

JOSEPHUS MISDATED THE CENSUS OF QUIRINIUS

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An enduring challenge for those reconstructing historical dates for the life of Jesus has been the date for the census of Quirinius because the Gospel-writer Luke and the first-century Jewish historian Josephus differ on its date. Luke, when read consistently with Matthew, dates the birth of Jesus to both the reign of Herod the Great (Luke 1:5, cf. Matthew 2:19–22) and a census under Quirinius (Luke 2:1–2). Josephus, on the other hand, reports that Quirinius conducted his census long after Herod's death, at the exile of Herod's son Herod Archelaus. So, either Luke or Josephus—at least as usually construed—must be wrong.

For more than a century, the consensus has grown in favor of the account of the census given by Josephus. In 1988, Daniel Schwartz of Jerusalem's Hebrew University declared, “[I]t seems fair to say that the scholarly consensus today, shared even by many conservative Christian scholars, is that Luke is wrong.”¹ For, as Luke Timothy Johnson asserts, “on the basis of exhaustive research, Luke's dates seem to be out of kilter: Quirinius and the census under him do not match the other dates.”² When faced with such conflicting accounts, reconstructing history consists in establishing the most plausible, rather than the absolutely certain, account of what really happened. The scholars who share this consensus find the Josephus account more plausible than the account provided by Luke.

Before offering a challenge to this consensus, significant evidence in its support must be admitted. First of all, while Luke's gospel refers to this census with only one sentence, Josephus relates a detailed narrative of the events surrounding the census: Quirinius was sent into the region on the twofold mission to take the census and to secure the property of Archelaus at the time of his exile. Second, Josephus asserts an explicit date for this census—in the 37th year from Caesar's defeat of Antony at Actium in 31 BC, that is, in AD 6 (*Ant.* XVIII, 26–28). Finally, Luke's one sentence *suggesting* that Quirinius was the governor of Syria at the time of the Jesus' birth adds a further complication since Josephus reports that Varus was governor of Syria from the last years of Herod the Great until after Herod's death and that Saturninus

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¹ Daniel R. Schwartz, “On Quirinius, John the Baptist, the Benedictus, Melchizedek, Qumran and Ephesus,” *RevQ* 13 (1988) 635.

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Sacra Pagina 3; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991) 49.

was Syria's governor before Varus.³ Consequently, without an *a priori* assumption of Luke's accuracy, this evidence lends greater plausibility to the account of Josephus.

Moreover, the plausibility of the account from Josephus finds further support in the circumstantial evidence in support of AD 6 for the census. This date matches the consular year that Cassius Dio reports for the exile of Archelaus (*Roman History* 55.22, 6). Moreover, assuming this date of AD 6 for his exile, the start of Archelaus's reign as ethnarch seems to match the start of the tetrarchies of his two brothers—apparently with the death of his father—in 4 BC: Josephus reports that Archelaus ruled 10 years before his exile (*Ant.* 17.342 or 9 years according to *J.W.* 2.111) that Antipas, whose latest extant coins were minted in his 43rd year, ruled until the second year of Gaius or AD 38/39 (*Ant.* 18.238), and that Philip died after ruling 37 years apparently in AD 33/34, the 20th year of Tiberius (*Ant.* 18.106). In fact, the only competing *explicit* date for this census still extant from antiquity is the one provided by Eusebius, who, writing his *Church History* in about AD 320—more than two centuries after Josephus—asserts that this census occurred in Augustus's 42nd year and the 28th year from Actium, or 3/2 BC (*Church History* 1.5). This date, which conveniently has Jesus at 30 years old in the 15th year of Tiberias—as suggested by Luke (Luke 3:1, 23)—still postdates the reconstructed date of 4 BC for Herod's death.⁴ So, even if Eusebius were right, Luke would still, apparently, be wrong in placing the census during the time of Herod the Great. So, in addition to its more substantial treatment of the census and its date, with its seemingly snugger fit with other historical data, the consensus has maintained its claim for greater plausibility than the account provided by Luke.

This study will challenge the consensus. However, unlike most recent attempts to vindicate Luke by seeking to reconcile Luke's account with the standard construal of Josephus, this study will directly challenge the plausibility of the consensus itself.⁵ Specifically, this study will argue on the basis of source criticism that the most plausible history underlying Josephus's narrative and the sources on which he relies do not actually fit the sequence of events as construed by the consensus. Without reference to Luke or other Christian sources, this study will advance source-critical arguments similar to those made a century ago by Theodor Zahn, W. Lodder, Friedrich Spitta,

³ According to Luke 2:2, Quirinius was exercising hegemony over Syria. Luke uses the participle, ἡγεμονεύοντος, which was translated into the English of the King James Bible and later versions as "was governor," however, this specificity in identifying the office held by Quirinius is not required by the Greek participle used by Luke.

⁴ Recently, arguments have been made in defense of a 1 BC date for Herod's death. For one recent argument with references to the further discussion, see Andrew Steinmann, "When Did Herod the Great Reign?" in *NovT* 51 (2009) 1–29.

⁵ For a helpful catalogue of approaches to this problem which focus on Luke's text see Stanley Porter, "The Reasons for the Lukan Census," in *Paul, Luke and the Graeco-Roman World: Essays in Honour of Alexander J. M. Wedderburn* (ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn and Alf Christophersen; London/New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 165–88.

and W. Weber, even though this study was largely completed unwitting of their previous work.⁶

This study, like those conducted by the earlier scholars, will argue that the account which Josephus tells of the census conducted by Quirinius, and the corresponding revolt by Judas the Galilean, is actually a mistaken duplication, broadly speaking, of events which occurred much earlier. In fact, this study goes beyond those of Zahn, Spitta, and Weber by arguing that the census began before Herod the Great's death. In other words, this study will offer a new reconstruction of the history based on the sources on which Josephus relied, a reconstruction which will be both more plausible than the standard construal of Josephus and also vindicate Luke.

I. SOURCE CRITICISM OF JOSEPHUS

During the last twenty-five years, Daniel Schwartz and others have developed some fruitful insights into the historiography of Josephus which have highlighted the susceptibility of Josephus to mistaken duplications and to reporting contemporaneous events from different sources as if they happened at different times. For example, Schwartz has argued that the embassy of Agrippa I to Judea in AD 38 under Claudius, reported at *Ant.* 18.238–39, was mistakenly duplicated, based on a different source, at *Ant.* 19.292–99 as if it were Agrippa's arrival a few years later as the ruler of Judea.⁷ Again, he argues that the trip of Vitellius to Jerusalem in order to dismiss Pontius Pilate reported at *Ant.* 18.90–95 was mistakenly duplicated in *Ant.* 18.122–26 as a trip occurring in the following year.⁸ This second example displays the fruitfulness of this source-critical approach since the standard reading resulted in the historically unsatisfying conclusion that either Pilate's reportedly rushed return to Rome still took a year or that the message of Tiberius's death took at least seven weeks to reach Vitellius, the governor of Syria. As Schwartz argues, a mistaken duplication is a simpler, more cogent, and more plausible explanation of the underlying sources than either conclusion based on the standard reading. Since this study similarly seeks to answer a question of actual chronology, it follows Schwartz's approach which has produced admirable results.

⁶ I commend this earlier work to the reader, especially that of Lodder whose work this study has largely affirmed. This study will, especially in its final section, highlight evidence and conclusions also used and reached by these authors. I will cite them directly when their studies provide specifically helpful additional discussion. T. Zahn, "Die Syrische Statthalterschaft und die Schätzung des Quirinius," *NKZ* 4 (1893); W. Lodder, *Die Schätzung des Quirinius bei Flavius Josephus. Eine Untersuchung: Hat Sich Flavius Josephus in der Datierung der Bekannten Schätzung (Luk. 2,2) Geirrt?* (Leipzig: Dörrfling & Franke, 1930); F. Spitta, "Die Chronologische Notizen und die Hymnen in Lc 1 U. 2," *ZNW* 7 (1906); W. Weber, "Der Census des Quirinius nach Josephus," *ZNW* 10 (1909).

⁷ D. R. Schwartz, *Agrippa I: The Last King of Judaea* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1990) 11–14; cf. idem, "Pontius Pilate's Appointment to Office and the Chronology of Josephus' *Antiquities*, Books 18–20," in *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity: Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*, 60 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992) 197–98.

⁸ D. R. Schwartz, "Pontius Pilate's Suspension" 202–17.

The historiography of Josephus. This study builds on the following insights into the historiographic method of Josephus reconstructed by Schwartz and others.⁹ First, Josephus organized his history along the skeleton provided by Judean rulers, giving the ruler's central events first supplemented by other events that occurred during that reign, and, if a delay occurs between the ruler's appointment and his taking office, Josephus presented "other" material before that ruler's central events. In other words, Josephus apparently pre-sorted the events recorded in his sources by Judean ruler before he began to rely on them in writing his history. Furthermore, since Josephus supplements his history with long background narratives based on their usefulness to his narrative focus rather than their chronological beginning or ending, chronological overlaps are at times evident. Finally, through comparison with known sources, it has been shown that, in *Antiquities*, Josephus often marked a change of source with a phrase such as "at this time" or "and this was the reason." This reconstructed methodology has sought to vindicate Josephus since one standard history has criticized that the last few books of *Antiquities* "seem to have been written in weariness" and that "the sources are often employed not only negligently, but also—at least, where it is possible to check them—with great freedom and arbitrariness."¹⁰ Schwartz has argued, to the contrary, that his reconstructed methodology explains chronologically the placement of all but two pericopes within the period of the Roman governors from AD 4 to AD 66.¹¹ So while these insights into the methodology of Josephus may disclose mistaken duplications, they also serve to vindicate Josephus from the charge of arbitrariness and negligence.

Sources used by Josephus. In addition to these insights into the methodology of Josephus, Schwartz's work has also provided identities for some of his likely sources for this time-period. In writing his first account, *Jewish War*, Josephus relied not only on Nicolaus of Damascus but also had a source sympathetic to Antipas as well as a history likely coming from Philo.¹² Then, in *Antiquities*, he supplemented the narrative he based on these sources with, at least, another narrative source sympathetic to Agrippa I.¹³ Josephus also inserted references from a high priest succession list into his *Antiquities* narrative at points which he judged most fitting, especially if precise dating was unknown.¹⁴ Naturally, other yet unidentified sources are also possible. So, in addition to a reconstructed methodology of how Josephus worked, this study

⁹ Daniel R. Schwartz, "Kata Touton Ton Kairon: Josephus' Source on Agrippa II.," *JQR* 72/4 (1982); H. G. M. Williamson, "Historical Value of Josephus' Jewish Antiquities 11:297–301," *JTS* 28 (1977).

¹⁰ Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135): A New English Version* (rev. and ed. Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973) 1.58. Hereafter, *SVM*.

¹¹ Schwartz, "Pontius Pilate's Appointment" 194. Schwartz argued in "Kata Touton Ton Kairon" that one of these two pericopes reflected a confusion Josephus was having with his sources. The other unexplained pericope is the famous statement about the rebel Theudas.

¹² Schwartz, *Agrippa I*.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Schwartz, "Pontius Pilate's Suspension" 213.

will assume that Josephus was using these main sources whose characteristics Schwartz has identified.

II. JUDAS AND JOAZAR: CANDIDACY FOR SOURCE CRITICISM

With this method and these sources in mind, it becomes possible to better investigate the history of events underlying the narrative reported by Josephus. For it must be remembered that Josephus relied on limited sources which he used in order to suit the purpose of the history he wanted to tell. Since neither he nor most of his sources were infallible, fideism is not, and should not be, the historian's first and only move. Moreover, despite the fact that this time period—between the death of Herod the Great and the rebellion of AD 66 to 73—reflects the times memorable to grandparents, parents, and others known to Josephus, this time period, chapters 18–20 of *Antiquities*, has posed a significant challenge to historical reconstruction. As mentioned above, the standard account suggested Josephus used his sources for this period negligently and with arbitrariness. Consequently, this investigation follows Schwartz and others in seeking to redeem Josephus from this charge of arbitrariness, albeit at the expense of adopting methodological fideism.

This study was prompted by the similarity of three descriptions of an insurgent or insurgents named Judas active during the relevant time period, each associated with ostensibly conflicting accounts of the high priest Joazar:

First account (*Ant.* 17.148–67): A narrative of a Judas son of the Sepphorean¹⁵ who gathers a group of young disciples around himself and a teacher named Matthias teaching zeal for the law of Moses and the expectation of lasting reward in the face of death. Judas and his followers raid Herod's Temple to tear down an eagle from its gate and are captured. Herod the Great orders those directly involved to be burned alive. Herod also deposes the previous high priest and promotes Joazar apparently in response to this insurrectionist activity.

Second account (*Ant.* 17.269–85): A catalogue of disturbances plaguing Judea—reported while Archelaus is in Rome seeking confirmation of his father's will—mentions that Judas the Galilean, son of Hezekiah, active around Sepphoris, Galilee raised an insurrection to raid Herod's army. Josephus reports that Archelaus deposes Joazar both before and after his trip to Rome, and for different reasons.

Third account (*J.W.* 2.117–18; *Ant.* 18.4–23): A teacher named Judas the Galilean—who gathered a group of disciples around himself and another teacher named Sadducand who focused on zeal for the law of Moses and willingness to die in the expectation of lasting reward—raised a revolt against the taxation tied to the census of Quirinius. Josephus reports that the high priest Joazar persuaded the people to go along with the census, and Quirinius deposes Joazar before the census is complete. Josephus reported no reappointment for Joazar.

The last two accounts are linked by referring to Judas as Galilean, and the first and third accounts are linked by the similarity in the religious activity

¹⁵ We will have reason for considering this patronymic in more detail below.

attributed to Judas, in partnership with another teacher.¹⁶ As will be later developed, the first and second accounts are also related by reference to Sephoris and the father of Judas. If the three accounts reflect the activity of the same Judas, and if each account is accurate, the activity must have occurred before the death of Herod the Great, given that in the first account Herod orders the execution of Judas.

This possibility of mistaken duplication in these accounts also prompted the studies mentioned earlier. Zahn, followed by Spitta and Weber, argued that the second two accounts reflect the activity of the same Judas shortly after the death of Herod the Great. Lodder went farther and, as this study will do, argues that all three accounts reflect the activity of the same Judas. The arguments of Zahn were dismissed by Schürer on two accounts: one, that “the stories of the two rebellions of Judas are so different” that “the theory of a mistaken duplication is unjustifiable” and two that “Josephus is so well informed on the history of the High Priests” that Zahn’s “theory of mistaken duplication is unjustifiable.”¹⁷ The first response concerning Judas seems off-point since this study, like those which came before it, will argue that these rebellions are the activity of the same man, not the same activity. The second response, concerning the high priesthood also seems to fail. Seth Schwartz of Hebrew University, Jerusalem has labeled the attempts of both E. Mary Smallwood and Ernst Bammel to reconstruct the rationale for reappointments and dismissals “fantastic elaborations of Josephus’ paltry and self-contradictory narrative about Joazar.”¹⁸ James VanderKam responded to Smallwood’s reconstruction by averring, “It is more difficult to understand why Quirinius would have deposed the high priest who had just proved so helpful in making the census palatable to Judeans.”¹⁹ Despite the dismissive attitude of its critics, these accounts still warrant source-critical attention.

Therefore, this study will examine the relevant texts of *Antiquities of the Jews* in light of the recent insights into Josephan methodology to determine whether source-criticism might support this suspicion of mistaken duplication. This study will first assume that the evident parallelism between the accounts of *Jewish War* and *Antiquities*, even with parallel shifts in sources, was not coincidental but the result of Josephus intentional reworking his earlier narrative in light of the original sources. Second, this study will seek to identify where Josephus shifts his reliance to a different source and, as much as possible, the identity of these sources. It will then argue on the basis of these results why Josephus located each account where he did within his narrative and why understanding all the accounts as reflecting activity dur-

¹⁶ For the taxation revolt, Josephus labels Judas as a Galilean in *J.W.* 2.118 but a Gaulonite in *Ant.* 18.4. The Galilean label, however, receives some confirmation from Luke in Acts 5:37.

¹⁷ *SVM* 1.425.

¹⁸ Seth Schwartz, *Josephus and Judaean Politics* (New York: Brill, 1990) 60, n. 7; cf. E. Mary Smallwood, “High Priests and Politics in Roman Palestine,” *JTS* 13 (1962) 20–21; Ernst Bammel, “Joazar,” *ZDPV* 90 (1974).

¹⁹ James C. VanderKam. *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004) 419.

ing the last days of Herod the Great becomes the more plausible explanation of these accounts.

First account: last days of Herod. As we will see, source criticism of the first account, *Ant.* 17.148–67, will disclose two important facts necessary for historical reconstruction. First, the account of the raid on Herod’s temple to tear the eagle down from its gate stems from a separate source than the source which reports Herod’s death and his preparation for death. Second, the report of the promotion of Joazar to the high priesthood stems from the high priest succession list and not one of the main narrative sources. Consequently, we will not need to conclude that Joazar was promoted to the high priesthood after the eagle-raid insurrection, at the time when Judas was executed.

First, the raid on Herod’s temple to tear down the eagle from its gate stems from a different source than the main narrative. Josephus marks off this account, *Ant.* 17.148–67, from the foreground narrative through his use of the discourse marker, διὰ τοιαύτην αἰτίαν, “on account of such a reason.”²⁰ Moreover, Josephus establishes an *inclusio* in both *J.W.* and *Ant.*, by resuming at *Ant.* 17.168 and *J.W.* 1.656 his discussion of Herod’s worsening malaise. So, in the foreground narrative, Josephus had been relying on one source which reported the last days of Herod the Great, his worsening illness, his pursuit of a cure, and Antipater’s attempt to bribe his way out of jail, etc. From another source, Josephus then introduced this first Judas account as a background narrative to characterize one cause of Herod’s distress. Consequently, the exact chronological placement of the narrative is uncertain beyond the fact that Herod executed the insurgents and that Josephus believed this execution occurred shortly before Herod’s death. Josephus provided the first account of Judas as background information on the last days of Herod the Great for which he was otherwise relying on a separate source.

Moreover, in support of this conclusion, we can hazard a reasoned inference on the sources which Josephus was using. The foreground narrative provides a somewhat negative and unsympathetic portrait of Herod during his last days. It not only reports his worsening health but also reports his plan to have, at the time of his death, the leaders of major families massacred in the Hippodrome in order to provoke national mourning. It further favorably features Herod’s sister Salome—who later in Rome would side with Antipas against Archelaus, Herod’s choice of successor—and highlights, when reporting Herod’s will, that Herod was in sounder mind when he had left the kingdom to Antipas. So, we presume that this foreground narrative relies on the Antipas source identified by Schwartz. The background narrative about the Judas insurrection, on the other hand, is sympathetic to Herod. Although it reports the activity of Judas and his colleague Matthias as rabbis zealous for the Law of Moses, it also highlights Herod’s speech in which he portrays his own building of the temple as worship—in contrast to the rebels’ sacrilege in tearing the eagle from its gate. Moreover, this background narrative shows Herod having mercy

²⁰ H. G. M. Williamson, “The Historical Value of Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities* XI. 297–301,” *JTS* 28 (1977) 49–66.

on the crowds, only punishing those who were directly involved in the revolt. Since this point of view, sympathetic to Herod, matches our expectation for Herod's friend Nicolaus of Damascus, we conclude that it originates from this other known source. The shift in sources initially identified on the basis of the discourse marker is affirmed by each suspected source having its own coherent point of view.

Second, in addition to these two main narrative sources, Josephus also introduces within the background narrative, at *Ant.* 17.164b–66, information regarding the promotion of Joazar to high priest. Josephus marks this new material off from the Nicolaus of Damascus source through an *inclusio* defined by a reference to Herod's removal of Matthias, not the insurgent, from the high priesthood in both *Ant.* 17.164 and 17.167. Furthermore, some of this material which has no counterpart in *Jewish War* suggests that it stems from his use of a high priest succession list.²¹ Since this reference to Herod's promotion of Joazar comes from a different source than Nicolaus of Damascus, it is possible that the promotion of Joazar was tied to a different insurrection than the one that resulted in the death of Judas. As was his custom, Josephus introduced the information from the high priest succession list in the point of his narrative in which it seemed to best fit. The promotion of Joazar to high priest need not have resulted from the eagle-raid insurrection which resulted in the death of the first Judas.

Still, consideration of the account of Herod's funeral demonstrates that Josephus was not acting arbitrarily either in his introduction of this promotion of Joazar or in his introduction of the Judas narrative from Nicolaus of Damascus into his report of Herod's last days. Indeed, Josephus reports that one of the causes of unrest and disturbance at the time of Herod's funeral was the fact that mourners of Judas and Matthias took Herod's death as vindication for the cause of their Rabbis (*Ant.* 17.206, 213). In fact, these mourners of Judas and Matthias demanded that Archelaus remove the high priest from office whom Herod had installed, a demand to which Archelaus apparently agreed (*Ant.* 17.207–208). So, since the followers of Judas and Matthias were still mourning them during Herod's funeral and since they were demanding the removal of the high priest, Josephus had reason to connect the promotion of Joazar to the eagle-raid insurrection which occurred shortly before Herod's death, even though the sources need not have made the connection between Joazar's promotion and this particular insurrection.

Before continuing to the second account of an insurrectionist Judas, it will be helpful to identify, as much as possible, the sources which Josephus was using in this account of the funeral. As the funeral account begins, Josephus seems to be relying on Nicolaus of Damascus for the foreground, or main, story line, *Ant.* 17.200–205, 213–23. This shift to relying on Nicolaus rather than the Antipas source for the foreground narrative corresponds to the start of *J.W.* Book 2. Josephus then introduces an account of the Passover disturbances, *Ant.* 17.206–12, from an unknown source, marked by the phrase, "Ev

²¹ Josephus seems to have further supplemented this account by a story for why another high priest substituted for Matthias for one day, marked off at *Ant.* 166 with "αἰτία δ' ἕστων ἦδε."

τούτω, “at this time.” Although the resumption, at *Ant.* 17.213, of reliance on the Nicolaus source is unmarked, the events reported in *Ant.* 17.213–18 clearly reflect the same activity, from a slightly different perspective, as the Passover disturbances just described by the unknown source. Further vindication for identifying Nicolaus as the source for the foreground material will be presented in the next section.

Second account: A catalogue of disturbances. Turning to the second account of an insurrectionist Judas, we will see that source criticism of *Ant.* 17.269–85 discloses reasons for considering this rebel to be the same Judas active before the death of Herod.²² First of all, we will see that this account once again serves as part of a background narrative stemming from a different source than the one on which Josephus had been relying. For example, its temporal sweep goes, at least with respect to the future, beyond the scope of its placement within the foreground narrative. Secondly, we will see that comparison of the activity of Governor Varus of Syria in this background narrative with his activity which Josephus reports elsewhere suggests that Judea was facing disturbances before Herod’s death. Consequently, the possibility will arise that—even though this account seems to recount activity after the death of Herod the Great—the Judas the Galilean attack on Herod’s armory may have actually occurred prior to the Herod’s death.

Again, Josephus introduces the catalogue of disturbances, which includes the account of Judas the Galilean’s raid on the armory, as a background narrative from a new source. He uses both a discourse marker, ἐντούτω, “at this time,” and an *inclusio* formed through repetition of the claim that Judea was filled with insurrections in order to set it apart, *Ant.* 17.269–85 and *J.W.* 2.55–65. In the foreground narrative, *Ant.* 17.250–68 resuming in 17.286–98, Josephus reported that while Archelaus was in Rome, Caesar received a letter from Varus, reporting on a revolt of the Jews, apparently provoked by Sabinus, Caesar’s procurator for Syrian affairs who had been seeking to secure Herod’s property by force. Josephus then reports from a separate source this account of four different insurgencies, including the one by Judas, which were reportedly representative of the ten thousand occurring in Judea “at that time.” Consequently, the historical chronology of the reference to Judas in the catalogue of disturbances must be considered open since it does not come from the same source reporting the events in Judea after Herod’s death and after the departure of Archelaus to Rome.

Indeed, it immediately becomes clear that this catalogue of disturbances cannot be interpreted as simply recounting various revolts occurring in Judea while Archelaus was in Rome since it reports the end of the final disturbance as occurring *after* Archelaus had been installed as ethnarch upon his return. In other words, this catalogue of disturbances is clearly a case of Josephus

²² While it goes beyond the scope of this paper to argue for a particular source, we have reason to suspect that the source for this catalogue of disturbances is the same as the unidentified source for the Passover disturbances. Lodder, *Schätzung des Quirinius* 11, observed that the phrase, ἐπὶ μέγα, occurs almost exclusively in *Antiquities* in books 15b to 19. In book 17, Josephus uses this phrase ten times, three times in the Passover pericope and five times the catalogue of disturbances.

linking a long background narrative to a narrative focus point rather than its chronological beginning or ending. So, since the end of the catalogue postdates its placement within the narrative in which Archelaus was still in Rome, the question arises whether the start of the catalogue also predates its placement in the narrative referring to disturbances possibly even before the death of Herod.

However, addressing this question requires consideration of the two main narrative accounts of the disturbances in Judea after Herod's funeral as well as the activity of Syria's governor, Varus, and Caesar's procurator of Syrian affairs, Sabinus. Josephus first reports the travel of Varus and Sabinus in *Ant.* 17.219–23 paralleled in *J.W.* 2.14–19. In the wake of the previously mentioned Passover disturbances after Herod's funeral, Josephus reports that Archelaus went to Caesarea where he encountered Sabinus hastening the other way to Judea to take charge of Herod's property in Caesar's name. Then Varus arrived to persuade Sabinus to hold off. Afterwards, Archelaus sailed from Caesarea toward Rome while Varus returned to Antioch. However, Sabinus reportedly then went to Judea anyway, seized Herod's palace and sought control over all of Herod's effects.

In the second account of post-funeral activity and political travel, Josephus reports, *Ant.* 17.250–55 and *J.W.* 2.39–42, that Varus, who was *already in Judea after Archelaus sailed*, punished the authors of a great disturbance and restrained sedition before returning to Antioch, leaving one legion behind in Jerusalem. Then Sabinus, after Varus returned to Antioch, either stayed behind (ὕπομείνας, *Ant.* 17.252) or arrived (ἔπελθὼν, *J.W.* 2.41) and began seizing Herod's property, taking command of the legion left by Varus. As Pentecost approached, that is, less than 50 days after Herod's funeral at the time of the Passover, Sabinus was under siege in Jerusalem and writing to Varus who was again back in Antioch, for help.

These two accounts of political travel defy straightforward historical reconstruction. If the two accounts of Varus travelling from Judea to Antioch, *Ant.* 17.222 and 17.251, refer to the same trip, how can it be that in the first account Varus apparently returns to Antioch after being with Archelaus in Caesarea *before* Archelaus set sail for Rome while in the second account Varus returns to Antioch after being in Judea fighting off a disturbance *after* Archelaus sails? Yet, if the two accounts refer to two trips, then different problems arise. First of all, fifty days seems to be insufficient time to account for all the activity: Varus would have been in Caesarea with Archelaus shortly after Passover, persuaded Sabinus to stop his rush to Judea, traveled from Caesarea to Antioch after Archelaus sailed, then went back to Judea with at least a legion in order to suppress a major disturbance and then returned again to Antioch, before Sabinus arrives in Judea in order to seize Herod's property, to get into his own battles, and to finally find himself under siege writing to Varus back in Antioch for help at the time of Pentecost. Moreover, according to this reconstruction Sabinus would have "immediately," διὰ τάχους, gone to Jerusalem to secure Herod's property after Varus left the first time, *J.W.* 2.18, but still waited until after Varus had traveled back and forth from Antioch with his army, suppressed several disturbances, and left again before actually

“arriving” or “remaining” to cause problems. Naturally, whether one assumes that Varus made either one trip or two trips, the shift from reporting that Sabinus “arrived,” as in *J.W.*, to reporting that he “remained,” as in *Ant.*, is a problem.

As we consider sources, we see that the first account likely stems from Nicolaus of Damascus. This report is written from the standpoint of Caesarea, and we know Nicholas was with Archelaus at that time and throughout his trip to Rome. Furthermore, this source-attribution affirms the previous attribution of the foreground narrative of this section to Nicolaus since a connection exists between Archelaus’s humble refusal to take the honor of king until Caesar’s approval in that earlier narrative, *Ant.* 17.202, and the response of the citadel-keepers to Sabinus that they kept the property for Caesar in this one, *Ant.* 17.223. In further support of Nicolaus as the source for the first account, we note that at *Ant.* 17.224 Josephus uses the expression, “At the same time,” κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν, to mark his shift to a new source which was likely his Antipas source since Josephus then reports on the trip of Antipas to Rome and provides details of Antipas’s inner circle. So, we attribute this first account, then, to Nicolaus.

On the other hand, the second account of the travels of Varus and Sabinus likely stemmed from the Antipas source. While the earlier account was written from the point of view of Caesarea, this account was written from the standpoint of Judea and the events there. In addition, this latter account begins with reference to the κύρωσις, or settlement, of affairs, a Greek word which Josephus otherwise uses only three times, two of them in the foreground narrative of Herod’s last days, a narrative which we have already attributed to the Antipas source.²³ So, we attribute this account to the Antipas source.

With these two sources in mind, we conclude that the most likely resolution to the apparent conflicts between them stands in favor of construing the two accounts as each reporting, from its own perspective, the one trip of Varus to Antioch and Sabinus to Jerusalem. One of the challenges noted above for this suggestion was the fact that the second account refers to Varus handling tumult in Judea *after* Archelaus sailed, *Ant.* 251, and before returning to Antioch. However, since this latter account has been credited to the Antipas source—which has an identified penchant for seafaring terms—and here reflects the point of view of Jerusalem, it likely referred not to the actual “sailing” departure of Archelaus from Caesarea by boat but simply his departure from Jerusalem, presumably eventually on to Rome by boat.²⁴ On this reconstruction, the *Jewish War* report of Sabinus “arriving” in Jerusalem after Varus’s departure—apparently to from Caesarea where Varus had tried to restrain him—rather than “remaining,” as in *Antiquities*, was likely the original and matches the earlier account from the Nicolaus source. Perhaps Josephus “corrected” his source to “remaining” because he failed to appreciate that his two sources were reporting the same travel.

²³ According to the Perseus search tool, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.

²⁴ According to Schwartz, the Antipas source “likes to mention seafaring,” for example, verbs of sailing. Schwartz, *Agrippa I* 178.

With this reconstruction in mind, Varus, then, had at least one legion in Judea handling disturbances already at the time of Archelaus' departure from Jerusalem, just slightly more than a week after Herod's death. In other words, Varus likely had his legions in Judea already at the time of the funeral. This conclusion further suggests the likelihood that disturbances occurring already *before* the death of Herod may have been one reason why the unrest at the funeral was "foreseen by Varus" and that "it was manifest that the nation would not be at rest" (*J.W.* 2.40). Moreover, since Varus met with Archelaus in Caesarea before the latter's departure for Rome, he must have at least established enough semblance of peace shortly after Herod's death that he felt he could afford to return to Syria but not enough to keep him from leaving one legion behind. In other words, Varus was not handling one revolt after another while in Judea immediately after Herod's death before returning to Antioch. Instead, it seems likely that Varus had been responding to some uprisings which occurred prior to Herod's death and immediately thereafter.

This harmonization of the travel accounts of Sabinus and Varus will now helpfully inform our consideration of the catalogue of disturbances, including its mention of the Judas active in Galilee. As we noted above, the last insurrection listed—the revolt led by Athrongas who was called a king—overlapped the ethnarchy of Archelaus and so is readily dated to a time after Herod's death and into the first part of his son's reign. Moreover, the catalogue, in describing the prolonged battle between Athrongas's forces against both Romans and the king's men, credits Gratus, one of Herod's generals with subduing one of Athrongas's brothers. When Varus returned to Jerusalem in response to the request of Sabinus under siege, Gratus was one of the generals he dispatched to pursue insurrectionists. The Athrongas revolt dates readily to the time not only after Herod's death but after Archelaus left Judea for Rome.

Before its reference to Athrongas, the catalogue of disturbances discussed Simon who also claimed to be king and burned the royal palace at Jericho before being killed by Gratus. Since Herod reportedly used his Jericho palace during his last weeks, we can reasonably conclude that Simon's revolt also occurred shortly after the death of Herod. This conclusion is supported by Tacitus who in *Histories* 5.9 reported that Simon claimed the crown at the death of Herod and was punished by Varus. This report would also correspond with the role Gratus played under the command of Varus. So, since the period being described during this early stage of the conflict fits the time period between the death of Herod and the start of the ethnarchy of Archelaus, we have reason to believe that these last two disturbances are, in part, reflected in the earlier account of the activity of Varus in returning to Judea while Archelaus was in Rome. Alternatively, perhaps Varus handled the revolt of Simon before he left Judea the first time and engaged the forces of Athrongas and his brothers when he returned.

With this possible chronology of the last two disturbances of the catalogue in mind, we will skip back to its start and look for clues to the chronology of the first two revolts from the catalogue. In the first disturbance, veteran soldiers of Herod's army revolt, and Herod's cousin Archiabus unsuccessfully brought an army against them. Here, we see that Josephus's source describes

this revolt only in relation to Herod the Great. So, having been freed from the assumption that these events must be tied to the post-Herod period, we might reasonably infer that this activity took place during the last days of Herod the Great. Josephus then reports the activity of Judas the son of Hezekiah in Galilee between this event, which may have occurred before Herod's death, and the events which clearly occurred at and right after Herod's death. So, while it is not possible to date the activity of Judas son of Hezekiah based on this catalogue of disturbances alone, being sensitive to Josephus's use of sources, we must be open to the possibility that this insurgency by Judas also occurred before the death of Herod the Great.

Third account: Revolt at the time of the census of Quirinius. Finally, source criticism of Josephus's account of the taxation revolt also discloses a significant reason for suspecting how Josephus may have chronologically misplaced this activity by ten years. In this section, we will focus on the differences apparent between *Jewish War* and *Antiquities* in order to suggest that although Josephus may have originally tied this event to AD 6 in keeping with Coponius as the first post-Archelaus Roman prefect, he later backed off this connection without abandoning the date. We will argue that he should have backed off this connection even further. In the following section, we will consider other implications of this conclusion.

A significant difference immediately appears between how Josephus reports this story in *J.W.* 2.117–18 and how he reports it in *Ant.* 18.1–10. Although the latter account focuses on Quirinius, Josephus makes no mention of either Quirinius or why he came to Judea in *Jewish War* but instead simply reports that the revolt occurred under the administration of Coponius as the first prefect of Judea at the time of Archelaus's exile. In *Antiquities*, Josephus reports significantly more detail concerning the taxation revolt, including the role played by the high priest Joazar in persuading the people to participate with Quirinius in the census. Only much later—even after a brief mention of the *res gestae* of Philip and Antipas—does Josephus at *Ant.* 18.29 mention the prefecture of Coponius, reminding the readers that he arrived with Quirinius.

From these details, we can provisionally surmise how Josephus might have originally organized his narrative, without yet considering either his explicit date for the census or his rationale for the arrival of Quirinius—neither of which is mentioned in *Jewish War*. Although Josephus makes no mention of Quirinius at all in his *Jewish War* report of the taxation revolt, its content is fully explanatory by the assumption that it relies on the same underlying source as the parallel account from *Antiquities*. Postulating that Josephus—who knew Coponius as the first prefect of Judea after Archelaus's exile—had a source, reflected in *Ant.* 18.2, which said that “Coponius, a man of equestrian rank was sent together with [Caesar's man Quirinius] to have dominion over the Jews, with complete authority,” then Josephus might reasonably have reported in *J.W.* 2.117 that Coponius was sent “as a procurator [*epitropos*], having the authority of death put into his hands by Caesar.” In other words, the account from *Jewish War* suggests that Josephus assumed his source was talking about the arrival of Coponius as prefect in AD 6, although the text

as it stands in *Antiquities* does not attribute this purpose to Coponius. The explicit date provided for the census stems from an apparently new source used for *Antiquities*.

Now, based on the reconstructed methodology, we infer that Josephus, in preparation for writing *Jewish War*, had already filed the taxation revolt narrative as an event in the prefecture of Coponius. The source, as reflected in *Antiquities*, does report that Coponius arrived with authority over the Jews. So, in *J.W.* 2.117–18, Josephus links the arrival of Coponius to the start of his reign as the first post-Herodian Roman prefect and mentions the revolt of Judas as occurring at that time. However, in writing *Ant.* 18.1–10, Josephus does not make this same connection between Coponius and Judas but mentions the administration of Coponius only much later, in *Ant.* 18.29. According to Schwartz, this way of reporting events suggests that Josephus no longer considered the taxation revolt as occurring within the reign of Coponius but rather as “other” activity from about the same time—when a delay occurs between the appointment and the installation into office of the new ruler. So, we have reason to suspect that although Josephus originally thought the events occurred under the administration of Coponius, he changed his mind. In writing *Antiquities*, Josephus had an additional source on the basis of which he reported that “after already selling Archelaus’s possessions and while the taxations were reaching an end,” Quirinius deposed Joazar as high priest (*Ant.* 18.26). Perhaps Josephus felt the need to correct his assumption that Coponius immediately took office since, as prefect of Judea, Coponius likely would have had this authority to depose and appoint high priests as exercised by his successor Gratus (*Ant.* 18.34–35). Consequently, it appears that Josephus originally filed the account of the taxation revolt under the administration of Coponius when writing *Jewish War*, but, for whatever reason, changed his mind when writing *Antiquities*.

The question then arises whether the explicit date for the census and the rationale which Josephus provides for the arrival of Quirinius in some way stem from the original assumption rather than as stand-alone facts. This question will be considered as we make the source-critical case for mistaken duplication.

III. THE SOURCE-CRITICAL CASE

We will now argue that, in fact, this third account—like Josephus’s narrative for the start of the reign of Agrippa I according to Daniel Schwartz—reflects a misplaced arrival. First, we will argue that the three accounts of an insurrectionist named Judas actually portray the same man active in the last years of Herod the Great. Next, we will look again at the varying accounts of the High Priest Joazar against this historical backdrop and in light of Josephus’s use of his sources. Then, we will discuss Quirinius and how he fits within Josephus’s narrative of the last days of Herod the Great. Finally, we will argue for the plausibility of this conclusion through an examination of Josephus’s account of the census itself to show how the event may have been misplaced by ten years.

Judas the Galilean. As mentioned briefly above, the iconoclastic Judas of the first account was identified, in part, by reference to his father.²⁵ According to Niese's critical text of *J.W.* 1.648, Josephus identifies the eagle-raid Judas as the son of Sepphoreaos, Ἰούδας υἱὸς Σεπφεραίου, but in the parallel passage of *Ant.* 17.149, as the son of Saripheus, Ἰούδας ὁ Σαριφαίου. However, according to the critical apparatus, textual evidence exists for the Σεπφεραίου reading in some manuscripts of *Antiquities*, but no manuscript evidence for *Jewish War* exists in support of the Saripheus reading—the only variants reflect alternative spellings of Sepphorean with most manuscripts reporting Σεπφωραίου. Comparing the name, Sepphoreaeon, with the name Nazarene or Ναζωραῖος which Luke 18:37, for example, uses for a man from the Galilean town of Nazareth, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Judas of the first account was properly identified as the son of the Sepphorean. This Judas was the son of a famous person who was identified in connection with the Galilean capital, Sepphoris.²⁶ Furthermore, Lodder has argued that a shift from a geographic name, Sepphorean, to the more common family name, Saripheus, is understandable since late Jewish literature makes reference both to the house of Seripha and to the sons of Seripha.²⁷ Regardless, the weight of the textual evidence supports the conclusion that the Judas responsible for the iconoclastic assault on Herod's temple and its offending eagle was known as Judas the son of the Sepphorean.

This highlighted patronymic gives reason to identify the iconoclastic eagle-raid Judas from the first account with the armory-raid Judas of the second account. For, the Judas of the second account is similarly identified by a patronymic: Judas the son of Ezekiah, *Antiquities*, or Hezekiah, *Jewish War*. This Hezekiah was killed by Herod the Great as a Galilean bandit about four decades earlier. Moreover, in the second account, Josephus's source identifies Judas's location as Sepphoris. Consequently, it is not unreasonable to suspect that the Galilean bandit Hezekiah may have been known as the Sepphorean. So, although these inferences are certainly not demonstrative proof, they do warrant the suspicion that these two insurrectionists named Judas, each identified by reference to their Galilean fathers, Hezekiah and the Sepphorean, are the same man.

Now, the consensus, as represented by Schürer, has already been that the Galilean Judas of the second account is identified with the Galilean Judas from the third account who was responsible for the taxation revolt.²⁸ This view maintains that the two accounts report events that occurred ten years apart. However, we now have reason to look more closely at the comparison between the iconoclastic Judas of the first account with the taxation-hating Judas of the third, a comparison which we briefly noted as prompting this source-critical study. This comparison discloses that the teaching of Judas

²⁵ This connection was also noticed by Lodder, who provides a more complete discussion.

²⁶ Cf. Lodder, *Schätzung Des Quirinius*, especially 41–44.

²⁷ "In der spat-jüdischen Literatur ist wohl von einem Beth-Seripha und von Bene-Seripha die Rede" (ibid. 41).

²⁸ *SVM* 1.381: "Judas of Gamala in the Golan, called the Galilean (he is no doubt identical with Judas son of Hezekiah mentioned on p. 332), made it his mission. . . ."

son of the Sepphorean of the first account, as it is presented in *Jewish War*, strongly resembles that of the Judas of the third account from *Antiquities*—both translations by Whiston, with supplement from Josephus’s account of Pharisee doctrine:

There were two men of learning in the city [Jerusalem] who were thought the most skillful in the laws of their country, and were on that account held in very great esteem all over the nation; they were, the one Judas, the son of Sepphoris, and the other Matthias, the son of Margalus. There was a great concourse of the young men to these men when they expounded the laws, and there got together every day a kind of an army of such as were growing up to be men. . . . Now the king had put up a golden eagle over the great gate of the temple, which these learned men exhorted them to cut down; and told them, that if there should any danger arise, it was a glorious thing to die for the laws of their country; because the soul was immortal, and that an eternal enjoyment of happiness did await such as died on that account; while the mean-spirited, and those that were not wise enough to show a right love of their souls, preferred a death by a disease, before that which is the result of a virtuous behavior. [*J.W.* 1.648–49a, 650b]

But of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy, Judas the Galilean was the author. These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions—[perhaps, “that souls have an immortal rigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life”]—but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man lord. [*Ant.* 18.23, with a bracketed quote from *Ant.* 18.14 on Pharisees]

Both the Judas of the first account and the Judas of the third gathered a crowd of young men around themselves and one other key teacher with a focus on the teaching of God’s law and on confidence in the face of death. In other words, if these accounts refer to the same Judas, the Saddok from the third account likely refers to Matthias, son of Margalus from the first. The similarity in teaching combined with the cooperation of another rabbi gives us reason to suspect that these two accounts of a Rabbi Judas reflect the activity of the same man. Therefore, we now have independent reasons for identifying the Judas of each account with each of the others.

Joazar the high priest. Now with these reasons in mind for seeing one Judas behind all three accounts, we turn to consider the various accounts of Joazar. Besides the narrative account which suggested that Archelaus yielded to the deposal demands of the crowd at Passover, Josephus gives three somewhat formal reports on Joazar. Of the promotion of Joazar, Josephus writes that Herod, “after ending the high priest Matthias’ service as priest for having become a reason for part of these things [apparently the eagle-raid], he installed Joazar as high priest, his wife’s brother” (*Ant.* 17.164b).²⁹ Then when reporting the ascendancy of Archelaus as ethnarch, Josephus writes

²⁹ It should be noted that Josephus explicitly distinguishes this high priest Matthias from the colleague of Judas.

that, “after removing the high-priesthood from Joazar, labeling him as having risen-up with the partisans, he installed Eleazar, his brother” (*Ant.* 17.339b). Then, when reporting the census, Josephus writes that Quirinius “removed the dignity of the honor from Joazar against whom the multitude had rebelled and installed Ananias son of Seth as high priest” (*Ant.* 18.26b). It may be worth noting that these three items are semantically parallel, though the Greek vocabulary is not identical, suggesting that they may stem from different translators using a Hebrew high priest succession list.³⁰ Similar diversity in Greek vocabulary also occurs in other apparent uses of this list for the activity of Gratus and Vitellius (*Ant.* 18.34–35, 95, 123). So, apart from the narrative account of Archelaus’s dismissal of Joazar, the three other references suggest Josephus was using a high priest succession list.

Now, although Josephus relied on Nicolaus of Damascus for his account of the eagle-raid, he apparently relied on this high-priest succession list for his account of Joazar’s promotion. Consequently the relationship of Joazar to three accounts of Judas still remains a bit ambiguous. We have observed that Josephus—since he had both Nicholas describing the followers of Judas and Matthias as grieving at Passover and the unidentified source reporting that those mourners demanded the deposal of the high priest promoted by Herod—reasonably identified the sedition of which the high priest Matthias apparently had a part with the eagle-raid. However, Josephus has perhaps artificially provided the historical referent for the “these things” in the high priest succession list on the promotion of Joazar. By comparison, in citing the succession list for the deposal of Joazar, he provides no referent for the sedition of which Joazar apparently played a part.

Indeed, let us consider the implications for historical reconstruction in seeing the Judas and Joazar activity as all occurring in the last days of Herod the Great. First of all, we might surmise that the raiding of the armory recorded in the second account was actually the reason for Joazar’s promotion rather than the first account’s assault on the temple. Then, Joazar who becomes high priest under Herod the Great explicitly in connection with this insurrectionist activity of Judas would be in a perfect place to persuade the people to register and pay their taxes rather than going along with the taxation revolt. When Judas and Matthias/Saddoc finally raid the temple, are captured, and executed, Joazar stands as an obvious collaborator with Herod. When Herod dies, the disciples of Judas demand Joazar’s deposal. Having had reason to see the three accounts of Judas as reflecting the activity of one person, we also have a plausible reconstruction of the activity of the same high priest active in opposition to him.

Moreover, the reported deposal by Quirinius also seems to make greater sense in the earlier historical context. When Judas’s mourners take the death of Herod the Great as vindication of their rabbi’s message, they demand

³⁰ *Ant.* 17.164b: Μαθίαν δὲ τὸν ἀρχιερέα παύσας ἱερᾶσθαι ὡς αἴτιον τοῦ μέρους τούτων γεγονότα καθίστα Ἰωάζαρον ἀρχιερέα, ἀδελφὸν γυναικὸς τῆς αὐτοῦ; *Ant.* 17.339b: Ἰωάζαρον τὸν Βοηθοῦ ἀφελόμενος τὴν ἀρχιερωσύνην νεπικαλῶν αὐτῷ συστάει τοῖς στασιώταις Ἐλεάζαρον τὸν ἐκείνου ἐπικαθίσταται ἀδελφόν; *Ant.* 18.26b: Ἰωάζαρον τὸν ἀρχιερέα καταστασιασθέντα ὑπὸ τῆς πληθῆος ἀφελόμενος τὸ ἀξίωμα τῆς τιμῆς Ἀνανου.

Joazar's removal, and according to *Ant.* 17.207–8, Archelaus yields to this demand. However, this scene also fits Josephus's account of the deposal by Quirinius in *Ant.* 18.26. Quirinius also removed the high priesthood from Joazar because of a popular uprising against him. The removal of Joazar from the high priesthood by Quirinius before the taxation is even complete, which makes no sense in AD 6, now makes perfect sense during the popular uprising in the aftermath of Herod's death, regardless of whether it was Quirinius or Archelaus who receives ultimate credit for the deposal.

Quirinius/Sabinus. Furthermore, in the person of Sabinus we find more than just wishful thinking to suspect that Quirinius was already present in Judea during the last days of Herod the Great. First of all, Josephus describes the offices of Sabinus and Quirinius in comparable ways. He calls Sabinus a steward/procurator of Syria, ὁ τῆς Συρίας ἐπίτροπος at *J.W.* 2.16 or Caesar's steward/procurator of affairs in Syria, Καίσαρος ἐπίτροπος τῶν ἐν Συρίᾳ πραγμάτων at *Ant.* 17.221. Similarly, Josephus reports that Quirinius was sent by Caesar into Syria as the *legatus juridicus* of the nation, the δικαιοδότης τοῦ ἔθνους, at *Ant.* 18.1. Of particular note in this regard is the fact that the *legatus juridicus* was not the title for the governor but rather the title of a magistrate sent in a complimentary capacity to the provincial governors, the *legati pro praetore*. Josephus never refers to Quirinius as the governor of Syria, and, as suggested above, Luke's reference to Quirinius holding dominion with respect to Syria, ἡγεμονεύοντος τῆς Συρίας, need not either. In other words, Josephus describes both Sabinus and Quirinius as holding an office with respect to the whole province of Syria and in the direct chain of command of Caesar Augustus.

Second, we have reason to suspect that Sabinus, like Quirinius, was of consular rank. According to the narrative mentioned earlier, Sabinus brazenly acted contrary to the wishes of Varus, the then governor of Syria, by going to Judea. He then took command of the Roman legion which Varus had left in Judea. So, we infer, not unreasonably, that Sabinus was of comparable rank with Varus. Quirinius, Josephus tells us, was of a consular rank, of equal rank with Varus. Not only are the offices of Sabinus and Quirinius characterized as comparable, they are described as apparently sharing the same rank.

Third, we have evidence that Sabinus, like Quirinius, was particularly concerned with the tax-value of Judea.³¹ The letters sent to Caesar by Varus and Sabinus included a detailed accounting of the annual incomes expected from each of Herod's territories. Moreover, after reporting the income for each territory, Josephus reports that Caesar decreed that Samaria be given a twenty-five percent reduction in the tribute paid to Archelaus (*Ant.* 17.319). The income for the Judean territories was apparently based on a taxation tribute under the direct control of Caesar Augustus. It stands to reason, if not required by reason, that these income figures, apparently reported by Sabinus, were based on an Augustan ordered taxation-census. In addition to being a *legatus*

³¹ Brook W. R. Pearson has responded to any lingering concern over whether this kind of census and taxation of Judea could have occurred during the reign of Herod the Great; see "The Lukan Censuses, Revisited" *CBQ* 61 (1999) 262–82.

juridicus, Josephus reports that Quirinius was also a *censor* of the property of Syria, τιμητής τῶν οὐσιῶν (*Ant.* 18.1). In this regard, an inscription has been found referring to the office of a *procurator ad census accipiendos* suggesting another connection between Sabinus's title of *epitropos/procurator* and Quirinius's title of *timetes/censor*.³²

Fourth, we have a strong correlation between the activity of Sabinus with respect to the estate of Herod the Great and the assignment given to Quirinius with respect to his Herod, reportedly Archelaus. Josephus reports that Archelaus encounters Sabinus in Caesarea as Sabinus was rushing to Judea in order to "secure Herod's effects" (ἐπὶ φυλακῆ τῶν Ἡρώδου χρημάτων, *Ant.* 17.221, cf. *J.W.* 2.16). Sabinus then goes to Jerusalem to take control of the disposition of Herod's property. Similarly, in *Ant.* 18.2, Josephus reports as additional information—after reporting the arrival of Quirinius and Coponius as censors—that "Quirinius himself came into Judea . . . to take account of their substance and to dispose of Archelaus's property, καὶ ἀπο δωσόμενος τὰ Ἀρχελάου χρήματα." Here, presuming that "Herod" or "King Herod" underlies Josephus's reporting of Archelaus, we see that this description of the activity of Quirinius matches perfectly the narrative of Sabinus. So, although Josephus asserts at the end of book 17 that the valuation of Syria and the disposition of Archelaus's property was a twofold mission from Caesar, this claim likely arises as a Josephan summary of his source for whom the securing of Herod's effects was added to his role as *juridicus* and *censor*. Consequently, this summary also fits the mission of Sabinus if the estate of Herod the Great, not of Herod Archelaus, was in mind.

Now, the suggestion that Josephus changed the name to Archelaus, even though his source referred to Herod, does not require mere presumption. Archelaus, like his brother Antipas, self-identified as Herod. All of Archelaus's coins are inscribed with Herod. So, quite possibly, Josephus relied on a source for his account of the census that did not refer to Archelaus by name but rather to "Herod," and perhaps even to "King Herod." In fact, in at least one place in *Antiquities*, Josephus does write "King Herod" where he had, in the parallel passage of *Jewish War*, written "Archelaus" (cf. *Ant.* 17.294; *J.W.* 2.74). At the very least, Josephus was conscious of possible ambiguity in this name.³³ At the most, this comparison suggests that in writing *Jewish War* Josephus changed a "King Herod" reference from his sources to "Archelaus" in his own account in order to match his historical reconstruction. Recalling the possibility that Josephus had originally placed the census account under Coponius because he thought it corresponded with the arrival of Coponius as prefect, Josephus would have been acting quite reasonably in resolving the ambiguity in favor of Archelaus. Perhaps "clarifying" his source document would have seemed obvious.

Now, this suggestion of identity between Sabinus and Quirinius is not new. Weber famously argued for this identity by suggesting a misreading of

³² For this inscription and a brief description of the *legati ad census accipiendos*, see *SVM* 1.410–11, n. 48.

³³ This evidence stands regardless of whether one considers Herod the Great or Archelaus the preferred referent.

an underlying Aramaic source.³⁴ While we consider this conclusion unlikely considering that both the Antipas source and Nicolaus of Damascus refer to Sabinus, another solution may be possible. Perhaps, in these sources “Sabinus” was not a family name but an ethnic indicator, that is, “the Sabine.” As Judas was called the Galilean and Hezekiah, the Sefhorean, so Quirinius may have been called Sabinus, the Sabine. While this study has not postulated or argued for a particular source for the Quirinius narrative, it arguably stems from a source with a Roman audience. It seems to have a Roman point of view. Therefore it is unlikely to be either of the earlier sources tied to the court of Herod the Great. Since Josephus made faithful use of his sources, he could be excused for not recognizing this identity between Quirinius and Sabinus. Perhaps, among the Semites of Herod’s court, Quirinius was known as Sabinus.

Indeed, further circumstantial evidence supports this conclusion. It must be noted that Quirinius was the legate’s Roman cognomen. Identified by Tacitus as Publius Quirinius in *Annals* 3.22–23 and as Sulpicius Quirinius in *Annals* 3.48, inscriptions record his name as Publius Sulipicius Quirinius.³⁵ Cognomens were often derived from ethnic or tribal indicators, and, indeed, Sabinus was also a Roman cognomen. The Quirinius cognomen likely stems etymologically from the Sabine god, *Quirinus*. Moreover, Quirinius was born in Lavinium, a small town outside of Rome which would have had a population of ethnic Sabines. Now, whether or not this suggestion is persuasive for how Sabinus may have become his nickname among the Semites, we should consider the previous accumulation of evidence in support of the identity: Sabinus is Quirinius.

The census account itself. Furthermore, if we consider the *Antiquities* text independently of its placement within the Josephan narrative and the Josephan transitions, we see several additional data which fit the reign of Herod the Great better than the context of AD 6. First of all, we notice that this text seems to subordinate Coponius to Quirinius whom Josephus explicitly labels as a δικαιοδότης, or *legatus juridicus* for Syria, again, not as governor, *legatus pro praetore*. Independent of Josephus’s assertion in *War* that Coponius was sent as prefect, we would be hard pressed to conclude that a man of equestrian rank who was sent as a traveling companion with a man of consular rank was not in the latter’s chain of command.³⁶ However, the prefect more likely would have been subject to the governor of Syria, the *legatus pro praetore* not to the *legatus juridicus*. So, we have reason to suspect that Coponius had been sent for some other duty in connection with the mission of Quirinius and not yet as prefect.

Second, Josephus refers to Coponius with a puzzling reference to him having “dominion over the Jews.”³⁷ If “Jews” is taken as an ethnic reference, it would seem to overstate the AD 6 situation since inhabitants of the tetrarchies

³⁴ Weber, “Census des Quirinius” 313–14.

³⁵ *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* #2683, #9502, #9503.

³⁶ Again, it should be noted that source-criticism has suggested that this mission for Coponius was not in the source on which Josephus relied.

³⁷ For a similar argument, see Lodder, *Schätzung des Quirinius* 26–28.

of Philip and Antipas were also Jews. However, if it is taken as a territorial reference, it understates the AD 6 situation since Archelaus controlled Itumea and Samaria as well as Judea so that Coponius would have dominion over more than just Judeans. This generic use of “Jews” or “Judeans” fits the historical context of Herod the Great better than that of Archelaus.

Finally, we know that Quirinius had men of equestrian rank who traveled with him to administer parts of his census of Syria. We have the Lapis Venetus which testifies to the work of Quintus Aemilius in helping to conduct this census in Syrian Apamena. This funeral stone also identifies Quirinius as an Augustan Legate of Syria but, again, not specifically as the *legatus pro pratore*, or governor.³⁸ In other words, apart from its placement in the narratives of Josephus, the account of Coponius arriving with Quirinius seems to reflect duties with respect to the Jews comparable to the duties exercised by Quintus Aemilius in parts of Syria. Consequently, we have reason to believe that the occasion of this mission was not that of AD 6.

More strikingly, Josephus also provided evidence that Coponius was in Judea earlier than the exile of Archelaus. As Lodder also noted in this regard, Josephus actually reports the presence of Coponius in Jerusalem at the time of Antipater’s trial before Varus, in c. 5 BC (*Ant.* 17.134). As a companion of Quirinius, Coponius’s presence at the time of Antipater’s trial would be explained if Quirinius and Sabinus were the same man but would be inexplicable if Quirinius was not sent for another ten years. Although text-critical issues still surround this reference to Coponius at Antipater’s trial, the associated vocabulary is Josephan and the three best manuscripts contain it. Certainly, it deserves the consideration which text critics typically offer the “more difficult reading.” Only prejudice, prejudgment of historical probability, would keep one from reading Coponius as present in Judea in 5 BC. For all these reasons, we must at least suspect a misplaced duplication in the reporting that Coponius only arrived ten years later.

However, if the census account has been misplaced, we must also speculate on how the census came to be dated explicitly to AD 6, the 37th year from Actium, if it indeed happened earlier. Perhaps, when writing *Antiquities*, Josephus found that his source on the census reported the 27th year of Actium which he misread as the 37th. Or, perhaps his source reported the 37th year of Herod (from his Roman appointment), and Josephus changed it to Actium for the same reason. Before dismissing this possibility of misreading a source as too unlikely, one should note that Josephus also asserted explicitly that Herod was only 15 years old when he was given charge of Galilee, an assertion that many scholars assume was a misreading of 25.³⁹ So, perhaps the explicit date stemmed from a simple misreading of his source.

However, I think it much more likely that Josephus simply changed the date to fit his reconstruction. If, as our source criticism has suggested,

³⁸ I offer this as a simple observation, but compare the claim of Lodder: “Der Offizielle Statthalter einer Provinz wird in Inschriften meistens ‘leg(atu)s Aug(ustu)s pr(o) pr(aetore)’ genannt. Hier steht nur ‘le.’” Lodder, *Schätzung des Quirinius* 66.

³⁹ *Ant.* 14.9.2; *SVM* 1.275, n. 29; cf. Lodder, *Schätzung des Quirinius*.

Josephus did not have the census date when constructing his narrative for *Jewish War*, he would have had a perfectly reasonable accounting of events already in hand which reflected the latter date based primarily on the arrival of Coponius—presumably as the first prefect. In keeping with his historiographic method, he had filed his Quirinius and Judas source under Coponius and reasonably assumed that the reference to King Herod was a reference to Archelaus. Then, when he took up the source for the explicit date of the census he simply changed whatever date he found in his source in order to match his reconstructed date, AD 6, the year of Archelaus's exile.

Now, lest one think this possibility too remote, Josephus already betrayed his willingness to change numbers for the purpose of matching the chronology of just this event. When reporting Archelaus's symbolic dream, he reported that Archelaus saw 9 ears of corn representing 9 years of rule in *J.W.* 2.112–13 but 10 ears of corn representing 10 years of rule in *Ant.* 17.345–47. So, in one of these accounts, he changed the number of ears of corn and the number of years of rule from how they appeared in his source in order to match his reconstruction of events. So, indeed, it is quite possible that Josephus similarly changed the date for the census to match his reasonably reconstructed chronology of events.⁴⁰

IV. SUMMARY

We can now summarize the Josephan evidence for locating the census of Quirinius during the reign of Herod the Great. First of all, name, provenance, being identifiable by reference to his father, and the context and content of both his teaching and his activity all combine to support the conclusion that the three accounts of an insurrectionist named Judas actually all reflect the same figure active during the last days of Herod the Great. Second, although the high priesthood data is still difficult, having Joazar active in bringing about cooperation in the taxation also fits the time of Herod the Great better than assuming a variety of unrecorded appointments in order to account for the multiple depositions. Herod exalted Joazar to the high priesthood in opposition to the supporters of Judas, and his deposition by either Sabinus/Quirinius or Archelaus after the disturbances associated with Herod's death makes sense while an AD 6 deposition by Quirinius does not. Third, by identifying Quirinius and Sabinus, we not only have the man responsible for the census located in Judea during the last days of Herod the Great and an explanation for the earlier reference to Coponius at Antipater's trial but also a very plausible rationale for the extraordinary behavior of Sabinus. Certainly, these three sets of data taken individually may not be ultimately persuasive, but one

⁴⁰ It may be of further interest that if only the date on the census had been changed, Josephus reports that Quirinius had finished accounting for the estates of his Herod while the taxation was reaching its end. In other words, even if Herod died in 4 BC in keeping with the consensus reconstruction, we still have reason to consider Eusebius's date of 3/2 BC for the census possible. Quirinius arrived earlier, possibly 5 BC, to begin the census which, because of the tumult surrounding Herod's death, was not completed until 3/2 BC.

must consider their combined weight for adding greater plausibility to the account of Luke.

Admittedly, some readers may still find the standard reading more plausible. These readers may acknowledge that Josephus was susceptible to mistaking numbers or changing dates but insist that he did not err with the date of the census. They may acknowledge that Josephus was susceptible to the ambiguity between “Archelaus” and “King Herod” but insist that he was not guilty when reporting the mission of Quirinius. These readers may additionally find it more plausible that two insurgents against Herod were active within weeks of each other around the time of Herod’s death, both named Judas, both with connections to Sepphoris, and both nicknamed in connection with a famous father. They may also prefer that while one was executed by Herod the Great for raiding Herod’s temple, the other one would wait ten years after raiding Herod’s armory to adopt the same manner and substance of the teaching of the first, only to have his revolt against the taxation-census be opposed by the very same high priest who had opposed the earlier Judas even though this high priest was reportedly deposed twice during those ten years. Indeed, remaining faithful to the story as told by Josephus, they insist that the similarity between Sabinus and Quirinius in both title and activity must be just as coincidental as the similarity in the accounts of Judas and Joazar but that the mention of Coponius at Antipater’s trial is some unexplained spurious insertion into the text. Admittedly, these readers may with stomped foot insist that all these features of the standard account are more plausible than this reconstruction offered here.

To these readers, this study has sought to respond, “Really?” Admittedly, this study has built a circumstantial argument that Josephus misplaced the census of Quirinius. However, historiography is about making the case for the most plausible reconstruction. In each case, this study has provided a rationale for why Josephus reasonably located each account of Judas where he did. Moreover, it has accounted for the narrative references to Joazar and for his participation in events. It has attributed to Josephus only those errors to which he has been shown demonstrably susceptible. It has argued that this reconstruction of the underlying history is more plausible than the standard reading. A source-critical solution that accounts for anomalies rather than ignoring them in favor of a fideistic reading of a fallible source is correct: Josephus misdated the census of Quirinius.