The  
Odds  
That H  
Is True**

**=**

The Prior  
Odds That  
**H** Is True

**×**

The  
Likelihood  
Ratio

**300 / 1**

**1 / 1,000,000**

At the *a fortiori* likelihood ratio:

$$\begin{aligned} 300/1 \times 1/64,000,000 &= \\ 300/64,000,000 &\approx \\ 1/21,333 &\approx \end{aligned}$$

Over 21,000 to 1 odds the TF was entirely forged and Josephus never mentioned Jesus here at all.

**Bayes'  
Factor**

The  
Likelihood  
Ratio

That H  
Is True

**H Is True**

**300 / 1**

**1 / 64,000,000**

# “Gerrymandering”

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- ❖ The evidence is all unlikely on H. **And speculation is not Fact.**
- ❖ Therefore, to escape the consequences of this, theorists will invent **hypothetical lost** “original versions” (that were then edited).
- ❖ Every speculated edit has an **improbability**. All the edits together **stack** their improbabilities.
- ❖ If every edit is 50/50 likely, and you need 10 edits, the probability of your claimed edits =  $0.5^{10} \approx 0.001 = 0.1\%$  or **1000 to 1 against** your edit having happened.
- ❖ Which **reduces your prior** (e.g. that 300/1 becomes 300/1000 or **3/10 against** authenticity rather than **300/1** in favor).

# “Harrumphing”

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- ❖ **Last gasp:** to try and get some of this evidence “not to matter” by making it dependent on an item of evidence already with a likelihood.
- ❖ On any **H**, the failure of context is not entailed by brevity, Origen’s ignorance, deviant vocabulary, deviant discourse or grammar, or slavishly paraphrasing a heretical mythography.
- ❖ Nor on any **H** is the deviant vocabulary entailed by the deviant discourse and grammar, nor vice versa.
- ❖ And so on. There is no way to get any of these six items of evidence to collapse into any other.

# “Harrumphing”

- ❖ **Last gasp:** to try and get some of this evidence “not to matter” by making it dependent on an item of evidence already with a likelihood.

**Worse:** even at the *absurdly low* likelihood ratio of 1/1,000,000 (counting each of the six categories as 1/10 likely on H):

To get 300/1,000,000 to above 50% you need to collapse half the evidence in the other three.

Because just three of them (any three) is  $1/10 \times 1/10 \times 1/10 = 1/1000$  and  $300/1000 = 3:10 = 3/13 \approx 23\%$ .

# “Harrumphing”

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- ❖ **Last gasp:** to try and get some of this evidence “not to matter” by making it dependent on an item of evidence already with a likelihood.

And that's impossible at the realistic *a fortiori* likelihood:

To get 300/64,000,000 to above 50% you need to collapse all the evidence into one. Which is impossible.

Because just two of them (any two) is  $1/20 \times 1/20 = 1/400$   
and  $300/400 = 3:4 = 3/7 \approx 43\%$ .

**The  
James  
Passage**

# But What about the James Passage?

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- ❖ **Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.200**
- ❖ Ananus the Cruel illegally executes “the brother of Jesus (the one called Christ), whose name was James, and some others.”
- ❖ The clause “the one called Christ” is just three words in Greek, *tou legomenou christou* (“the [one] called Christ”).
- ❖ Even if Josephus wrote those words, the probability is low that he knew Christians regarded themselves to be the brothers of Christ.
- ❖ Therefore, since he cites no source for this information, we cannot demonstrate it to be independent of Christian claims to fictive brotherhood. It therefore does not reliably attest a biological brother of Jesus. ***It is therefore useless as evidence.***

## Bayes' Factor

The  
Odds  
That  
Josephus  
Wrote That

= Interpolations  
are Admittedly  
Uncommon  $\times$  How Likely is  
the Evidence  
on **H** vs.  $\neg$ **H**

300 / 1

**H:** Josephus wrote what we have.

$\neg$ **H:** Josephus did not write “called Christ” but that was added later by mistakenly incorporating a scribal note (maybe from Origen or his successors), a common occurrence.

This entails he originally meant (and may even have *said*) brother of Jesus “son of Damneus,” explaining the story.

wrote that

300 / 1

## Bayes' Factor

X How Likely is the Evidence on **H** vs.  $\neg$ **H**

**1. Evidence conclusively shows:** Origen searched Josephus for references to Jesus (3rd century) and failed to find this. He instead describes a different one in Hegesippus & misattributes it to Josephus.

**2. No one else saw it either:** Eusebius is the first author to “discover” this in Josephus (4th century). Before him, all other accounts of the death of this Christian James completely deviate from this one.

**3. Evidence shows:** The author of the biblical book of Acts used the *Antiquities* as a source but never found this passage there. Which is odd because it exactly serves that author’s agenda.

**4. Incongruent vocabulary:** *tou legomenou christou* is uncharacteristic for Josephus (he peculiarly avoids calling messiahs that everywhere else). But it is an exact quote from the Gospels.

**5. Incongruent discourse style:** Josephus always explains obscure terms. As here: he explains what “Sadducee” meant, and why it is relevant to his story, and refers back to his previous discussion. It is therefore improbable he wouldn’t for “Christ.”

**6. Incongruent assumptions:** Only a Christian would assume the reader knows what a ‘Christ’ was; that James was a Christian; that Jews sought to kill Christians; and why any Jewish elite and Roman authorities would oppose killing a Christian.

**IN FACT Not even the Testimonium Flavianum** explains these things. It never mentions James or any family of Jesus (much less as becoming Christians). It never mentions Jews persecuting Christians. It never mentions any elite defense of

**7. In contrast:** The story makes no sense as written (why James is targeted is never explained, and so why the story is being told is never explained). But makes sense when you remove the suspect phrase.

**IN FACT as told:** Ananus illegally kills the brother of a man named Jesus, and is punished for this by being replaced in office by “Jesus the son of Damneus.” This only makes sense if this is the Jesus meant.

**FINALLY:** Had Origen found the passage we have, he would have reported its contents instead of the contents of Hegesippus. Which proves these words were not in Origen’s copy of Josephus.

# How Likely Is All that?

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- ❖ These are all exactly what we expect on  $\neg\mathbf{H}$ .
- ❖ And nothing is unexpected if  $\neg\mathbf{H}$ .
- ❖ Therefore,  $\mathbf{P}(\mathbf{E} \mid \neg\mathbf{H}) = 100\% = 1$
- ❖ Each of these is unexpected on  $\mathbf{H}$ .
- ❖ None are entailed by any of the others.
- ❖ Do any of these things happen even as often as 1 out of every 10 similar times? Much less 5?
- ❖ Let's argue *a fortiori* and say each of these things is 5 times more likely if Josephus *didn't* write the suspect words.

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**P(EIH) = Likelihood Ratio =  
1 / 78,125  
Authentic / Interpolated**

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Odds  
That  
Josephus  
Wrote That

=

Interpolations  
are Admittedly  $\times$   
Uncommon

300 / 1

**Bayes'  
Factor**

All **E** is at  
least 78,125  
times less  
likely if he  
wrote it

1 / 78,125

At the *a fortiori* likelihood ratio:

$$\begin{aligned} 300/1 \times 1/78,125 &= \\ 300/78,125 &\approx \\ 1/260 &\approx \end{aligned}$$

260 to 1 odds “called Christ” was accidentally interpolated and Josephus said or meant Jesus ben Damneus.

wrote that

## Bayes' Factor

All **E** is at least 78,125 times less likely if he wrote it

X

300 / 1

1 / 78,125

What if we reduced the 5/1s to all 3/1s? And just say it's only "three times" as likely we'd have each thing if interpolated?

$$\begin{aligned} 300/1 \times 1/2187 &= \\ 300/2187 &\approx \\ 1/7 &\approx \end{aligned}$$

7 to 1 odds "called Christ" was accidentally interpolated.

## Bayes' Factor

All **E** is at least 78,125 times less likely if he wrote it

$$300 / 1$$

$$\approx 1 / 2000$$

What if we kept the 5/1s but collapsed almost half the evidence into itself somehow?

$$\begin{aligned} 300/1 \times 1/625 &= \\ 300/625 &\approx \\ 1/2 &\approx \end{aligned}$$

2 to 1 odds “called Christ” was accidentally interpolated.

300 / 1

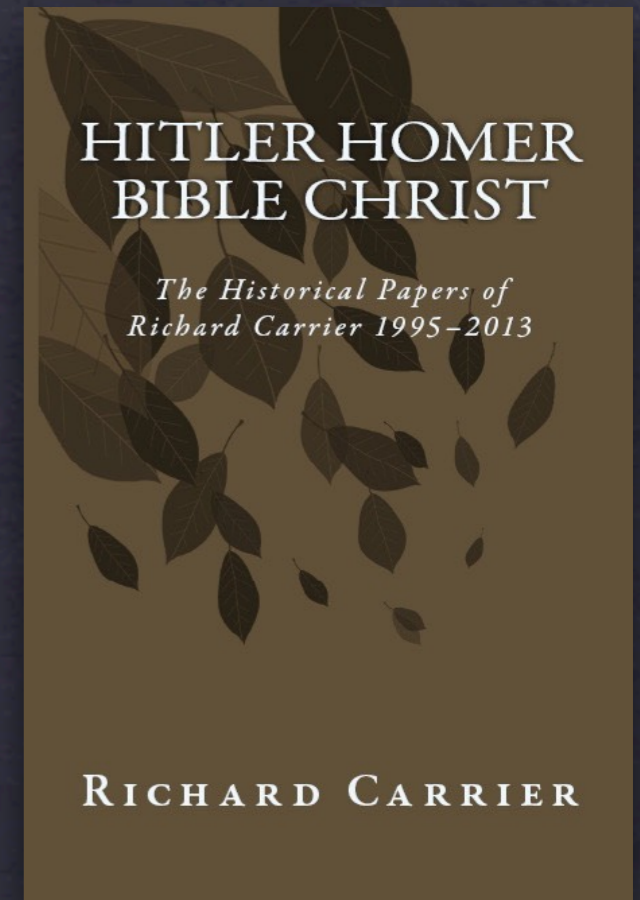
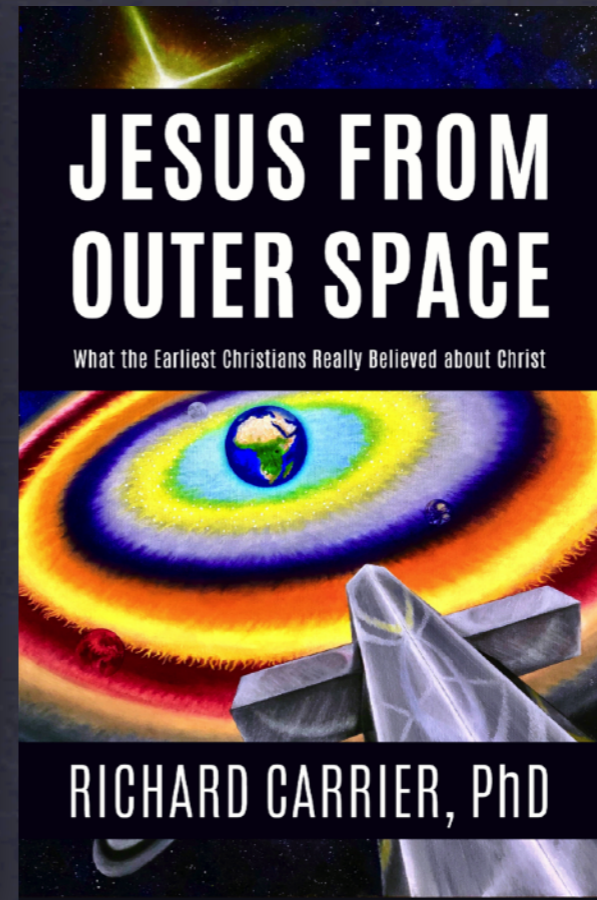
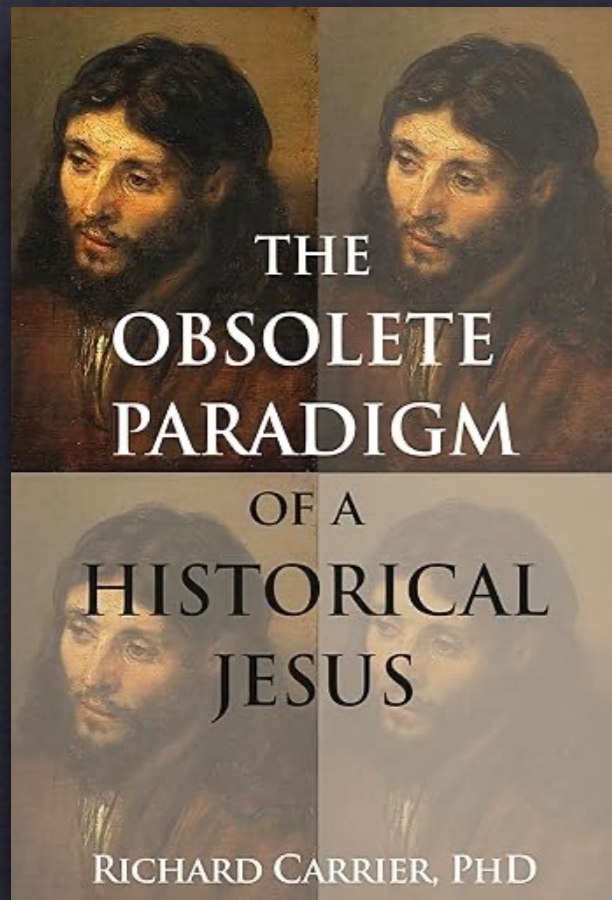
## Bayes' Factor

All **E** is at least 78,125 times less likely if he wrote it

$\approx 1 / 600$

**If we play no games and just count the evidence for what it actually weighs:**

- The probability that Josephus was talking about Jesus Christ and not the son of Damneus is worse than *hundreds* to one against.
- And the probability that Josephus wrote anything about Jesus anywhere else is worse than *thousands* to one against.



# Bayesian Josephus: How Likely Fake?

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