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THE CHURCH HISTORY

Full-color edition with photographs and maps

Translation and commentary by

PAUL L. MAIER

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Eusebius—The Church History: A New Translation with Commentary

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To the faculty of Concordia Seminary

in appreciation
for their conferral
of the degree of
Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*

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INTRODUCTION

If Herodotus is the father of history, then Eusebius of Caesarea (c. A.D. 260-339) is certainly the father of church history. He was the first to undertake the task of tracing the rise of Christianity during its crucial first three centuries from Christ to Constantine. Since no other ancient author tried to cover the same period, Eusebius is our principal primary source for earliest Christianity, and his *Church History* is the cornerstone chronicle on which later historians would build. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus provides fascinating addenda to our information about the people, places, and events of the biblical world, and Eusebius does the same for the period up to A.D. 324.

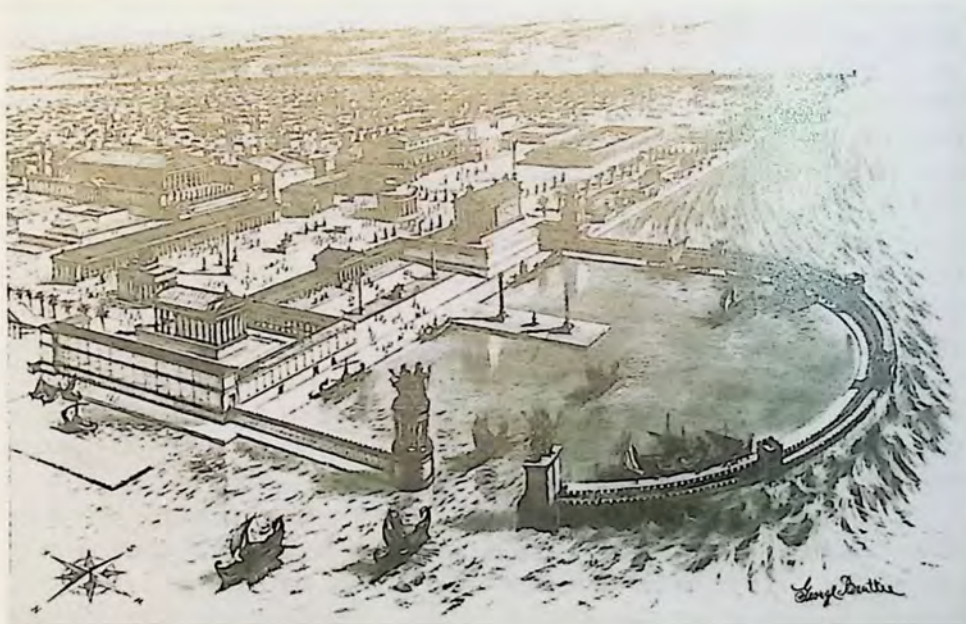
What happened to Jesus' apostles later in life? Did Simon Peter ever go to Rome? Where did John spend the rest of his days? Did Paul survive his trial before Nero? When were the Gospels written? Who wrote them, and where? How did the New Testament canon develop? Why and how were the early Christians persecuted? These questions and many more involve an era no longer covered by the New Testament and could hardly be answered were it not for Eusebius.

The ten books of his *Church History* are a treasure trove of data on the fledgling faith, whose survival and purity were sorely tested by persecution without and heresy within. Today Christianity is the most successful single phenomenon, statistically considered, in all of history. During its early years, however, it was fragile, fragmented, harried, tortured, and seemingly doomed by a hostile Roman Empire. Equally destructive were the internal attacks by renegade religionists who tried to seduce the saints through arcane distortions of doctrine or corral them into schismatic groups that foreshadowed contemporary cults.

Eusebius tells it all, but he also reports the heroic stance of the martyrs, whose blood indeed became the "seed of the church," as Tertullian put it. Eusebius writes of the fearless defenders of the faith who had the courage to face emperors and face down heretics, of bishops and elders who guided the church through horrendous adversity, and of writers whose crucial statements preserving orthodoxy would in many cases have been lost had Eusebius not reported them word for word. These pages, then, show how Christianity's tragedies turned into triumph in the course of its first three centuries.

The Life of Eusebius

“Eusebius” in Greek means one who is reverent, pious, or devout—a proper name (nearly equivalent to Pius in Latin) that was shared by a half dozen other famed figures in Christian history. A geographical suffix distinguishes them from one another. Just as Jesus of *Nazareth* differentiated him from the twenty other Jesuses in biblical times, so Eusebius of *Caesarea* designates the church historian.



Ancient Caesarea, looking toward the southeast. Herod the Great constructed the city in the years 25 to 13 B.C., including the semicircular seawall opening to the north (George Beattie).

Although there were also a number of Caesareas in antiquity—all named in honor of Augustus, the first Roman emperor—Eusebius’s is Caesarea Maritima, the famous city of Palestine constructed by Herod the Great on the Mediterranean shore, at a site previously called Strato’s Tower. This Caesarea is mentioned frequently in the New Testament as the Roman capital of Judea, the headquarters of Pontius Pilate, Cornelius, Herod Agrippa, Felix, and Festus, as well as the place where Paul was imprisoned for two years. Here, too, the riot broke out in A.D. 66 that led to the great Jewish War against Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem. The last only enhanced the importance of Caesarea, and by the

third century it was virtually the capital of Syria, a very large, cosmopolitan city with a Jewish, Greek, Samaritan, and Christian populace.

Eusebius was probably born around 260. His biography, written by Acacius, his successor as Bishop of Caesarea, has not survived to provide more exact detail. His ancestry and the story of his youth are unknown. His education may be adduced from the fact that the great Eastern scholar-theologian Origen spent his later years in Caesarea, dying several years before Eusebius was born. Origen's influence persisted strongly in the theological school founded there by the learned Pamphilus, presbyter in the church at Caesarea, who taught Eusebius and influenced him most. Eusebius joined Pamphilus in writing a defense of Origen, made use of his great library, and wrote a *Life of Pamphilus* (now lost), whom he valued so highly that he was often known as Eusebius Pamphili. In the final Great Persecution of the Christians under Diocletian, Pamphilus was imprisoned and martyred in 310.

Upon the death of his mentor, Eusebius went to Tyre in Phoenicia and Alexandria in Egypt, where he was imprisoned in the Diocletianic persecution but released shortly afterward. Many years later an opponent accused him of having gained his release by pagan sacrifice, but no evidence for this was adduced at the time or since. Had such evidence existed, it surely would have been used in the theological turmoil of the day. Just after Constantine's edict of toleration was issued in 313, Eusebius was elected Bishop of Caesarea, where he remained until his death, despite being offered (and declining) the patriarchate of Antioch in 331.

About 316, he gave the dedicatory address at the new cathedral in Tyre, which he published in Book 10 of his *Church History*. Two years later the Arian controversy exploded in Eastern Christendom, and Eusebius soon found himself embroiled in it. He favored a mediating position between the theological extremes of Arius, presbyter in Alexandria ("Jesus is more than man but less than God, who existed before the Son") and Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria ("Jesus is God, of the same essence and co-eternal with the Father"). Although Eusebius did not endorse the full subordinationism of Arius, he was somewhat sympathetic to the Arian cause, for which the Council of Antioch provisionally excommunicated him and two others in 324. His case, however, was transferred to the great Council of Nicea the following year, where he sat at Constantine's right hand and served as a prominent theological adviser, delivering a panegyric in honor of the emperor.



A section of the Roman wall at Nicea in Asia Minor, where Eusebius advised the emperor Constantine at the great Council in A.D. 325.

As leader of the moderate party at the council, Eusebius presented the creed used by his church at Caesarea and was exonerated of any heresy. Constantine stated that the creed reflected his own views, and it seems to have served as basis for that adopted at Nicea, but this creed was adopted only after important addenda had been made by the Alexandrian party, including Jesus being defined as *homoousios* (“of one substance” or “essence”) with the Father. Although Eusebius finally voted with the overwhelming majority for what would emerge as the Nicene Creed, he wrote a letter to his church explaining his hesitations and voicing concerns that the Alexandrian party was verging on Sabellianism, a heresy that claimed unity over trinity (i.e., that the Son of God was only God acting in a saving mode or capacity).

This concern followed Eusebius to the Council of Antioch in 331, which deposed Eustathius, a leading anti-Arian, and to the Synod at Constantinople in 336, which condemned Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra (modern Ankara), for extreme anti-Arianism. This does not, however, mean that Eusebius remained a pro-Arian. Eusebius’s orthodoxy later in life is confirmed by his rejection of two cardinal principles of Arianism: that there was a time when the Son of God was not and that he was created out of nothing.

Just after the Synod of Constantinople, Eusebius was chosen to deliver an oration on the *tricennalia* of Constantine, the celebration marking his thirtieth year as emperor. Constantine died in the following year (337), and Eusebius two years after that, most probably on May 30, 339, a date known with considerable certainty from the Syriac martyrology of the fourth century. Nothing is known of Eusebius's two final years, other than that he published a *Life of Constantine* in four books, a panegyric rather than a strict history.

The Writings of Eusebius

Eusebius was a prolific author, writing books, chronologies, treatises, dictionaries, and orations in many different areas, not to mention his extensive correspondence. The most complete edition of his works (vols. 19–24 of J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca* [Paris: 1857]) fills six large volumes, and these are merely some, not all, of his writings that have survived in Greek. Following is a partial catalogue of his works in categories suggested by A. C. McGiffert in his magisterial introduction to Eusebius in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Some of these titles have been lost or survive only in fragments.

1. Historical Writings. Aside from the *Church History*, which will be discussed in the next section, Eusebius wrote about his mentor in the *Life of Pamphilus*; two separate works on persecution in the *Martyrs of Palestine* and *Collection of Ancient Martyrdoms*; an important work on chronology, the *Chronicon* or *Chronicle*; and the *Life of Constantine*.

2. Apologetic Works. In defending the faith, Eusebius wrote *Against Hierocles*, opposing a Neoplatonist governor in Bithynia and Egypt who persecuted the Christians; and *Against Porphyry*, refuting another Neoplatonist philosopher who launched a formidable attack on Christianity. *On the Numerous Progeny of the Ancients* was Eusebius's explanation of the polygamy of the patriarchs. His greatest apologetic writings, however, are the *Preparation for the Gospel*, in which he shows how superior a base for Christianity were the Scriptures of monotheistic Judaism rather than the pagan polytheisms of the Greeks; and the *Proof of the Gospel*, which shows how Jesus was indeed the Messiah predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures. Unlike these major works, the *Praeparatio Ecclesiastica* and the *Demonstratio Ecclesiastica*, which concerned the life of the church rather than its doctrines, have not survived. In the *Theophany* he defends God's manifestation in Christ; his *Two Books of Objection and Defense* have been lost.

3. Polemic Writings. As mentioned earlier, Eusebius and his mentor Pamphilus jointly wrote the *Defense of Origen*, against attackers who faulted Origen's allegorizing theology. Only the first of the six books of the *Defense* has survived, and that in a Latin translation by Rufinus.

Eusebius seems to have been provoked most by the Sabellian heresy of his day, which stressed unity in the Trinity to such an extent as to teach that the one God appeared in three different modes, not persons, and it might thus be said that the Father suffered in the Christ mode (Patripassianism). He wrote two works against the Sabellian views of the Bishop of Ancyra: *Against Marcellus* and *On the Theology of the Church: A Refutation of Marcellus*.

He also wrote *Against the Manicheans*, opposing followers of Mani, who preached in Persia a dualistic Gnosticism that divided reality into two principles—Light and Dark, God and Matter—and ensnared even the later Augustine for a decade.

4. Doctrinal Works. As an opening guide to theological study, Eusebius wrote ten books entitled *General Elementary Introduction*, of which only fragments survive, except for Books 6–9, which formed an independent unit called *Prophetic Extracts*, dealing with messianic passages from the Old Testament.

On the Paschal Festival was Eusebius's contribution to the controversy over the date to celebrate Easter. It explains the decision made at the Council of Nicea.

5. Exegetical Writings. Eusebius was particularly active in transcribing biblical texts, especially Origen's edition of the Septuagint. Under commission from Constantine, he also had fifty elaborate copies of the Scriptures prepared for use by the churches in Constantinople.

In *Ten Evangelical Canons*, he wrote a comparative harmony of the New Testament Gospels, showing which passages were common to all or several of them and which were unique to each. *Gospel Questions and Solutions* deals with the different genealogies of Jesus given in Matthew and Luke, as well as with the divergences in the accounts of the Resurrection.

The following listing is in biblical, not chronological, order. His *Commentary on the Psalms* is complete to Psalm 118, but that for 119 to 150 survives only in fragments. Because of its good Hebrew scholarship and critical acumen, the work enjoyed high regard among his contemporaries and since. The same can be said of his *Commentary on Isaiah*. In contrast, the simpler interpretations in his *Commentary on Luke* suggest an earlier dating. Other writings, such as his *Commentary on First Corinthians*, are known only as names or have survived only in fragments.

6. Bible Dictionaries. Eusebius's range of learning surfaces also in his titles: *Interpretation of Ethnological Terms in the Hebrew Scriptures*, his *Chorography of Ancient Judea*, and *A Plan of Jerusalem and of the Temple*, all of which have been lost. Fortunately, this is not the case with his *Onomasticon*, or *On the Names of Places in Holy Scripture*, which lists and defines, in alphabetical order, the names of biblical cities, villages, rivers, mountains, and the like, very much like a modern Bible dictionary. Finally, *On the Nomenclature of the Book of the Prophets* summarizes the lives and predictions of the Old Testament prophets.

7. Orations. Aside from the panegyric at Tyre contained in Book 10 of the *Church History*, Eusebius gave the following major addresses: The *Oration at the Vicennialia of Constantine*, commemorating the twentieth anniversary of Constantine's reign in 325, was delivered at the opening of the Council of Nicea. The *Oration on the Savior's Sepulcher* was also heard by Constantine a decade later, just after the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. A third was the *Oration at the Tricennialia of Constantine*, which Eusebius delivered at Constantinople in 336 for the emperor's thirtieth anniversary. He delivered other addresses: *In Praise of the Martyrs*, *On the Failure of Rain*, and on other topics.

8. Letters. Eusebius's surviving correspondence deals with the Arian controversy in letters to Alexandria, his own Caesarea, and elsewhere. But it includes also a letter *To Constantia Augusta*, Constantine's sister and the wife of his co-emperor, Licinius, in reply to her request that Eusebius send her a likeness of Christ about which she had heard. Eusebius objected that such images invite idolatry.

Even apart from his *Church History*, then, Eusebius was a prolific and wide-ranging author of much erudition. This list of his own publications exceeds most of those he recorded for other writers whom he admired in the first three centuries A.D.

The Church History

The title of this work in the original Greek is *Ekklesiastikes Historias*, in Latin *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and in English *Ecclesiastical History*, the formal title by which it is still known (and usually abbreviated by scholars as *Hist. eccl.* or simply *H.E.*). The final version comprises ten books, of which the first deals with the life of Jesus as the incarnate Word of God. Books 2-7 cover the rise of Christendom from the ascension of Christ in A.D. 33 up to the reign of Diocletian, which began in 284. Book 8 tells of the Great Persecution under Diocletian that started in 303 and ended

under his successor Galerius in 311. Book 9 reports Constantine's victory in the West and Maximin's renewed persecution in the East, while Book 10 celebrates the toleration, peace, and imperial favor finally accorded the church.

Eusebius added to his original work as time went on. The first edition most likely comprised Books 1-7 only and was probably published before 300 (though some scholars argue for a later dating). Books 8-10 differ from the previous ones in that the author is now a contemporary or an eyewitness of the events described, and they no longer continue lists of apostolic succession, a hallmark of the earlier books. It is clear that Eusebius published another edition of his history that included Books 8, 9, and 10 (through chapter 7) after his panegyric at the rededication of the basilica at Tyre in 314 and before Constantine's war with his co-emperor, Licinius, in 316. The final edition including all of Book 10 as we now have it appeared after the defeat of Licinius in 324 and before the death of Constantine's son Crispus in 326, hence late 324 or early 325, just prior to the Council of Nicea. The reasons will be obvious in Book 10.

Eusebius structured his *Church History* on a time grid of Roman emperors, a device used in nearly all histories of the Roman Empire to the present day. Within this framework the successions of bishops in the four great centers of the early church—Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome—constitute subdivisions. Eusebius thus shares the annalistic tradition of such predecessor historians as Thucydides, Polybius, Tacitus, and Josephus, as we might expect from the author of the earlier *Chronicle*. Difficulties in this otherwise logical arrangement, however, develop when a theme or a personality extends into the reigns of several emperors. One such was Justin Martyr, who appears in Books 2, 3, 4, and 5, when one section dedicated to the apologist might better have served the reader.

His sources, which Eusebius often quotes, paraphrases, or condenses in Books 2-7, need not be listed here, since he is always scrupulous about crediting the fonts of his information and citations. His debt to Josephus, Hegesippus, Justin, Irenaeus, Dionysius of Alexandria, and others is open and acknowledged. He may have borrowed too heavily for modern tastes, but much of this material owes its very survival to its felicitous incorporation in Eusebius's record. He found much of his material in the vast library at his own Caesarea, founded by Origen and tended by Pamphilus, and that at Jerusalem established by Bishop Alexander, which accounts for the Greek and Eastern emphasis in his pages at the expense of the Latin and Western contributions, which somewhat upsets a balanced presentation in his *Church History*.

Other faults in Eusebius's historiography will become clear in the reading. Footnotes in the text will have to correct his occasional inaccuracies in matters of chronology and interpretation. In desultory fashion he often jumps from one theme to the next through abrupt transitions, and one hardly looks for literary elegance or logical precision in his copious prose. He seems to have written rapidly, with little thought given to subsequent refinement or revision. His coverage at places is superficial, where he seems content to describe effects but not causes or identifies either God or Satan as sufficient explanation of cause. Except for the persecutions, the events of history and its actors seem to interest him less than its writers and their books, for Eusebius is preeminently a literary historian. Even here, however, the central ideas of these literati receive only scant attention, as is the case with the basic teachings of the Fathers or the errors of the heretics.

Eusebius's merits, however, clearly outweigh these defects. Had his *Church History* never been written, our knowledge of the first three centuries of Christendom would be heavily pockmarked by missing figures, facts, documents, and data of major importance. With his vast erudition, the Bishop of Caesarea sifted through mountains of material to gather valuable information for subsequent ages that might explore it more deeply than he did. Unlike many authors of antiquity, he could usually discriminate between reliable and unreliable sources and was far less credulous than many historians before him and since. He was scrupulously honest not only in acknowledging his sources but also in confessing the trepidation with which he undertook this task, since no history of the church had been written before. He was blazing a theological-historical trail, and pioneers can be forgiven their rugged qualities. His *Church History* was never redone by another historian of antiquity but became a classic and has survived the centuries intact—facts that overcome all criticism.

This Edition

Unlike my *Josephus—The Essential Works* (Kregel Publications, 1994), which is necessarily a condensation of the vast writings of the Jewish historian, this volume is a full translation of Eusebius's *Church History*. It is based on the standard critical edition of the original Greek text of Eusebius published by the great German scholar Eduard Schwartz (in *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller* [Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1897]). This text, which has superseded earlier versions, is most conveniently available in the *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; and London: Heinemann, 1926, 1932),

with English translations by Kirsopp Lake (vol. 1) and J. E. L. Oulton (vol. 2). Other prominent English translations include a rather dated version by Christian Frederick Cruse from 1850 (reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); a text with excellent commentary by A. C. McGiffert from 1890, reprinted in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, volume 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952); and the best recent translation: G. A. Williamson, *Eusebius—The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (London: Penguin, 1965; rev. ed., Andrew Louth, 1989).

A new edition, translation, and brief commentary on Eusebius, however, seems indicated for several reasons. The first is to make Eusebius clearer and more readable. His Greek, as Williamson points out, is quite difficult: "The first sentence of Book I is 166 words long, and we have to plough through 153 of them before we reach the one and only main verb. Sometimes there is no main verb at all, or the sentence is an anacoluthon, beginning in one way and ending in another" (xxxvii).

A word-for-word translation would be almost unreadable, and yet Eusebius must survive his translation intact. The problem of trying to remain faithful to an original text while rendering it readable in another language is one that has always beset translators. As someone has said (wickedly and in sexist days), "A translation is very much like a woman: if it is beautiful, it is not faithful; if it is faithful, it is not beautiful."

I have endeavored to clarify Eusebius's text by breaking up his long sentences into digestible segments, eliminating excess verbiage where it serves no purpose other than to obscure meaning, reducing parallel phraseology where it is clearly useless, and dropping any cloyingly repetitive phrases that add nothing to the record. In other words, *if Eusebius had had a good editor*, this is how his text might have appeared when adjusted for modern tastes. (Eusebius, it will be recalled, did not have an editor, not even himself in polishing or revising his work.) Not one datum of information has been surrendered in the process, and the results, I hope, have rendered Eusebius far more readable and usable today.

Several examples may illustrate my method. The first translation in the following couplets is from the Loeb edition, which faithfully renders all of Eusebius's verbiage, while the second is mine:

I have already summarized the material in the chronological tables which I have drawn up, but nevertheless in the present work I have undertaken to give the narrative in full detail (1.1).

Previously I summarized this material in my *Chronicle*, but in the present work I deal with it in the fullest detail.

Again:

Now while Origen was plying his accustomed tasks at Caesarea, many came to him, not only of the natives, but also numbers of foreign pupils who had left their own countries (6.30).

While Origen was teaching at Caesarea, many students, both local and from many foreign countries, studied under him.

And again:

It is not our part to commit to writing the conflicts of those who fought throughout the world on behalf of piety toward the Deity, and to record in detail each of their happenings; but that would be the especial task of those who witnessed the events (8.13).

To record in detail the ordeals of those who fought throughout the world for reverence toward the Deity would be a task for eye-witnesses rather than for me.

Another, though lesser, reason for this new translation is to correct occasional errors in previous versions. For example, Eusebius has an interesting passage concerning the fate of Pontius Pilate after Pilate's return to Rome in A.D. 37. According to one recent translation, Pilate committed suicide, "as the records show" (2.7), but Eusebius's Greek for the phrase in quotes is much less definite: *katexei logos*, "word has it" or "tradition holds"—a rather significant difference. (There is earlier evidence that Pilate was not a suicide.)

Finally, no edition of Eusebius, to my knowledge, is illustrated with documentary photographs of the sites he describes or with maps and charts that assist in interpreting the text. Sometimes these become very important in trying to understand Eusebius's meaning in full.

A word of caution may be appropriate here. Since Eusebius was eager to trace the episcopal succession in the four great sees of early Christendom—Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome—long lists of bishops' names and dates at these locations will clutter the text from time to time. The reader is urged to scan or to skip this material, since it can all be found in Appendix 2, where it is laid out much more clearly.

Several mechanical items should be mentioned. Greek versions of proper names have been rendered in their common English equivalents (e.g., "Peter" rather than "Petros"). Literary titles are treated similarly: hence Justin's *Defense*, for example, rather than his *Apologia*; Clement's *Outlines* rather than his *Hypotyposes*. Although each book (chapter) in this volume is

lengthy, it was Eusebius himself who divided his work into these ten segments. Book titles and subtitles, however, are mine, as are chapter or section titles. Their numbering in each book has been standard since the early manuscripts of Eusebius, even if the placement of these numbers sometimes seems to have been the work of a madman. The Greek manuscripts also have lengthy indexes prior to each book, which are tedious and unnecessary and have not been included in this translation. Many of the chapter titles, however, directly reflect these.

Important dates are added in the margins, since the B.C./A.D. system was not yet in use at the time of Eusebius. Ellipses (. . .) do not indicate omissions in the text other than, for example, when Eusebius, in quoting Josephus twice in the same passage, strings citations together with an unnecessary "Josephus goes on to say." Brackets denote my addenda in Eusebius's text to improve its intelligibility.

Brief commentaries follow each chapter to elucidate the preceding material. The last part of each of these provides a summary of concurrent Roman imperial history to clarify the political framework of the times.

Going behind the works of digested or secondary history to primary sources like Eusebius is extremely rewarding. Even if historians have pored over this material for nearly seventeen hundred years, joining them in this process should be a refreshing experience for the lay reader or, in the case of the scholar, a challenge to find new nuggets of information. Here, then, is the most important work of the most voluminous extant author, pagan or Christian, of the late third and early fourth centuries: the first history of the church ever written.

PAUL L. MAIER
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BOOK 1

THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

AUGUSTUS TO TIBERIUS

The Contents of These Books

1. It is my purpose to record

the successions from the holy apostles and the periods extending from our Savior's time to our own;

the many important events that occurred in the history of the church;

those who were distinguished in its leadership at the most famous locations;

those who in each generation proclaimed the Word of God by speech or pen;

the names, number, and ages of those who, driven by love of novelty to the extremity of error, have announced themselves as sources of knowledge (falsely so-called)¹ while ravaging Christ's flock mercilessly, like ferocious wolves;

the fate that overtook the whole Jewish race after their plot against our Savior;

the occasions and times of the hostilities waged by heathen against the divine Word and the heroism of those who fought to defend it, sometimes through torture and blood;

the martyrdoms of our own time and the gracious deliverance provided by our Savior and Lord, Jesus the Christ of God, who is my starting point.

1. The Gnostics, as prime representatives of heresy.

This project requires kindness on the part of the reader, since I feel inadequate to do it justice as the first to venture on such an undertaking, a traveler on a lonely and untrodden path. But I pray that God may guide me and the power of the Lord assist me, for I have not found even the footprints of any predecessors on this path, only traces in which some have left us various accounts of the times in which they lived. Calling as from a distant watchtower, they tell me how I must walk in guiding the course of this work to avoid error. I have gathered from the scattered memoirs of my predecessors whatever seems appropriate to this project, plucking, as it were, flowers from the literary fields of the ancient authors themselves. I shall incorporate them in a historical narrative, happy to rescue from oblivion at least the most distinguished of the successors of our Savior's apostles in the most famous churches. I deem this work especially necessary because I know of no Christian author who has taken interest in such writings, which, I hope, those who know the value of history will find most valuable. Previously I summarized this material in my *Chronicle*, but in the present work I deal with it in the fullest detail.

I will begin with a concept too sublime and exalted for human grasp: the ordering of events [by God] and the divinity of Christ. Anyone intending to write the history of the church must start with the Christ himself, from whom we derive our very name, a dispensation more divine than most realize.

The Nature of Christ

[Chapters (sections) 2-4 that follow are unlike the rest of the Church History and deal with the preexistent Christ. Eusebius's regular history begins with section 5.]

2. His character is twofold: like the head of the body in that he is regarded as God and yet comparable to the feet in that he put on humanity for the sake of our salvation, a man of passions like ours. If I begin his story with the principal and most basic points to consider, both the antiquity and divine character of Christianity will be demonstrated to those who suppose that it is recent and foreign, appearing only yesterday.

No language could adequately describe the origin, essence, and nature of Christ, as indeed the Holy Spirit says in prophecy: "Who shall declare his generation?" [Isa. 53:8]. For no one knows the Father except the Son, and no one has fully known the Son except the Father who begot him. And who but the Father could conceive of the Light that existed before the world, the Wisdom that preceded time, the living Word that was in the beginning

with the Father and was God? Before all creation and fashioning, visible or invisible, he was the first and only offspring of God, the commander-in-chief of the spiritual host of heaven, the messenger of mighty counsel, the agent of the ineffable plan of the Father, the creator—with the Father—of all things, the second cause of the universe after the Father, the true and only begotten Child of God, the Lord and God and King of everything created, who has received lordship, power, honor, and deity itself from the Father. According to the mystic ascription of divinity to him in the Scriptures:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him, and apart from him nothing was made [John 1:1, 3].

Indeed, this is also the teaching of the great Moses, the earliest of all the prophets, when by the Holy Spirit he described the origin and ordering of the universe: the Creator gave over to none but Christ himself the making of subordinate things and discussed with him the creation of man: "For God said, 'Let us make man in our image and likeness' " [Gen. 1:26].

Another of the prophets confirms this ascription of divinity: "He spoke, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created" [Ps. 33:9; 148:5]. Here he introduces the Father and Maker as a supreme sovereign giving commands by a royal nod and, second to him, none other than the divine Word as carrying out his commands.

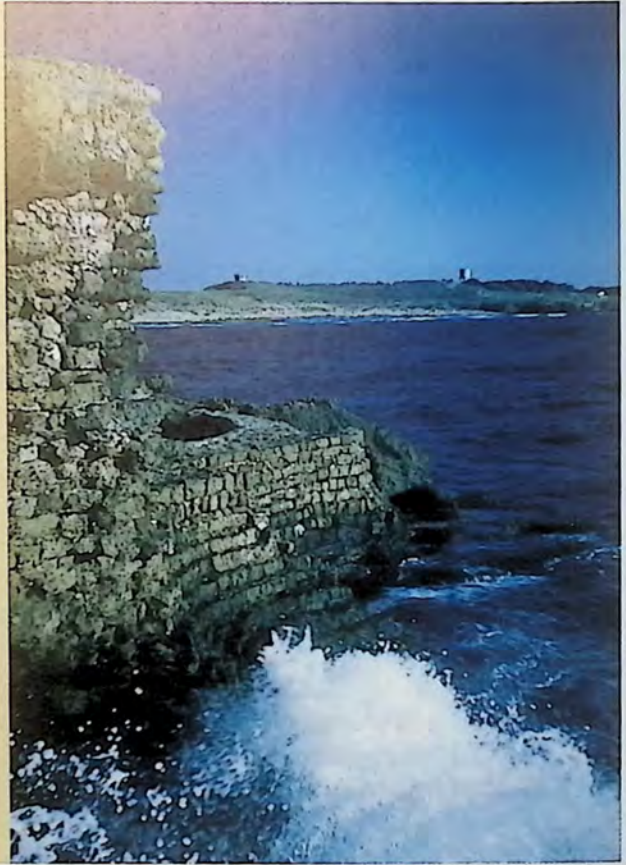
Ever since Creation, all those distinguished for righteousness and virtue—Moses, and before him Abraham and his children, as well as all the just men and prophets since—recognized him through the eyes of the mind and paid him the reverence due the Son of God, who taught all humanity the knowledge of the Father. Thus the Lord God is said to have appeared as an ordinary man to Abraham as he sat by the oak of Mamre, yet he worshiped him as God, saying, "O Lord, judge of all the world, will you not do justice?" [Gen. 18:25]. Since reason would never permit that the immutable essence of the Almighty be changed into human form, even by illusion, or that Scripture would falsely invent such a story, who else could be so described as appearing in human form but the preexistent Word, since naming the First Cause of the universe would be inappropriate? Of him it is said in the Psalms:

He sent his Word and healed them,
And he rescued them from their destruction [107:20].

Moses clearly speaks of him as a second Lord after the Father when he says: "The Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord" [Gen. 19:24]. Holy Scripture again

refers to him as God when he appeared to Jacob in the form of a man and said, "No longer shall your name be Jacob, but Israel . . . for you have prevailed with God." Then too: "Jacob called the name of that place 'the Vision of God,' saying, 'For I saw God face-to-face, and my life was spared' " [Gen. 32:28-29].

Mediterranean waves break against the jetty at Caesarea, where Eusebius was bishop.



To suppose that these recorded theophanies were appearances of subordinate angels and ministers of God cannot be correct, for whenever these appear to people, Scripture distinctly declares in countless passages that they are called angels, not God or Lord.

Joshua, Moses' successor, names him commander-in-chief of the Lord's army, as leader of the angels and archangels and the heavenly powers and accorded the second place in universal rule as the power and wisdom of the Father, yet Joshua too saw him only in human form. For it is written:

When Joshua was at Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua approached him and said, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" He

replied, "It is as commander of the Lord's army that I have come." Then Joshua fell to the ground, face downward, and asked, "Master, what do you command your servant?" The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy" [Josh. 5:13-15].

The words themselves will show you here too that this was none other than the one who spoke also to Moses:

When the Lord saw that he approached to see, the Lord called out to him from the bush, "Moses, Moses!" He replied, "What is it?" He said, "Do not come near. Remove your sandals, for the place where you stand is holy ground." He continued, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" [Ex. 3:4-6].

There are additional proofs that this really is the being named the Word of God and Wisdom, who existed before the world and assisted the God of the universe in the fashioning of all created things. Wisdom clearly reveals her own secret through the mouth of Solomon:

I, Wisdom, made counsel my dwelling and invoked knowledge and thought.
 By me kings reign and rulers decree justice;
 By me the great are enhanced and sovereigns rule. . . .
 In the beginning before time began and before the Lord made the earth
 He begot me, before springs gushed forth and the mountains arose.
 When he prepared the heavens, I was there, and when he secured the springs under heaven, I was with him, setting them in order.
 I was she in whom he daily delighted, and I always rejoiced in his presence when he rejoiced that he had completed the world.²

This, then, is a brief demonstration that the divine Word pre-existed and appeared to some, if not all, people.

Why he was not proclaimed long ago to all people and all nations, as now, is explained as follows. In the past humanity was not capable of grasping the teaching of Christ in all its wisdom and virtue. At the beginning, after the original state of blessedness, the first man disregarded the command of God and fell into this mortal state, exchanging the delight of heaven for the curse of earth. His descendants, who filled our world, showed themselves even worse, except for one or two, choosing a brutal existence and a life not worth living. City, state, art, knowledge, laws,

2. Selections from Prov. 8:12-31.

virtue, or philosophy were not even names among them, and they lived as savage nomads in the desert, destroying reason and culture through excessive wickedness. Surrendering to total depravity, they corrupted, murdered, or cannibalized each other and in their madness prepared for war with God himself and to fight the famed battles of the giants,³ trying to fortify earth against heaven and, in their delirium, to do battle with the supreme Ruler himself.

In response, God sent them floods and conflagrations, famines and plagues, wars and thunderbolts—punishments progressively drastic—in order to restrain the noxious illness of their souls. Then, just when the vast flood of evil had nearly drowned humankind, the firstborn and first-created Wisdom of God, the preexistent Word himself, appeared in his great kindness, as an angelic vision or in person as God's saving power to one or two of the God-fearing men of old, yet always in human form, since they could receive him in no other way.

When they, in turn, had sown the seeds of true religion among many, an entire nation appeared, sprung from the Hebrews and practicing the true religion. To them, through the prophet Moses, he revealed images and symbols of a mystical Sabbath and of circumcision, as well as instruction in other spiritual principles, but no complete revelation of the mysteries, for they were still bound by old practices. Yet when their law became famous and penetrated everywhere like a fragrant breeze, the minds of most of the heathen were moderated by lawgivers and philosophers. Savage brutality changed into mildness, so that profound peace, friendship, and easy communication prevailed.

Then at last, when all humanity throughout the world was now ready to receive knowledge of the Father, that same divine Word of God appeared at the beginning of the Roman Empire in the form of a man, of a nature like ours, whose deeds and sufferings accorded with the prophecies that a man who was also God would do extraordinary deeds and teach all nations the worship of the Father. They also predicted the miracle of his birth, his new teaching, the wonder of his deeds, the manner of his death, his resurrection from the dead, and, finally, his restoration to heaven by the power of God. Through inspiration by the Holy Spirit, the prophet Daniel described his final sovereignty in human terms:

As I looked, thrones were placed and an Ancient of Days was seated. His clothing was white as snow and his hair like pure wool. His throne was a flame of fire. . . . A thousand thousand

3. Eusebius combines the description of the *nephilim* (Gen. 6:4) with the account of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9).

ministered to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. . . . I looked, and behold, one like a Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven before the Ancient of Days. To him was given dominion, glory, and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His is an everlasting sovereignty that shall not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed [Dan. 7:9-10, 13-14].

Clearly this could not apply to anyone but our Savior, the God-Word who was in the beginning with God, called "Son of Man" because of his ultimate incarnation. But since I have collected the prophecies concerning our Savior Jesus Christ in special commentaries, let this suffice.

The Names Jesus and Christ Known Earlier

3. The very names *Jesus* and *Christ* were honored even by the God-loving prophets of old. Moses himself was the first to announce how greatly sanctified and glorious was the name of Christ, using types and symbols in response to the oracle that told him, "Make everything according to the pattern shown you in the mount" [Ex. 25:40]. When describing God's high priest as a man of supreme power, he calls him and his office "Christ" as a mark of honor and glory,⁴ understanding the divine character of "Christ."

He was also inspired by the Holy Spirit to foresee quite clearly the title *Jesus*. Although previously it had never been known, Moses gave the title *Jesus*, again as a type or symbol, only to the man he knew would succeed him after his death.⁵ His successor had been known by another name, Hoshea, which his parents had given him [Num. 13:16], but Moses calls him Jesus—Joshua the son of Nun himself bearing the image of our Savior, who alone after Moses received authority over the true and pure religion. In this way Moses bestows the name of our Savior Jesus Christ as a supreme honor on the two men who in his time surpassed all others in merit and glory: the high priest and the man who would rule after him.

4. The high priest is described as "anointed" in Lev. 4:5, 16 and in 6:22. The words *Christ* and *anointed*, though different in English, are the same in Greek, as translations of the Hebrew *messiach* or "Messiah."

5. Num. 27:12-23 refers to *Joshua*, which is the Greek transliteration of "Jesus."

Later prophets also clearly foretold Christ by name, predicting also the plots against him by the Jewish people and the calling of the Gentiles through him. Jeremiah, for example, says:

The spirit of our face, Christ the Lord, was caught in their pits;
Of whom we said, "In his shadow we shall live among the
Gentiles" [Lam. 4:20].

David, in his perplexity, asks:

Why did the nations rage and the peoples imagine vain things?
The kings of the earth arrayed themselves, and the rulers convened
against the Lord and against his Christ [Ps. 2:1-2].

He adds, speaking in the person of Christ himself:

The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you.
Ask me, and I will give you the Gentiles as your inheritance and
the limits of the world as your possession" [Ps. 2:7-8].

Accordingly, it was not only the high priests, symbolically anointed with oil, who were designated among the Hebrews with the name *Christ*, but also the kings; for by divine directive they too were anointed by the prophets as symbolic Christs, since they carried in themselves the patterns of the regal and sovereign authority of the only true Christ, the divine Word, who rules over all. Similarly, some of the prophets themselves, by anointing, became types of Christ, so that all [three] refer to the true Christ, the divine Word, who is the only High Priest of the universe, the only King of all creation, and the only Archprophet of the Father.

Proof of this is the fact that none of those symbolically anointed of old, whether priest, king, or prophet, ever obtained the sort of divine power our Savior and Lord, Jesus—the only real Christ—demonstrated. None of them, however honored among their own people for so many generations, ever conferred the name *Christian* on their subjects from their symbolic title of *Christ*. None was worshiped by his subjects or held in such esteem after his death as to be ready to die for the person honored. None caused such a stir in all nations throughout the world, since the power of the symbol could not produce such an effect as the reality of our Savior. He did not receive the symbols of high priesthood from anyone or trace his physical descent from priests. Armed forces did not promote his rule, nor did he become a prophet like those of old. Jews accorded him no rank or precedence whatever. Yet he had been adorned with all these by the Father, not in symbols but in truth. Although he did not obtain the honors cited, he is called Christ more than all of them, for he is himself the one true Christ of God who has filled the entire world

with his Christians. He no longer provides patterns or images for his followers but fully revealed truths, and he has received not material chrism but divine anointing by the Spirit of God through sharing in the unbegotten divinity of the Father.

Isaiah teaches this very point when he exclaims, as if Christ were speaking:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind [Isa. 61:1-2].

And not only Isaiah but David also refers to him in saying:

Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever:

Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity.

You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

Therefore God, your God, has anointed you

With the oil of gladness above your fellows [Ps. 45:6-7].

The first verse calls him God, the second accords him a royal scepter. Honored with divine and royal attributes, he is presented, in the third place, as having become Christ, anointed not with material oil but divine, and far superior to his physically anointed predecessors. Elsewhere too the same writer explains his status:

The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand

Till I make your enemies your footstool. . . .

From the womb before the morning star, I begot you."

The Lord swore and will not rescind: "You are a priest forever of the order of Melchizedek" [Ps. 110:1-4].

This Melchizedek is defined in the sacred books as priest of the most high God without his having received any material anointing or even as belonging to the Hebrew priesthood. That is why our Savior has been called, under oath, Christ and priest according to his order and not that of others who received symbols and patterns. Nor does the record state that he was anointed physically by the Jews or belonged to the tribe of those who held the priesthood but that he had his existence from God himself before the morning star, that is, before the creation of the world, and holds his priesthood to all eternity.

That his anointing was divine is proved by the fact that he alone, of all who have ever lived, is known throughout the world as Christ and is called thus by Greeks and non-Greeks alike and to

this day is honored by his worshipers throughout the world as King, held in greater awe than a prophet, and glorified as the true and only High Priest of God and above all as the preexistent Word of God, having his being before all ages and worshiped as God. We who are dedicated to him honor him not only with voice and word, but also with all of our soul, so that we value testimony to him more than life itself.

The Antiquity of the True Faith

4. This introduction was necessary lest anyone think of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, as novel, in view of the date of his incarnation, or his teaching new and strange, as crafted by a typical man of recent date. With his recent advent, it was admittedly a new people—neither small, weak, nor remote but the most numerous, pious, and invincible, with God's eternal help—that appeared at the appointed time, honored with the name of Christ. This so amazed one of the prophets when he foresaw the future through the eye of the Holy Spirit that he exclaimed:

Who has ever heard such things? And who spoke thus?

Was the earth in labor but one day, and was a nation born at once?

[Isa. 66:8].

The same writer also hints at its future name, saying, "Those who serve me shall be called by a new name, which shall be blessed on the earth" [Isa. 65:15-16].

But although we are new and this clearly fresh name of Christians has only recently become known among all nations, our life, conduct, and religious principles are no recent invention of ours but stem from the natural concepts of men of old who were the friends of God, as we will demonstrate. The Hebrews are not a new people but are known by all and honored for their antiquity. Now their oral and written records deal with men of an early age, few and scarce in number yet outstanding in piety, righteousness, and other virtues. Some of them lived before the Flood, others after—Noah's children and descendants—but Abraham in particular, whom the Hebrews boast as their own founder and ancestor. All of these credited for righteousness, going back from Abraham to the first man, could be described as Christians in fact if not in name, without exceeding the truth. For the name means that the Christian, through the knowledge and teaching of Christ, excels in self-control and righteousness, in discipline and virtue, and in the confession of the one and only God over all, and in all this they showed no less zeal than we.

They had no interest in bodily circumcision, nor do we; nor for keeping the Sabbaths, nor do we; nor for abstaining from some foods or other distinctions that Moses first delivered to their successors to be observed as symbols, nor do such things concern Christians now. But clearly they knew the Christ of God, since he appeared to Abraham, taught Isaac, spoke to Israel [Jacob], and conversed with Moses and the later prophets, as I have shown. Therefore you will find that these God-loving men even received the name of Christ, according to the word regarding them: "Touch not my Christs, and do no wickedness among my prophets" [Ps. 105:15]. Clearly then, the recent proclamation of Christ's teaching to all nations is none other than the very first and most ancient of all religions discovered by Abraham and those lovers of God who followed him. Even if they argue that Abraham long afterward received the command for circumcision, I reply that before this he had been deemed righteous through faith, as the divine Word says: "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" [Gen. 15:6]. The oracle given him before his circumcision by the God who showed himself to him—Christ himself, the Word of God—dealt with those who in the future would be justified in the same way as he and ran as follows: "In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" [Gen. 12:3]. And: "He shall become a great and mighty nation, and in him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" [Gen. 18:18].

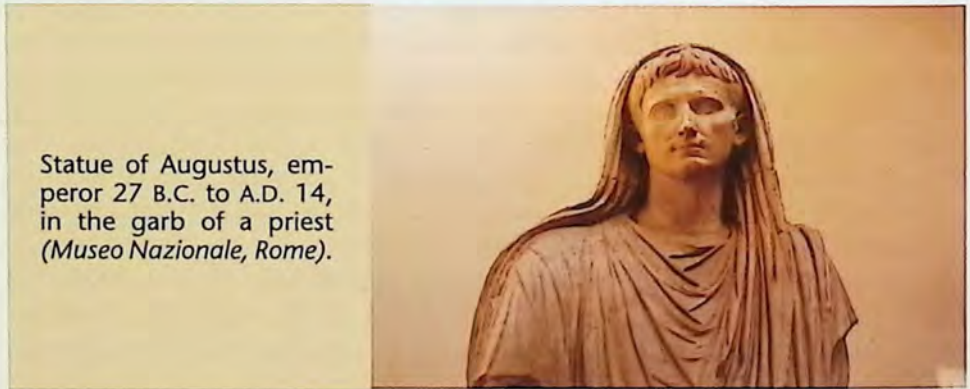
Now this has obviously been fulfilled in us, for it was by faith in the Word of God, the Christ who had appeared to him, that he was made righteous and gave up the superstition of his fathers to confess the one God, the God over all, serving him by right conduct and not by the law of Moses, who came later. To him, as he was then, it was said that all nations would be blessed in him. And currently, in deeds louder than words, Christians alone across the world practice their faith in the very way that Abraham practiced it. Accordingly, Christ's followers share the same life and religion as the God-loving men of old, and thus Christ's teaching is not new or strange but, in all honesty, ancient, unique, and true.

Jesus' Birth and the End of the Jewish Dynasty

5. Now then, after this necessary introduction to my *Church History*, let us begin with the appearance of our Savior in the flesh, first invoking God, the Father of the Word, and Jesus Christ himself to assist us in producing a truthful narrative. It was in the forty-second year of the reign of Augustus and the twenty-eighth after the conquest of Egypt and the deaths of

Antony and Cleopatra,⁶ the last of the Ptolemaic dynasty, that our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, was born in Bethlehem of Judea in accordance with the prophecies concerning him. This was at the time of the first census, which took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, a registration mentioned also by Flavius Josephus, the most famous of the Hebrew historians, who adds an account of the Galilean sect that arose at the same time, to which our own Luke refers in the Acts:

After him arose Judas the Galilean at the time of the census. He persuaded some of the people to follow him. But he too perished, and all his followers were scattered [Acts 5:37].



Statue of Augustus, emperor 27 B.C. to A.D. 14, in the garb of a priest (*Museo Nazionale, Rome*).

The historian previously cited [Josephus] supports the above in *Antiquities*, Book 18:

Quirinius, a member of the senate who had passed through all the other offices to become consul and was a man of high distinction in other ways, arrived in Syria with a small staff. He had been sent by Caesar to govern the nation and to assess their property. . . . Judas, a Gaulonite from the city called Gamala, took with him Zadok, a Pharisee, and incited a revolt, for they claimed that the assessment would lead to nothing but total slavery, and they called on the people to defend their freedom.⁷

6. Eusebius calculates Augustus's reign as beginning with the death of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., hence 2 B.C. for the birth of Jesus, which accords also with twenty-eight years after the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra in 30 B.C. This date, however, is too late, since Jesus was born in 4 B.C. at the latest and most probably in 5 B.C.

7. *Antiquities* 18.1, 4. The census causing Judas's revolt took place in A.D. 6, ten years after Jesus' birth, a chronological problem long debated among scholars.

And in the second book of his *Jewish War*, he writes about the same man:

At this time a Galilean named Judas stirred the natives to revolt, naming them cowards if, after serving God, they accepted mortal masters and submitted to paying taxes to the Romans.⁸

6. At this time Herod was the first foreigner to become king of the Jewish nation, fulfilling Moses' prophecy that "A ruler shall not be wanting from Judah, nor a leader from his loins, until he comes for whom it is reserved" [Gen. 49:10]. Moses also states that he will be "the expectation of the Gentiles." This prediction could not be fulfilled as long as the Jews lived under rulers of their own race, beginning with Moses and continuing down to Augustus's reign. In his time, however, the Romans awarded the government of the Jews to Herod, the first foreigner. Josephus states that he was an Idumean on his father's side and an Arab on his mother's, but [Julius] Africanus—no ordinary historian—claims that Antipater, Herod's father, was the son of a certain Herod of Ascalon, one of the servants in the temple of Apollo. As a child, this Antipater was captured by Idumean bandits and stayed with them because his father was too poor to pay his ransom. He was brought up in their customs and later befriended by the Jewish high priest Hyrcanus. His [Antipater's] son was the Herod of our Savior's time.



The Mediterranean seafront at Ashkelon, where Herod the Great was born in 73 B.C. At lower left are ruins of the ancient Philistine city.

8. *Jewish War* 2.118.

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