

Jesus among the Historians: How the Manuscripts of Josephus Changed Over Time and What They Originally Said: A Survey of Recent Scholarship

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Summary

- Manuscripts of the *Antiquities* of Josephus contain two refs. to Jesus Christ: the Testimonium Flavianum (in book 18) and a reference to James the brother of Jesus (in book 20).
- Recent publications by Richard Carrier, Louis Feldman, G.J. Goldberg, Paul Hopper, Ken Olson, and Alice Whealey shed new light on what happened, altering what we should conclude about what Josephus originally wrote.
- All surviving manuscripts of the *Antiquities* derive from the last manuscript of it produced at the Christian library of Caesarea between 220 and 320 A.D.
- Both references to Jesus were probably added after their first custodian, Origen (who had no knowledge of them), but by the time of their last custodian, Eusebius (who is the first to find them there). The long one deliberately; the short one accidentally.
- The additions may have been made by, or at the direction or under the supervision of, Eusebius, or his predecessor at the library, Origen's successor, Pamphilus.
- Reliance on the Arabic version of the TF must be discarded. Attempts to invent a pared-down version of what Josephus wrote are untenable. The TF derives from the NT, doesn't match Josephan narrative practice or context, and matches Eusebian more than Josephan style. Previous opinions on the James passage were unaware of new research; thus need revision.

Traditional Essential Bibliography

James Carleton Paget. 2001. "Some Observations on Josephus and Christianity." *Journal of Theological Studies* 52.2 (October): 539–624.

Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz. 1996. *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Fortress), pp. 64–74.

Robert Van Voorst. 2000. *Jesus outside the New Testament* (Eerdmans), pp. 81–104.

Alice Whealey. 2003. *Josephus on Jesus: The Testimonium Flavianum Controversy from Late Antiquity to Modern Times* (P. Lang).

New Essential Bibliography

Alice Whealey. 2016. "The *Testimonium Flavianum*." *A Companion to Josephus in His World*, eds. Honora Howell Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers (John Wiley & Sons), pp. 345–55.

[Which fails to take into account any of the following (except Whealey 2008 and Olson 1999), which is reflective of the problem that needs correcting.]

Richard Carrier. 2014. "Josephus and the Testimonia Flaviana." *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt* (Sheffield-Phoenix), pp. 332–342.

Paul Hopper. 2014. "A Narrative Anomaly in Josephus: Jewish Antiquities xviii:63." *Linguistics and Literary Studies: Interfaces, Encounters, Transfers*, eds. Monika Fludernik and Daniel Jacob (de Gruyter), pp. 147–169.

Ken Olson. 2013. "A Eusebian Reading of the Testimonium Flavianum." *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations*, eds. Aaron Johnson and Jeremy Schott (Harvard University Press), pp. 97–114.

Ken Olson. 2013. "The Testimonium Flavianum, Eusebius, and Consensus." *The Jesus Blog* (August 13): <http://historicaljesusresearch.blogspot.com/2013/08/the-testimonium-flavianum-eusebius-and.html>.

Louis Feldman. 2012. "On the Authenticity of the 'Testimonium Flavianum' Attributed to Josephus." *New Perspectives on Jewish Christian Relations*, eds. Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob Schacter (Brill), pp. 13–30.

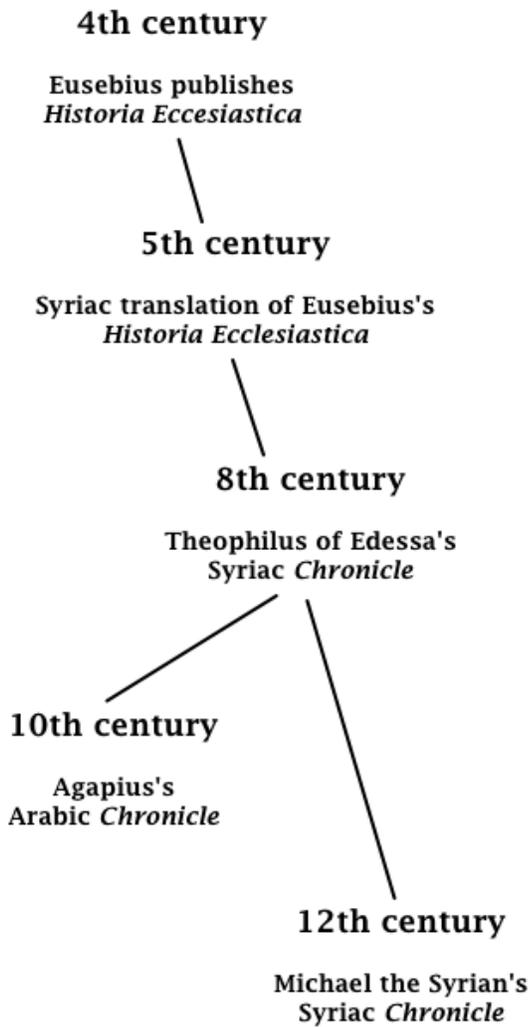
Richard Carrier. 2012. "Origen, Eusebius, and the Accidental Interpolation in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.200." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20.4 (Winter 2012): 489–514 [Reproduced in *Hitler Homer Bible Christ: The Historical Papers of Richard Carrier 1995-2013* (Philosophy Press, 2014), pp. 337–68.]

Alice Whealey. 2008. "The Testimonium Flavianum in Syriac and Arabic." *New Testament Studies* 54.4 (October): 573–90.

Ken Olson. 1999. "Eusebius and the Testimonium Flavianum." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61: 305–22.

G.J. Goldberg. 1995. "The Coincidences of the Testimonium of Josephus and the Emmaus Narrative of Luke." *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 13: 59–77.

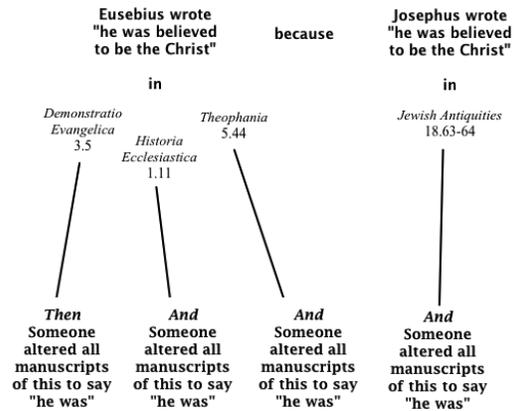
Whealey Refutes Pines:



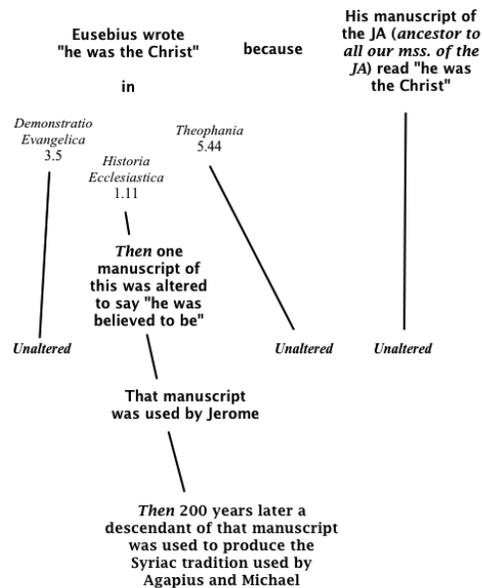
[Contra Whealey, Theophilus or Michael may have emended the text to match Jerome's or a descendant of the manuscript of Eusebius employed by Jerome. Or the variant isn't Jerome's: the Greek translation of *De Vir. Ill.* 13 reads "was" and not "was believed to be."]

Whealey's Alternative Unlikely:

Theory 1



Theory 2



[Whealey's thesis also requires that three extant mss. of the Syriac *Historia* all derive from yet another textual tradition emended to "was the Christ" while somehow Michael & Agapius had access to an *un*-emended text, even though no such text is extant.]

Observations:

- TF doesn't fit the context of *JA* 18.62 and 65
- TF is implausible from a Pharisaic Jew (e.g. Jesus declared messiah, fulfilled prophecy)
- TF is improbably brief (contrast the religious controversy immediately following in the *JA*)
- TF is improbably obscure (contrast Josephus on other sects, teachings, actions, and terms)
- TF was unknown to Origen (despite his explicit search of Josephus for Jesus material)
- Rewriting the TF to 'solve' these problems is baseless speculation, not empirical argument

New Results Ignored Even in Recent Publications (e.g. Whealey 2016):

- Content, concepts, and sequence of the TF matches Luke (Goldberg 1995)
 - Style of the TF more Eusebian than Josephan (Olson 2013; Feldman 2012)
 - Narrative structure of the TF not Josephan (time, story, emplotment, apologetic: Hopper 2014)
 - All manuscripts of *JA* are descended from the Eusebian (Whealey 2008; Carrier 2012)
 - Apart from them, there is no evidence the *JA* ever contained the TF in any form.
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- James passage unknown to Origen (despite search of Josephus for Jesus material)
 - Origen mistook a story in Hegesippus as being in Josephus (Carrier 2012)
 - All other accounts of the death of James the brother of Jesus do not match Josephus
 - Acts used Josephus, yet never noticed this (despite Jews punished for persecuting Christians)
 - Josephus would explain things; only a Christian would just assume they were known (e.g. what a "Christ" was; that James was a Christian; that Jews sought to kill Christians; why the Jewish elite and Roman authorities opposed the killing of James if he was a Christian)
 - The words *tou legomenou christou*, "the one called Christ," likely a marginal note (by Origen or Pamphilus or another scribe or scholar in their library), expressing belief rather than fact
 - That note was then accidentally interpolated into the ms. produced or used by Eusebius (which would have been a copy of the one used by Origen)
 - Possibly replacing *ton tou damnaiou*, "the son of Damneus" (repetition of that phrase a few lines after may have led a scribe to suspect the marginal note was correcting a dittograph)
 - All arguments against interpolation have assumed the entire passage was interpolated (not just the one phrase) and that it was deliberate (instead of accidental or conjectural).