

Making fruit salad of the Testimonium Flavianum.

By Kookaburra Jack, 2009

Preamble

What is the faithful copying of historical literature? It is considered to be an apple of the genuine and authentic apple tree. What is an unfaithful copy? It is considered to be a lemon - forgery and fraud - of the genuine and authentic lemon tree. What is a forgery?

"Only a historian can be guilty of forging evidence or of knowingly used forged evidence in order to support his own historical discourse. One is never simple-minded enough about the condemnation of forgeries. **Pious frauds are frauds, for which one must show no piety - and no pity.**" [1]

What is an interpolation? The forger inserts a word, a phrase, a paragraph into the original literature as if it were already there in the original. What is a partial interpolation? The forger inserts a word, a partial phrase, a partial paragraph into the original literature as if it were already there in the original. What is a partial forgery? The scale of the act of forgery is diminished partially. What is the difference between an interpolation and a partial interpolation? The scale of the act of forgery is partially diminished in the latter. What is the difference between an interpolation and a forgery? These two forms of fraud are distinguished by their scale. What is the difference between a partial interpolation and a partial forgery? The scale of the act of forgery is diminished in the former. Is an interpolation a forgery? Yes, of course it is. Is a partial interpolation a forgery? Yes, of course it is. Is a forgery a forgery? Yes, of course it is.

What is the Testimonium Flavianum (TF)?

The term *Testimonium Flavianum* essentially means the testimony of the historian Flavius Josephus. The TF is the name given to one major passage preserved in a series of twenty Jewish history books Flavius Josephus authored in the first century. In addition to this major passage in Antiquities 18.3.3, there is a minor reference at Antiquities 20.9.1 which will not concern us here.

Why is the authenticity of TF so heavily contested?

The TF is heavily contested because it appears "too good to be true". The earliest manuscripts date from copies made in the tenth century. We do not have any earlier copies or originals. The TF presents an exceedingly attractive citation to the historicity of both Jesus and the nation of his followers – "the Christians" – in the 1st century.

What questions are asked in respect of the Testimonium Flavianum?

Modern scholarship and historical scholarship have asked many questions in respect of the TF. Some of these include: Is the TF a faithful copy? (Is the TF an apple?) Is the TF an unfaithful copy? (Is the TF a lemon?) Is the TF a forgery? Is the TF an interpolation? Is the TF a partial interpolation? Is the TF a partial forgery? What is the difference between the TF as an interpolation and the TF as a partial interpolation? What is the difference between the TF as an interpolation and the TF as a forgery? What is the difference between the TF a partial interpolation and the TF as a partial forgery? These weighty questions have generated hundreds of publications and thousands of comments on the authenticity or otherwise of the TF.

What surveys have been conducted in respect of the Testimonium Flavianum?

The sedimentary deposit of commentary upon commentary of experts has been augmented by the appearances of surveys of expert opinion on the authenticity or otherwise of the TF. The expert opinion of modern and historical scholarship has been surveyed in a number of modern works. Frequently cited by modern authors is the review of Louis Feldman, who counted 87 articles published during the period of 1937-1980, "the overwhelming majority of which question its authenticity in whole or in part". [2]

Independent of Feldman, his survey stats are often presented with a life of their own by those who argue in the defense of the "partial authenticity" of the TF. One such statement of the survey results declares a numerical dominance of 39 out of 52 (ie: 75%) at the summary level in support of "partial authenticity". Five separate categories of opinion are sub-tallied as follows:

52 scholars reviewing the subject,
39 found portions of the TF to be authentic:

4 scholars regarded the TF as entirely genuine,
6 as mostly genuine,
20 accept it with some interpolations,
9 with several interpolations, and
13 regard it as being totally an interpolation.

Feldman Survey (1)

By means of exploring a fruitful analogy in the remainder of this article, we will refer back to these questions, and to the statistical treatment of consensus in scholarship cited above.

Is the TF an Apple?

In the fourth century, while diligently working away in Constantine's Orchard, the historical researcher Eusebius exclaimed "I have found an apple!" in the literature of Flavius Josephus, to wit in "Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18, chapter 3, verse 3. Eusebius' diligent research into the Ante Nicene history of the nation of the Christians is presented as "an attempt to traverse as it were a lonely and untrodden path". At the summit of the path, in the high places, the choicest of apples of Christian proof and testimony in an ancient historical sense is produced. The TF was treated almost like as a flag is placed on the pinnacle of Mt. Everest.

"The revolution of the fourth century, carrying with it a new historiography will not be understood if we underrate the determination, almost the fierceness, with which the Christians appreciated and exploited "the miracle" that had transformed Constantine into a supporter, a protector, and later a legislator of the Christian church." [3]

Was Eusebius fiercely and determinedly exploiting this miraculous support and protection of Constantine?

In all objectivity some commentators, possibly including Eusebius himself, would favor and support the theory that the TF is an apple. The theory that the TF – the "apple of the Christian eye" – is genuine and authentic and thus a true and historical account, is unfortunately rejected by practically all scholars who have ever commented on the TF. The TF is certainly not an apple!

Is the TF a Lemon?

If the TF is not in fact an apple, is it indeed a lemon? In the twenty first century we are assured by some modern scholarship that this is not likely the case. Many modern assessments appear to identify the TF as a "partial apple", and not a lemon.

One argument often employed is that although there are grounds by which the TF is rejected as an apple, there may be grounds by which the TF might be represented as a "partial apple" – or as "partially authentic". This argument insists that it is reasonable to argue that the TF has an authentic "apple core", to which bits of another fruit were grafted.

What is a "Partial Apple"?

It appears that "partial apple" is a useful classification. A partial apple is not the same thing as a genuine apple. A partial apple sounds like it is closer to being an apple than any other type of fruit. A partial apple presents as something which is partially genuine and authentic. A partial apple may not be the genuine and authentic apple, but it is certainly not a genuine and authentic lemon!

Is the TF a “Partial Apple”?

The theory that the TF is a “Partial Apple” (is “partially authentic”) has been defended in recent decades according to a number of interpretations of the survey data of Feldman (1937-1980) introduced earlier. In considering the question “Is the TF a partial apple?” we may conveniently restate the survey data as follows:

52 scholars reviewing the subject, 35 found the TF to be a “partially authentic apple”:		
4 scholars said:	“It’s a genuine apple!”	
6 scholars said:	“It’s mostly a genuine apple!”	
20 scholars said	“It’s a partial apple, but there appears to be some bits of lemon in it.”	
9 scholars said:	“It’s a partial apple, but there appear to be several bits of lemon in it.”	
13 scholars said:	“It’s a lemon!”.	

Feldman Survey (2) and the question
“Is the TF A “partial apple”

Understandably, a number of further questions arise from this summary data tabulation. Questions like the following What is a mostly genuine apple? What is a partial apple with some bits of authentic lemon it? What is a partial apple with several bits of lemon it? What is the difference between a partial apple with some bits of lemon it, and a partial apple with several bits of lemon it?

What is a “Partial Lemon”?

Notably also, some reviewers’ questions appear to be characterized by their absence. Many commentators like to distinguish at great length the properties and characteristics of the TF by which they argue it best appears to be a partial apple. The corresponding arguments that the TF is a partial lemon are often either understated or omitted in entirety by those who would argue that the TF is a partial apple. Questions such as these are seldom, if ever, addressed: What are the differences between a “Partial Apple” and a “Partial Lemon”? What are the similarities between a “Partial Apple” and a “Partial Lemon”?

One valid answer to the last question is that “both the “Partial Apple” and the “Partial Lemon” are neither the “Authentic Apple” nor the “Authentic Lemon”. As a result of the logic of the situation we hereby introduce the concept of an “Authentic Orange” as something which clearly, is neither an “Authentic Apple” nor an “Authentic Lemon”.

Is the TF an Orange?

If the TF is an authentic and genuine orange, it is not thus a genuine and authentic apple, and neither thus is it to be considered as a genuine and authentic lemon. Looking at the TF as an orange has many advantages for certain scholarship, exemplified in the following questions.... What sort of an orange is the TF? How Apple-like is the TF when it is considered as an Orange? How Lemon-like is the TF when it is considered as an Orange?

We return to the Feldman stats, and restate them using the concept of the Orange:

52 scholars reviewing the subject, 35 found the TF to be an authentic orange:		
4 scholars said:	“It’s a genuine apple!”	
6 scholars said:	“It’s an orange which resembles mostly a genuine apple!”	Feldman Survey (3) and the question
20 scholars said	“It’s an orange, but there appears to be some bits of lemon in it.”	“Is the TF an orange”?
9 scholars said:	“It’s an orange, but there appear to be several bits of lemon in it.”	
13 scholars said:	“It’s a lemon!”.	

Understandably, a number of further questions arise from this summary data tabulation. Questions like the following What is an orange which is a mostly genuine apple? What is an orange with some bits of authentic lemon it? What is an orange with several bits of lemon it? What is the difference between an orange with some bits of lemon it, and an orange with several bits of lemon it? If Eusebius found an orange why did he dress it up as an apple? Certain modes of modern scholarship appear to be very seriously concerned with these issues, and with the defense of Eusebius’ (possible or probable) forgery.

Is the TF a Lemon?

Some modern scholarship offers a great range of well considered opinion as to why it is better to think of the TF as an orange, rather than a lemon. This is quite understandable. It is important to assess the validity (or otherwise) of the following questions. What sort of a lemon is the TF? How orange-like is the lemon, and to what extent is it thus not a lemon?

How apple-like is the TF as a lemon, and to what extent does the lemon of the TF resemble an orange, or indeed, an apple? Do lemons actually exist? What type of person would sell lemons? Do lemon sellers have a philosophy at all? Who could believe that anyone would argue that the TF is a lemon?

52 scholars reviewing the subject, 42 found the TF to either be, or to have traces of, an authentic lemon:	Feldman Survey (4) and the question
4 scholars said: "It's a genuine apple!"	"Is the TF a lemon"?
6 scholars said: "It's an orange which resembles mostly a genuine apple!"	
20 scholars said "It's an orange, but there appears to be some bits of lemon in it."	
9 scholars said: "It's an orange, but there appear to be several bits of lemon in it."	
13 scholars said: "It's a lemon!"	

What is the 1937 to 1980 consensus of opinion concerning the TF?

Clearly it is a fruit salad. There is no general agreement.

However some who see the TF as an orange (and not a lemon) claim that we should be convinced that TF is not a genuine and authentic apple because it is demonstrably better to consider that TF is an orange (and not a lemon!). The demonstrable proof relies on the interpretation, categorization and totalling of the Feldman Survey stats.

The claim presented is that if we add together the 6 scholars who said: "It's an orange which resembles **mostly** a genuine apple!", and the 20 scholars who said "It's an orange, but there appear to be **some** bits of lemon in it!", and the 9 scholars who said: "It's an orange, but there appear to be **several** bits of lemon in it!" then clearly, we have a total of 35 scholars who regard the TF as an orange. Some treatments then add to this, the 4 scholars who said: "It's a genuine apple!" to arrive at a numerical dominance of 39 to 13 supporting the position that the TF is best regarded as an orange rather than lemon. Such treatments appear biased.

Can authors in the period from 1980 help us decide in this issue of the assessment of the

authenticity of the TF?

Opinion 1980 - 2009 concerning the TF

Is the TF an apple ?

This position is all but given up. The TF is definitely not an apple! A number of positions are carefully weighed in an article examining textual coincidences between the TF and the Emmaus narrative in Luke. [xx] The result indicates that if these textual coincidences are not the result of chance, at least two possibilities emerge. The first is that the TF is genuine and that Josephus and Luke may have shared a common source. The second is that the TF is a lemon, and that the interpolator may have been heavily influenced by Luke.

Is the TF an orange?

This defensive position seeks to find partial authenticity in the TF, and to diminish the finding of partial forgery. The TF may not be an apple, but it is definitely not a lemon! Some reviewers of the field of opinion since 1980 who support this conclusion, extrapolate the numerical dominance earlier cited. A large count of authors who also argue that the TF is not a lemon but an orange is compared with a diminished count of opposition authors who argue that the TF is not an orange but a lemon. Such treatment may be seen to reflect a bias in the reviewers' reading list.

Additionally, those who see the TF as an orange, often introduce the polemic that many of those who see the TF as a lemon, may be classified as people who do not necessarily subscribe to the historicity of Jesus. The term "Mythicist" is commonly used in an attempt to shift polemic to other issues, other than the assessment of the TF.

Is the TF a Lemon?

Modern reviews since 1980 which express an unqualified opinion that the TF is in fact a lemon do not appear to be "just a few". These would include George Albert Wells ("Eusebius suddenly "found" it."), Freke and Gandy ("later Christians forged the proof that they so badly needed"), Earl Doherty - "slender thread by which an assumption hangs), Acharya S, Kenneth Harding, Jay Raskin ("Eusebius the Master Forger"), David Taylor, Kerry Shirts, Ken Olsen ("Eusebius fabricated the TF") and perhaps Gordon Stein.

Can quantum physics help us in this issue of the TF?

SCIENCE and the TF

Schroedinger's Cat and Eusebius' Fruit Salad

Eusebius' fruit salad is a paradoxical thought experiment. The TF is placed in a sealed box. Experts are invited to open the box, to examine the TF and to assess the answer to the following three questions, as a yes or a no. Is the TF an apple? Is the TF an orange? Is the TF a lemon? Quantum mechanics suggests that after a while the TF is simultaneously an apple, an orange and a lemon. Yet, when we look in the box, what do we see? Do we see the TF either as an apple, an orange or a lemon? Or do we see the TF as a mixture of an apple, an orange and a lemon? Various schools of thought distinguish themselves by various explanations of this paradox of Eusebius' Fruit Salad. In developing this experiment, the notion of "Eusebian entanglement" naturally arises.

What fields of scholarship contribute to assessment of the TF?

The dominant objective field in which the study of the TF is most natural is the field of ancient history. The TF appears in an historical document (The Antiquities of the Jews", written by a historical figure of the first century (Flavius Josephus), first quoted by a historical figure of the fourth century (Eusebius of Caesarea). Contributions to the scholarship on the TF arise from the two primary fields - on the one hand Ancient History, and on the other Biblical (or New Testament) History. Archaeological and manuscript discoveries gradually accrete to the field of ancient history over time.

Stability of the Scientific Evidence associated with the TF

The source manuscripts which preserve the TF are at the earliest from the tenth century, and this state of the evidence has been the case since at least the 17th century, when the source manuscripts first commenced to be studied by scholars of the Enlightenment. This is not to say new evidence has not been introduced to the assessment of the TF, it is to say that the evidence has not been critical to the assessment.

The most recently discovered evidence was published by S.Pines [4] in 1971, a tenth century Arabic version of the TF preserved by Agapius, and a twelfth century Syriac version, preserved in a chronicle authored by Michael the Syrian. Though interesting, and debate provoking, these discoveries had very little impact on the overall evidence, due to the lateness of the manuscripts. The evidential field of manuscripts associated with the TF has been one of great stability for centuries, because new *critical evidence* has not been introduced that has any relevance to the TF and/or assessment of its authenticity.

Stability of the Scientific Paradigms associated with the assessment of the TF

Since the Enlightenment, the history of many if not all of the fields of the natural and social sciences include large changes in attitudes --- popularly referred to as “Paradigm Shifts” which have been brought about by radical changes in the way people in those fields assess the evidence being examined. Newton and Einstein radically altered the ideas in the fields of physics, Darwin the ideas associated with evolution, and the rise of information technologies has radically altered many scientific and social fields. There have been no paradigm changes in the field of ancient history with respect to the TF since the seventeenth century.

Enlightenment, Gravity and the fall of the Eusebian Apple from grace

The pioneering work and acumen of the seventeenth century enlightenment scholars is legendary. An apple was noticed to fall from the apple tree by Newton, who described its trajectory in the mathematics of a new theory of gravity. The rate of acceleration of the fall of the apple was derived from first principles. Newton had not theorized how the apple got up there in the apple tree. He had theorized how it fell to the ground, and how stayed at rest on the ground

Similar acumen was directed at the TF. A number of ancient historians gathered around the fallen apple and scrutinized it thoroughly. They examined what everyone had presumed to be the apple of the TF. The gravity of their momentous finding is being downplayed in recent years. Their detailed reports outlining their reasons and conclusions have not been, and are not being refuted by modern scholarship. Their conclusion was astounding and revolutionary! It established a paradigm for future centuries. What they had found on the ground under the so-called apple tree they declared not to be an apple. They pronounced in no uncertain terms that the TF was a lemon! And conspicuously sour!

HISTORY and the TF

Historical Assessment of the TF by the pioneers (1662 to 1937):

“The TF is a lemon!”

Between the Enlightenment and prior to 1937 the following series of scholars examined the TF and after considering all the evidence available assessed it to be a genuine and authentic forgery. (i.e: a lemon!)

Bishop Warburton of Gloucester ("a rank forgery, and a very stupid one, too"), Dr. Nathaniel Lardner, Edward Gibbon – ("may furnish an example of no vulgar forgery"), Ittigius, Blondel, Le Clerc, Vandale, Tanaquil Faber, Dr. Alexander Campbell, Dr. Thomas Chalmers, Mitchell Logan, Theodor Keim, Cannon Farrar – ('interpolated, if not wholly spurious'), The Rev. Dr. Giles, Rev. S. Baring-Gould ("first quoted by Eusebius), Rev. Dr. Hooykaas ("certainly spurious, inserted by a later Christian hand."), Emil Schürer, Edwin Johnson, Jakob Burckhardt ("Eusebius was the first thoroughly dishonest historian of antiquity"), Adolph Harnack, John Remsburg, Arthur Drews, Marshall J. Gauvin ("Everything demonstrates the spurious character of the passage."), Solomn Zeitlin, Charles Guignebert ("a pure Christian forgery"), Joseph McCabe.

Why do modern statistical tallies ignore the pioneers - "The TF is a lemon!"

Many modern treatments of the TF as an orange appear to be biased in their failure to make reference to the above pioneers of the field. Why not? Has their scholarship on the TF been superseded by the appearance of new and critical evidence into the field of the TF? No. Have there been any paradigm shifts in the field which would make the contributions of these pioneers invalid? No. In fact the pioneering arguments have never been refuted.

Perhaps the modern proponents of the numerical dominance of 39 to 13 supporting the position that the TF is best regarded as an orange rather than lemon, do not wish to have to discuss the addition of the 26 pioneering scholars who identified the TF as a lemon, because if they did so, the numerical dominance would be radically altered. In historical terms, the dominant consensus of the pioneers was that the TF was a genuine lemon, and a very bad one.

It appears that some modern scholarship would have us believe that the historical paradigm in the field of historical scholarship that the TF is a lemon has been superseded with the paradigm that the TF is an orange. Such arguments omit the map of the territory of the field prior to the survey (i.e. before 1937). Such arguments omit to mention that the earlier scholarship – the actual map-makers in the field - were in general agreement that the TF was a lemon.

CONCLUSIONS

The theory that TF is an Apple

The theory that the TF is genuine and authentic is rejected by practically everyone. A dominant consensus of opinion reject Eusebius' assertion that "I found an apple!". In essence he did not find any apple in the orchard of Constantine. Eusebius, as an

historian, according to the criteria [1] of Arnaldo Momigliano, with respect to the TF, was just another pious forger of his own published “evidence”. But did Eusebius find an orange?

The theory that the TF is an Orange

The theory that the TF is genuine and authentic orange is a theory which many modern scholars subscribe to, either rightfully or wrongly. In essence, it assumes that Eusebius found an orange-core in Josephus, and grafted apple onto it by forgery. As such, it diminishes the forgery of Eusebius. Embracing the theory that the TF is an orange also represents an alternative to the unpleasant consequences of admitting that the TF is a lemon. The theory that Eusebius found an orange in the TF, and then fraudulently dressed the orange up as an apple avoids the mention of lemons. It’s a neat arrangement. It is a fall back option adopted by a good defense attorney, seeking a finding of “partial authenticity” without the mention of “partial fraud”.

The theory that the TF is a Lemon.

The theory that the TF is a genuine and authentic lemon has been long championed since the dawn of the age of enlightenment. In essence, Eusebius did not find any apple, or indeed any orange, or pear, or banana, or kiwi fruit, or passion fruit in Josephus. There was nothing fruitful about the testimony of the historian Josephus. Eusebius simply forged the TF in Josephus [5], and then cited the forgery in his history and elsewhere. Such fraud was a neat solution to the problem of a lack of evidence for Jesus and Christianity in the first century. Perhaps Eusebius received imperial encouragement in this forgery.

Constantine’s Orchard: Lemon’s in the “Oration”.

To conclude this article concerning the lemon tree in Constantine’s Orchard we make mention of Constantine’s Oration at Antioch, perhaps very close to the year Eusebius forged the TF. Constantine’s citation of Cicero and Virgil includes the assertion that these two Roman poets predicted BCE the advent of Jesus. Robin Lane-Fox describes this as “the proof was a fraud twice over” [6]. Constantine was thus himself not averse to the use of lemons in his political speeches. In defense of Eusebius, we may meditate on the notion that Eusebius may have been inspired and/or commanded to follow the fraudulent precedent of the emperor.

REFERENCES

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