Fernando Bermejo-Rubio*

Was Pontius Pilate a Single-Handed Prefect?
Roman Intelligence Sources as a Missing Link in the Gospels’ Story

https://doi.org/10.1515/klio-2019-0040

Summary: The portrayal of Pontius Pilate as a single-handed prefect is one of the many incongruous and implausible elements found in the Gospel accounts of Jesus of Nazareth’s passion. Moreover, a striking imbalance in these accounts emerges: whilst Romans appear only at the last phase of the story, earlier the only people plotting against Jesus are Jews. There is every indication that some key information has been dropped. The present paper, after taking into account the traces of anti-Roman aspects in Jesus’ career, surveys what is known about the consilia of Roman provincial governors and the sources of information available to them, and, for the first time, applies this knowledge to a critical reconstruction of the story underlying the Gospels, thereby providing a missing link to understand it.

Keywords: Pontius Pilate, Provincial Governors, Gospels, Jesus of Nazareth, Roman Intelligence Sources, Client Rulers

The Problem and Its Relevance

Quite a few aspects in the Passion accounts of the Christian Gospels have been unveiled through century-long research as sheer fiction: the so-called privilegium paschale, the portrait of a Roman prefect washing his hands (according to Jewish custom) and pronouncing a Jew innocent whilst letting him being scourged and executed through the summum suplicium, or the depiction of the Jewish authorities compelling that same prefect to crucify one of their coreligionists by the threat of a complaint made against him to the emperor, are only a few examples among many.1 Although – or perhaps precisely because – these items form an

1 For detailed surveys of incongruities in these accounts, see e.g. Kautsky 1908, 384–392, 418–432; Winter 1974. Stegemann 1998, 919: “Die Darstellungen der Passionsgeschichte in den Evangelien sind zum Teil widersprüchlich.” I here assume the virtually unanimous opinion of

*Kontakt: Fernando Bermejo-Rubio, fjlmbr@yahoo.es
essential part of a deep-rooted cultural myth, no responsible historian would use them nowadays for a reliable reconstruction of the period of Roman governorship in Judaea.²

There is an aspect of those sources, however, which has hardly been noticed, despite its extreme implausibility and oddness. I refer to the fact that Pontius Pilate is portrayed in the Gospels as a single-handed prefect: in the so-called ‘Roman trial of Jesus’ (Mk 15:1–15 and par.) no mention is indeed made of any other Roman high-ranking official, counsellor, or assistant, or of Pilate meeting them to deliberate when condemning some Jews to crucifixion,³ despite the fact that every provincial governor had an entourage with which he surrounded himself when he assumed his provincial duties.⁴ The only interlocutors of the prefect are the Jewish authorities and the crowds, nobody else.

Such a portrayal of Pilate as a single-handed man is, of course, understandable in the light of the literary and ideological enterprise carried out by the evangelists. Writing in a period (during or immediately after the First Jewish War) in which any relationship of Nazoreans with anti-Roman revolt had to be roundly denied,⁵ they needed to defuse any politically subversive dimension of Jesus’ story. Accordingly, they needed a scapegoat through which to channel the responsibility for Jesus’ crucifixion. The best option was to portray the Jewish authorities as malevolent and bloodthirsty men who wanted Jesus’ death at any cost, and who put pressure on the prefect to get rid of this allegedly hated target. The portrayal of the Roman authority giving in to pressure from Jews was all the easier and more dramatic and convincing if a collective – the high priests and the scribes, along with the crowd – was described as threatening a single man, who is presented as a puppet in their hands. Moreover, the tendency to focus on individuals rather than institutions is a well-known tendency of biographical or pseudo-biographical texts. From a historical standpoint, however, such a depiction, as I argue below, is hopelessly implausible and even verges on the incredi-

² It has been recently argued that the Synoptic narratives of the Passion contain a stratum composed in Judaea on the eve of the Great Revolt, and that they anachronistically reflect some facts which actually took place in the 60s in that province; see Bourgel 2012.
³ Although Jesus of Nazareth became ‘the Crucified’ par excellence in the Western conscience, Roman history knows tens of thousands of crucified people, and the Gospel accounts depict a collective execution; Jesus is crucified along with two insurgents (λῃσταί: Mk 15:27; Mt 27:38). On the pejorative use and frequent political meaning of λῃστής (latro), see Shaw 1984, 4–6; Grünwald 1999.
⁴ See Lintott 1993, 50–52.
⁵ Acts 24:5 describes Jesus’ followers as “the sect of the Nazoreans” (αἵρεσις τῶν Ναζωραίων).
ble. What is more worrying and sobering, modern scholarship has endorsed this depiction as a substantially trustworthy report of historical events, and systematically assumes that the Roman prefects of Judaea had to rely upon the Jewish chief priests to get information about Jesus or any other troublesome Judaean or Galilean.  

A second point which should give pause for thought is the striking imbalance which even a cursory reading detects in the Passion accounts: despite the ceaseless attempts of the Gospel writers (and many other Christian authors in the first centuries C.E.) to blame the Jews, they could not hide the too obvious fact that Jesus had been crucified by the Romans. Crucifixion being a Roman punishment, no serious historian harbours any doubt that Jesus was executed on Pilate’s order. But this means that, whilst Romans appear at the last phase of Jesus’ story, earlier the only people plotting against the Galilean preacher are Jews. This obvious imbalance among the beginning and the end of the story helps explain why, up to the very present, many scholars go on referring to Jesus’ crucifixion as a “puzzle”, an “enigma” or a “mystery”.  

The hypothesis set forth in the present paper is that the Gospel story is puzzling only insofar as it is not seriously taken into account that some key information has been dropped in the tradition, making some crucial connections unclear. Even if we cannot recover the past by recreating silenced facts, fortunately we are not wholly in the dark. Sometimes, traces of that repressed information emerge here and there in the texts, allowing us to reconstruct a course of events which, however tentative, is by far more plausible than the extant accounts. Other times, a combination of critical reflection and knowledge of – or reasonable conjectures about – the actual procedures in the Principate allows us to get a glimpse of events which have been distorted. More specifically, my contention is that a survey of Roman sources about information-gathering and intelligence procedures could provide a missing link to understand the story underlying the Gospel fictions.

---

6 This shortcoming has not only been typical of New Testament scholars. Referring to Republican and Imperial Rome’s civil service, the false impression that Roman magistrates accomplished their duties without a proper staff, conveyed in textbooks in the past, has been denounced; see Jones 1949, 41.

7 There have been, however, some savants who stated that, whilst the execution of the Ἁγοραί was entirely a Roman matter, Jesus was crucified by ‘the Jews’; see e.g. Bammel 1984, 443.

8 See e.g. Green 2001, 88 f; Meier 2001, 646.

9 On the so-called ‘evidential paradigm’, see Ginzburg 1986.
Traces of Anti-Roman Aspects in Jesus of Nazareth’s Career

The portrayal of a Roman prefect hesitant to condemn Jesus and repeatedly declaring his innocence whilst at the same time having him scourged and crucified is blatantly contradictory and intrinsically self-defeating. Pilate’s reluctance is in fact only understandable when one assumes – as the Gospel authors and, surprisingly, mainstream scholarship do – the Christian view of Jesus as a meek figure, politically innocuous for the Roman Empire: as Jesus is absolutely innocent, Pilate cannot find anything wrong or really dangerous in his behaviour. Such an assumption, however, has been compellingly unveiled as untenable by independent research. Since the sixteenth century, scholars with very different cultural and ideological backgrounds agree that a critical reading of the sources provide compelling arguments supporting the hypothesis that Jesus of Nazareth, whatever else he may have been, was thoroughly engaged in anti-Roman ideology and/or activity.10 Since this aspect has already been investigated with great competence and perspicacity in the history of research, in this section I need not tarry too long on this issue, and will limit myself to a brief survey.

There is a great amount of material pointing towards a deep-rooted conflict between Jesus and Roman imperial rule. Although the Gospel tradition has distorted and muddied the data because of apologetic interests, it has retained quite a few snippets of historical likelihood which can and must be assembled for a reconstruction of the figure: Jesus was crucified, i.e., executed with the usual Roman punishment for rebellious provincials; a lot of evidence indicates that Jesus considered himself as a king or God’s viceroy;11 the focus of Jesus’ preaching was the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God, a proclamation which had an unambiguously political character, as far as the establishment of God’s will “on
Was Pontius Pilate a Single-Handed Prefect?

earth” (Mt 6:10; Lk 11:2) would leave no place for the Roman rule;\textsuperscript{12} according to Lk 22:36–38, Jesus ensured that his disciples were armed by ordering them to buy swords, and all four Gospels record that armed resistance was offered in Gethsemane;\textsuperscript{13} the ‘triumphal entry’ into Jerusalem seems to have been a prearranged action and involved a high messianic temperament and clear political claims in words and deeds; according to the Synoptics, Jesus promised that his twelve disciples would sit on thrones to judge and rule Israel’s twelve restored tribes, which implies the disappearance of the actual rulers of Israel, both Romans and Jews;\textsuperscript{14} the concrete socio-political, material dimension of the kingdom of God (not a merely ‘spiritual’ realm beyond the skies) expected by Jesus and his disciples is proved by their hopes of being granted this-worldly rewards;\textsuperscript{15} according to the disciples’ own statements (Lk 24:21; Acts 1:6), Jesus’ aim was to restore the kingdom to Israel. The convergence of these and many other related items constitutes a pattern that is obviously at odds with the overall impression conveyed by the evangelists, according to which Jesus had nothing to do with the dirty matters of politics in first-century Judaea. A significant part of the evidence unmistakably points to a conflict not only with the ruling class in Judaea, but also with the Romans.

An important point is that, unlike the prevailing scholarly (and popular) view, Jesus seems to have opposed the payment of tribute to Rome.\textsuperscript{16} When the

\textsuperscript{12} This was already clearly recognized by Weiss 1900, 123: “Es erscheint mir einfach selbstverständliche, dass unter den Gütern, die das Reich Gottes bringen soll, die Befreiung von der Fremdherrschaft mit obenan steht.”

\textsuperscript{13} Several converging passages (Lk 22:38.49; Mk 14:47 and par.) indicate that – at least in the final phase of Jesus’ ministry – Jesus’ disciples were armed and ready to use the swords they carried (see Martin 2014). Moreover, Jesus and his disciples are remembered as saying and doing some other things which are not to be reconciled with a kind of pacifism or nonviolence avant la lettre. A critical reading of the sources proves that – unlike the widespread assumption that Jesus was a man solely of love, mercy, and peace – violence was not ultimately incompatible with his message; see Aichele 1998 and Avalos 2015, 90–128. It has been recognized, however reluctantly, even by a respected Catholic exegete, that Jesus “zu Gewaltanwendung kein prinzipiell negatives Verhältnis hat” (Berger 1996, 127a).

\textsuperscript{14} Mt 19:28; Lk 22:28–30.

\textsuperscript{15} Mk 10:28–30.35–41; Lk 22:24.30; see Mk 9:33. For a recent survey of this aspect, see Bermejo-Rubio 2018.

\textsuperscript{16} See Brandon 1967, 345–348; Horsley 1993, 306–317; Herzog 2000, 219–232; Oakman 2012, 127. Several scholars (see now Zeichmann 2017) have argued that the mention of a denarius in Mk 12 is anachronistic, and that it reflects the later situation of a Judaea subjected to the fiscus iudaicus. This contention is indeed plausible, but the answer attributed to Jesus in Mk 12:17 does not imply a reference to a denarius (or any other coin), so it is still a reasonable surmise (especially in the light of Lk 23:2 and the other evidence of an anti-Roman stance) that a historical core goes back
sentence “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mk 12:17) is laid alongside the report which Josephus gives of the teaching of Judas of Galilee, the founder of the ‘Fourth Philosophy’, the similarity of outlook is striking: according to Judas, God owned the land of Israel, so everything belonged to him, and nothing whatsoever is owed to Caesar; the payment of tribute to Rome was accordingly an act of disloyalty to Yahweh. Although opposing the payment, Jesus was shrewd enough not to let himself be trapped, by providing an apparently ambivalent, but also a rather clear answer for those in the know (a case of “public transcript”, in the terminology of the political scientist James Scott). 17 This reading is strongly supported by Lk 23:2, which specifies the charges brought against Jesus: “We found this man perverting our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar (κωλύοντα φόρους Καίσαρι διδόναι), and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.” Although, according to the perspective of the evangelist and his readers, this is nothing but slander, the subversive dimension in Jesus’ activity – which is also restated, with the verbs ἀνασείω and ἀποστρέφω, in 23:5 (“he stirs up the people”) and 23:14 (“one who was inciting the people to rebellion”) – is pronounced, so there is every indication that Lk 23:2 contains trustworthy information about Jesus’ true thoughts on this matter.

Application of several criteria – at least recurrent patterns, embarrassment, and contextual plausibility – suggests that the convergent material hinting at an anti-Roman stance has the best guarantees of historicity, 18 thereby allowing us to infer that there existed an acute hostility between Jesus and the Empire. It would be, therefore, extremely unwise to downplay this material and to ascribe it to redactional work. Even a conservative scholar like Charles H. Dodd perceptively remarked that in the known conditions under which primitive Christians lived in the Roman Empire it is by far easier to account for the toning down of apparently political features if the tradition originally contained such features, than to find reasons why they should be given enhanced importance in the development of a tradition originally innocent of them – or almost innocent, for nothing could eliminate from the record the fact that Jesus was crucified as “king of the Jews”. 19 But this, in turn, means that the widespread view that the Jewish authorities

to Jesus. Let us note that the logion 100 of Gospel of Thomas contains a version in which the coin itself – described as “a gold coin” – is incidental to the story as a whole.

17 See Scott 1990.
18 For an extensive treatment of the historicity of this material, see Bermejo-Rubio 2014a, 15–34.
19 See Dodd 1963, 215; Davies 1994, 344: “That the Gospel tradition has undergone a process of depoliticization has to be recognized.”
on their own represented Jesus to the Romans as dangerous\textsuperscript{20} is wholly unwarranted: they did not need to, as it seems that from the Roman point of view Jesus was indeed known by them to be dangerous.

All this does not necessarily imply that Jesus was the leader of an army, or that the core of his preaching was advocating armed struggle. It is probable that he believed that the kingdom of God would not be established by human might and that the dirty work of crushing the Romans and their collaborators would be basically God’s task. A convincing explanation for the extant evidence seems to be that Jesus prepared his disciples for the imminent eschatological manifestation of God in the light of the prophetic literature, which states that at the end of time there would be a final battle led by God and/or the angelic hosts in which the pious men should willingly take part.\textsuperscript{21}

There is still a further argument supporting this hypothesis, namely, the passage about Jesus in Flavius Josephus’ \textit{Antiquitates Judaicae} 18.63–64 – the so-called \textit{Testimonium Flavianum}. Although the claim that Josephus’ passage was originally ‘neutral’ is being repeated time and again in many reference works, compelling arguments have been recently set forth to underpin the old opinion of scholars coming from very different ideological backgrounds, who asserted that Josephus mentioned Jesus unfavourably.\textsuperscript{22} Since there is every indication that Josephus knew the messianic claims made by and about Jesus, and that the Jewish historian did not feel any sympathy for popular messianic claimants, he seems to have viewed Jesus as a kind of seditionist, all the more so because his report about the Galilean preacher mentions his crucifixion by Pilate, and is placed within a series of disturbances.

Be that as it may, the above-mentioned set of evidence definitely refutes the widespread contention that Jesus did not come into conflict with Rome.\textsuperscript{23} Despite the idyllic view of him in the Gospels – which the overwhelming majority of scholars uncritically and naively endorse –, the Roman prefect had very serious reasons to prosecute Jesus and his group. There was considerably more to the charges brought against him than those who wrote the gospels were inclined to report, and all these aspects account for why Jesus and his followers would

\textsuperscript{20} See e.g. Sanders 1985, 290. Examples could be easily multiplied.

\textsuperscript{21} See Joel 4:9–10. Zech 14:1–5 locates the eschatological miracle on the Mount of Olives. Several of Qumran’s texts (1QM) offer an interesting analogy to the expectation of an eschatological battle. For a convincing explanation along these lines, see particularly Maccoby 1973, 154–173.

\textsuperscript{22} See Bermejo-Rubio 2014b; Curran 2017.

\textsuperscript{23} The claim that Jesus did not question the authority of Rome’s client Herod Antipas nor that of the Caesar has been repeated by many scholars. See e.g. Bryan 2005, 50 f.; according to this author, Jesus’ concerns were not “specifically anti-Roman any more than they were anti-Jewish or anti-Parthian or anti-anything else” (Bryan 2005, 51).
have become a target for the Roman power, and why the Romans would have been exceedingly interested in getting rid of him and probably also of his closest followers. The Gospel contention that Pilate had Jesus killed only because he knuckled under to Jewish pressure is, accordingly, an implausible claim.24

The Governor's officium

As is well known, evidence about the officium consularis or headquarters’ staff of Roman governors is rather late, most of it relating to the second or early third century, when the military habit of setting up inscriptions was at its strongest.25 In this period an officium was a rather complex cadre which carried out a variety of duties and dealt with whatever the governor required of it. It seems that the developed staff comprised both general functionaries such as the cornicularii, speculatores and beneficiarii and those with more specific duties such as the singulares (governatorial bodyguard), commentarienses (judicial recorders), quaesitionarii (interrogators and torturers), interpretes (interpreters), notarii (secretaries), exacti (recorders), librarii (archivists) and exceptores (short-hand writers), among others.26

Admittedly, there is no evidence of such a body in the early Principate. While a great deal is known about the full-blown officium, very little is known about its evolution; from the third century hundreds of inscriptions are available, but for the earlier stages of the development of this institution only scant trace is left in the record. As to Judaea, neither Josephus nor the Gospels provide us with information about Pilate’s staff, which is indeed conspicuous by its absence. Moreover, it should be obvious that the bureaucratic needs of an equestrian prefect in a backwater imperial province of little importance like Judaea (all the more so in the first half of the first century) could not have been comparable in complexity

24 One could retort that, according to Josephus, there was Jewish responsibility in Jesus’ death: “Pilate […] hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us […] condemned him to be crucified” (Ant. Iud. 18.63). Nevertheless, there are several problems with that contention. On the one hand, it is beyond doubt that Josephus’ passage has been tampered with by Christians, so it is not sure that this sentence comes from the historian; on the other, even if the sentence is genuine, given that Josephus was writing towards the end of the first century, he could have been indirectly reflecting Christian claims that in turn reflected the Gospels or the traditions immediately behind them.

25 See Austin – Rankov 1995, 149–155; Rankov 1999; Haensch 1997, 227–237 and 710–726; Nelis-Clément 2000, 115–122; Fuhrmann 2012, 171–200.

26 For the various officiales, see Haensch 1997, 720–724; Haensch 2010, 77 f.
and size to the *officium* of a Syrian legate (*legatus Augusti pro praetore*), who had several legions under his command, whilst the *praefectus Judaeae* only disposed of auxiliary forces.\(^{27}\)

Once having recognized that, for the early Roman imperial period, the sources suggest that a governor’s *officium* was in the developmental stages and did not reach the complex and wide-ranging bureaucracy that we know from the second century and later, it is still a reasonable surmise that the equestrian prefect of Judaea must have had, as every provincial governor, some kind of staff, however elementary.\(^{28}\) Since the Republic, governors had surrounded themselves with an entourage when they went out to their provinces, and this in turn was only a cut-down version of the personal household and the circle of *amici* of a Roman aristocrat, modified by a small dilution of public officials. Under the Principate, these individuals undoubtedly continued to assist in various official activities.\(^{29}\) Furthermore, because governors were military commanders, they also could draw on the troops under their command for assistance. Literary evidence demonstrates that at least since the civil wars at the end of the Republic senior officers had been detailing men from the ranks to serve them as attendants and orderlies.\(^{30}\)

The above-mentioned facts compel us to critically reassess the depiction of Pontius Pilate carried out in the Christian Gospels. The portrayals of Jesus’ ‘Roman trial’ offer the image of a puzzled prefect, wishing to spare Jesus’ life despite the Jewish authorities’ pressure. According to Mark, Pilate “realized that it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed him over” (Mk 15:10), and gives the crowd the option of saving Jesus or Barabbas. According to Matthew, Pilate is warned by his wife (an otherwise unknown and presumably fictitious character)

\(^{27}\) The forces at the prefect’s disposal would have comprised between three and four thousand auxiliaries enrolled in one cavalry *ala* and five infantry cohorts (Ant. Iud. 19.365; 20.122; Bell. Iud. 2.52); see Lémonon 1981, 102. On the nature and development of the equestrian prefects, see Pflaum 1950; Faoro 2011.

\(^{28}\) It has been indeed surmised that military governors were served by a very substantial specialist staff probably as early as the first century (Austin – Rankov 1995, 153). In several monographs about Pilate, their authors make just a fleeting mention of the prefect’s personal staff (see e.g. Bond 1998, 12 f.; Schiavone 2017, 96).

\(^{29}\) See Front. Ad Ant. Pium 8: “Then I took active steps to enlist the help of my friends in all that concerned the ordering of the province. Relations and friends of mine, of whose loyalty and integrity I was assured, I called from home to assist me” (*Post illa quaecumque ad instruendam provinciam adtinerent, quo facilius a me tanta negotia per amicorum copias obirentur, sedulo praeeparavi. Propinquos et amicos meos, quorum fidel et integritatem cognoveram, domo accivi*). On the limited number (*statutum numerum*) of these *comites*, see Dig. 27.14.1.2.

\(^{30}\) Caes. Civ. 1.75; 3.88 (references to Pompeius’ *beneficiarii*). See Dise 1997, 274; Haensch 1997, 710 f. This seems to have been the case in Palestine with Titus Mucius Clemens; see SEG 47.1982 = SEG 51.2020 = CIIP 2.2123 (I owe this reference to Christopher Zeichmann).
to “have nothing to do with that just man” and he washes his hands, thereby declaring himself innocent of Jesus’ blood (27:19.24). According to Luke, Pilate sends Jesus to Herod Antipas, declares him innocent and wants to let him off. According to John, Pilate is impressed by Jesus’ answers and repeatedly insists, “I find no case against him”, to the extent that he is dissuaded from releasing him only by the threat of a complaint made against him to the emperor.\footnote{See Lk 23:4.7,14–16.20.22; Jn 18:38; 19:4.6.12.} As it has been often argued, these accounts are wholly unreliable, because of their internal contradictions and their historical implausibility.\footnote{The Gospels present Pilate “as a fool beyond belief. For, if he had truly sought to save Jesus, he could surely have done nothing worse to defeat his purpose than to offer the Jewish crowd a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. To them Barabbas was a patriot who had risked his life against their hated Roman rulers, whereas Jesus, according to Mark, had advised them to pay tribute to these Romans. To have offered the people such a choice, with the intention of saving Jesus, was the act of an idiot” (Brandon 1967, 4).} According to the Gospels themselves, the charge brought against Jesus was subversion and \textit{adfectatio regni}: he was reported to have claimed a royal title. Since no responsible Roman governor would have harbored any doubts about what to do, Jesus’ (and some of his followers’?) crucifixion was to be expected.\footnote{On the probability that the men who were crucified with Jesus shared with him a common ideology and/or activities, and that they might even have been among his followers, whether in a narrow or a loose sense, see Bermejo-Rubio 2013.}

A thought experiment, however, is in order. Let us accept, for the sake of the argument, that the situation was of the kind imagined by the Gospel writers and that in Jesus’ case the prefect faced a terribly tricky matter, because he was not convinced of the Galilean’s guilt. Now, such a situation is precisely that which would have prompted the prefect to gather his \textit{consilium} for advice; Pilate would not have made a decision without consulting his staff first. A Roman governor needing to take a decision about a provincial who was potentially dangerous for the \textit{disciplina publica} but faced with contradictory evidence would have relied not primarily on the Jewish religious authorities but on his own personnel, his \textit{officiales} being the executive branch of Roman government in the province.

This is indeed clearly seen in the Book of Acts. According to the author of this work (whoever it may be), “the Jews” (or “the Judaeans”: \textit{οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι}) laid serious complaints against Paul and clamoured that Porcius Festus (ca. 59–62 C.E.) should bring him up to Jerusalem for trial. The procurator, wishing to please them, asks Paul if he would go up to be judged there. It is then, however, that the visionary from Tarsus refuses to do so and appeals to Caesar. Faced with such an unexpected move, Festus finds himself in a quandary. But the text makes plain that he is not alone. In fact, we are told that he takes a decision – to send Paul
to Rome – only after having conferred with his council (συλλαλήσας μετὰ τοῦ συμβουλίου)\(^{34}\). Although this συμβουλίον is not mentioned earlier – and we do not know if its members are thought to be already present or convened at that very moment –, its mention makes perfect sense. Irrespective of the historical value of the account, the significant point is that the author of Acts assumes that the procurator has at his disposal an advisory body of *consiliarii* or *adsessores*.

A similar allusion can be drawn from a report by Josephus about Ventidius Cumanus, procurator of Judaea from 48 to 52 C.E. When an Imperial slave was robbed while travelling near Beth-horon, Cumanus sent troops to arrest the leading men of the nearby villages. One of the soldiers, who had found a copy of the Torah, tore it in two while he uttered blasphemies. When, angered by this outrage to their religion, a crowd of Jews confronted Cumanus at Caesarea Maritima and besought him to punish the guilty party, the procurator ordered that the soldier responsible should be beheaded in front of his accusers. The interesting point is that Josephus states that Cumanus took this decision “after taking counsel with his friends” (συμβουλευσάντων καὶ τῶν φίλων), which is a clear reference to his *comites* or *cohors amicorum*\(^ {35}\).

But this is just what is missing in the Gospel accounts: the staff is conspicuous by its absence. In the light of the scant available traces about the procedures in the Roman Empire, however, we should not infer that the silence of the Gospels means that Pilate was an unassisted man. Nothing indicates that a few decades before Festus, the prefects of Judaea did not have a similar staff to that of those governors designated as *procuratores* (ἐπίτροποι) since Claudius. And this allows us to infer – along with the realization that other relevant pieces of information have been conveniently overlooked in the Gospels – that the existence of Pilate’s advisory body has been ‘forgotten’ or silenced in our sources because of ideological and/or rhetorical reasons.\(^ {36}\) Either Jesus’ case was so straightforward and clear that the prefect did not need to summon his council, or he took the decision after having conferred with it. In either case, the responsibility for Jesus’ cruci-

\(^{34}\) Acts 25:12.

\(^{35}\) Ant. Iud. 20.117.

\(^{36}\) The terseness of the Gospel accounts in some key respects could be explained in terms of the “selective forgetting” envisaged by Cognitive Dissonance Theory in the case of failed millenarian groups. When (the memory of) a fact triggers a high degree of discomfort and embarrassment among the members of such a group, a way to reduce dissonance is to overlook or screen out some items of information, so effective processes are initiated which prevent the dissonant elements from being firmly established cognitively; see Festinger 1957, 134, 156, 163. My point is that the Gospel accounts do not make sense because some key information is lacking, irrespective of whether it has been (consciously or unconsciously) repressed, forgotten or overlooked because of some other reason.
fixion falls entirely within the Roman realm. Of course, this is not the story the Gospel writers wanted (and needed) to tell.

This should not be misunderstood as suggesting an anachronistic view of Pontius Pilate’s *officium*. We have no clear evidence of *officia* before the second/third century, and it is also rather obvious that an equestrian prefect in the mid-first century could not have at his disposal any sort of complex and highly developed body of officials like that of a governor of a senatorial province. Of course this is not my point. What I contend is that even an equestrian prefect like Pilate must not have struggled with his official duties alone, without any staff worthy of the name, which he was able to consult at any time, particularly on important courses of action and in dubious situations. And this means, in turn, that the impression conveyed by the Gospel accounts of a single-handed Roman magistrate puzzled about what to do with a *peregrinus* and solely relying on the information provided by the Jewish chief priests, irrespective of its dramatic value, is desperately unrealistic and lacks any historical reliability.

Sources of Information (I): Roman Intelligence

According to the Gospel story, the Roman prefect knew nothing about Jesus until the Jewish authorities handed the Galilean over to him. In fact, the reader of Mark does not hear anything about the prefect before that moment. Although the highest political authority in Judaea and Samaria was a Roman magistrate, this fact is overlooked by Mark throughout almost his whole story. Jesus’ opponents are always Jews: first, the Pharisees and the scribes, and then (in a rather inconsistent way) the chief priests and the elders. Only towards the end of the Gospel, just a few hours before the crucifixion itself, is Pontius Pilate rather abruptly introduced into the narrative. As I remarked at the outset of this article, this creates a sharp and odd imbalance. Leaving aside a fleeting reference to Caesar in the coin-tribute episode, Roman authorities enter Mark’s story only at its end:

“Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ asked Pilate.”

37 Admittedly, Jesus might have gone to the province of Judaea late in his ministry. Nonetheless, others in Judaea seem to be well aware of his activities (see e.g. Mk 3:8).
38 Mk 15:1–2. On the tribute, see Mk 12:13–17.
When this account is attentively read, particularly when the reading involves the parallel passages in the other Gospels, several odd things emerge, as has been remarked in critical scholarship. For the sake of brevity, I will only enumerate some major points. First, the report that Jesus is transferred early in the morning to the presence of the prefect means that there must have been previous conversations between Pilate and the Jewish authorities about what was taking place during the night, but this aspect has been silenced in the narrative. Second, the Roman prefect, who had formerly not been present at the so-called ‘Jewish trial’ and who is introduced here in the Gospel for the first time, interrogates Jesus as if he knew everything about the charges carried against him, inasmuch as he starts asking: “Are you the king of the Jews?” (the charge of claim to kingship being essential to the subsequent account); but the fact that Pilate knew the charges against Jesus implies that he had been minutely informed in advance. Third, the charge brought against Jesus is not the same in the Jewish and the Roman trial: before the Sanhedrin Jesus is accused of having claimed to be “the Messiah, the Son of God”, but before Pilate he is accused of having claimed to be the king of the Jews; although it would be admittedly possible to understand the second charge as a kind of convenient ‘translation’ of the former one for the Romans, it is not easy to explain why this would not have been remarked by the narrator, and anyway this again means that important information has been dropped. Fourth, there is a fundamental discrepancy between the Synoptics and the Gospel of John in so crucial a matter as the identity of those responsible for Jesus’ arrest: whilst the Synoptics ascribe it to the Jewish authorities and depict the arresting party as a Jewish throng (“a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders”: Mk 14:43), the Fourth Gospel mentions a cohort (σπεῖρα) and a tribune (χιλίαρχος, the usual Greek rendering of the tribunus militum who commanded a cohort). These and other points are further traces that crucial information has been dropped in the story.

The last point we have noticed is relevant enough to deserve a more detailed survey regarding its reliability as a historical report. It has been sometimes

39 For an exhaustive survey, see the major – but seldom cited – article by Goguel 1910.
40 Mk 15:2.9.12.18.26.32 (“king of Israel”). Also in Mt 27:11 Pilate, without having been informed, knows what Jesus is accused of.
41 Incidentally, let us note that Matthew’s report on the dream of Pilate’s wife, who had “suffered a great deal because of” Jesus (Mt 27:19), however legendary and lacking any historical reliability, assumes that the Romans knew in advance about him.
42 See Jn 18:3.12 (for χιλίαρχος, see Acts 21:31). Mk 15:16 and Mt 27:27 also use the term σπεῖρα, but located at the praetorium of Pilate and in the context of the mockery and flagellation of Jesus.
asserted that such a Roman participation in Jesus’ arrest is unlikely,\(^{43}\) and/or that σπεῖρα and χιλίαρχος do not designate Roman troops, but a detachment of the Temple police and its leader, as far as they are terms adopted by the Hasmoneans and Herodians for their own police and army;\(^{46}\) in such an interpretation, any contradiction between the Synoptics and John vanishes. Quite a few arguments, however, militate against this interpretation. Although within a Palestinian context those terms could theoretically refer to non-Roman troops, their usual meaning is that of Roman military, and in fact in the rest of the New Testament, “cohort” always refers to Roman soldiers.\(^{45}\) Moreover, an author living under Roman rule and writing in Greek would know very well the usual meaning of those terms and would not lead his readers into error; in fact, he refers to the cohort with the article (τὴν σπεῖραν), as something well known – but the only well-known cohort was the Roman one, stationed in the Antonia Tower in Jerusalem. A further argument is that the author distinguishes these troops from the attendants (ὑπερήται) supplied by “the chief priests and the Pharisees” (Jn 18:3) or “the Jews” (Jn 18:12), thereby indicating that the cohort is not Jewish.\(^{46}\) In addition, it is extremely unlikely that the army of a client ruler would be doing this sort of thing in the Roman province of Judaea, as it is far outside of Herodian jurisdiction. From all this, it may confidently be inferred that, through the use of technical terminology, the author is thinking of Roman troops.

This conclusion is all the more probable because the author of the Fourth Gospel betrays decidedly anti-Jewish feelings. He places the burden of the responsibility for Jesus’ death on the shoulders of the 'Ιουδαῖοι, and his sympathies lay with the Romans; he emphatically exonerates the prefect, to whom three similarly worded denials of guilt are ascribed: “I find no case against him” (’Εγὼ οὐδεμίαν εὑρίσκω ἐν αὐτῷ αἰτίαν).\(^{47}\) Therefore, it is inherently unlikely that he would have used of his own accord some terms leading his audience to think

\(^{43}\) “[H]öchst unwahrscheinlich” (Blinzler 1969, 92). The arguments set forth by this conservative scholar, however, do not hold. For instance, he argues that if Pilate’s troops had arrested Jesus he would have been taken directly to the prefect’s headquarters (Blinzler 1969, 93–95; see also MacAdam 1995, 155–158); this objection, however, assumes the reliability of the Gospel accounts of the “trial before the Sanhedrin”, but these accounts are extremely suspect from a historical standpoint.

\(^{44}\) Blinzler 1969, 95 f., refers to the fact that this is the meaning of σπεῖρα in the Septuaginta (e.g. Jdt 14:11; 2 Macc 8:23; 12:20.22, and also sometimes in Josephus (Ant. Iud. 17.215; Bell. Iud. 2.11)); something similar happens with χιλίαρχος (see Mk 6:21).

\(^{45}\) See Mk 15:16 = Mt 27:27; Acts 10:1; 21:31; 27:1.

\(^{46}\) See Brown 1993, 248.

\(^{47}\) Jn 18:38b; 19:4; 19:6. To this, Jn 19:12 (ὁ Πιλᾶτος ἐζήτει ἀπολύσαι αὐτὸν: “Pilate sought to release him”) should be added.
of Roman military personnel if he had not possessed a report or early tradition bearing out such participation: this item of information blatantly contradicts his tendency to magnify the Jewish responsibility for Jesus’ fate and downplay the Roman one.  

As to the alleged implausibility of a whole cohort used to arrest Jesus, two remarks are in order. On the one hand, this objection assumes – along with and relying on the Christian tradition – the notion that Jesus was an innocuous preacher, but, as several scholars have compellingly argued, this assumption is untenable and dictated by theological prejudices. There is a lot of evidence and arguments hinting at an involvement of Jesus in anti-Roman stance, so the use of Roman troops against a royal claimant surrounded by an armed entourage would have made perfect sense. On the other, the use of Roman military terms as “cohort” and “tribune” might have been perhaps used in an inexact, exaggerated way to supply colour, irrespective of the quantity of the troops envisaged in the underlying tradition; one could imagine, for instance, that the military unit was not a cohort but – for instance – a manipulus (and in this case χιλίαρχος should be reduced to a decurio).

As the French scholar Maurice Goguel compellingly argued more than a century ago, a close reading of the Gospel accounts of the arrest not only makes evident their lack of accuracy and that crucial information has been silenced in those accounts, but also that an underlying story can be glimpsed. After all, the rewriting was not carried out in a completely consistent way, and that is why some traces of the editorial work still remain. It appears to have been a more original (oral or written) account according to which the course of events was quite different to that actually reported in the Canonical Gospels, and in that underlying story the Romans played the main role in Jesus’ arrest. Put otherwise, unlike what Mark would have his readers believe, there was a Roman involvement in Jesus’ fate before the so-called “trial before Pilate”. The existence of traces of that alternative story has led several scholars to suggest the possibility that Romans

---

48 “On weighing the arguments it seems more likely that the author of the Second Gospel would have refrained from mentioning Roman participation in the arrest than that the writer of the Fourth would have invented it” (Winter 1974, 62 f.).

49 See Goguel 1910, 321 and passim. Let us note that his conclusion – “On peut reconnaître des morceaux qui ont dû à l’origine appartenir à des traditions où les événements se déroulaient d’une autre manière” (1910, 174) – might be seen as an exemplification of Kautsky’s more general reflection on the Gospel story: “Das ist in der Form, wie es hier steht, eine ganz sonderbare Geschichte, voll von Widersprüchen, die ursprünglich ganz anders gelaufen haben muß” (1908, 387). The fact that the work of a Protestant exegete essentially confirms the approach of a Marxist historian in such a key issue should give pause.
themselves arrested Jesus, and that later Christian accounts shifted the blame to Jewish authorities.50

Possibility, however, does not still mean probability, and a historian should be wary not to incur the fallacy *possibiliter ergo probabiliter*. But when the significant traces of Jesus’ involvement in anti-Roman ideology and practice are fully taken into account, the probability of a Roman participation in his arrest exponentially increases. Furthermore, everything suggests that the Golgotha event was a collective execution of insurgents (λῃσταί) at the hands of Roman soldiers: λῃστής – the term in Mark and Matthew – is the word Josephus uses to designate Jewish insurgents. Given that, according to the available evidence, when the Romans controlled Judaea until the Jewish War, they only crucified political rebels,51 by far the most natural assumption is that the two λῃσταί were revolutionaries.52 In these circumstances, the most reasonable presumption is that the Romans deemed these men extremely dangerous, must have been seriously interested in their fate, and must accordingly have played, from the very beginning, a crucial role in identifying them, and in their arrest.53 Although the Gospels provide virtually no information about the ‘back-story’ of the men crucified along with Jesus, there is not the slightest reason to think that they were not arrested by the Romans. The conclusion is thereby forced upon us that the most likely hypothesis is that the responsibility not only for the death but also for the arrest of Jesus rests on the Roman authorities.54

The contention that, most probably, Romans were responsible for Jesus’ arrest – both in the sense that they carried it out and that the order for the arrest was issued by imperial officials –, compels us to pose the elementary question about how they came to know about him. According to the Gospel view, the Jewish religious authorities were the only ones interested in plotting against the Galilean and those who brought him before Pilate, so whoever strenuously clings

50 Besides the classic works by Brandon and others, for some recent examples see e.g. Stegemann 2002b, 382; Destro – Pesce 2014, 159; Martin 2014, 19.
51 See Kuhn 1982, 724.
52 See supra, n. 3. Furthermore, Jn 18:40 uses the term for Barabbas, who according to Mk 15:7 “was in prison with the insurrectionists (στασιασταί)”; the reference to στάσις and στασιασταί betrays a revolutionary atmosphere that coheres well with the political interpretation of λῃσταί.
53 The fact that the collective nature of the crucifixion at Golgotha makes the Gospel version suspect has been sometimes perceived: “Pilate was probably not nearly as reluctant to accept the charges as the gospels assert, indeed, far from it, for he executed two other dissidents as an example along with Jesus” (Rutledge 2001, 74).
54 For a recent, sustained argument that Jesus was probably arrested by Roman troops, see Bermejo-Rubio 2016.
to the standard view would answer that question by saying that Romans became aware of Jesus because of the information provided by the chief priests. Nevertheless, taking into account the insurgent dimensions of Jesus’ message and practice opens a new scenario, because it means that Romans themselves would have been most predisposed to counteract his activity as threatening the *pax Romana* in Judaea. An eloquent preacher with a message of an impending divine kingdom, a bold royal claim, criticizing Antipas, probably opposing the payment of tribute and surrounded by a group of hotheaded disciples would have been deemed not only potentially destabilizing for public order, but a real danger to it.

Admittedly, we cannot be sure when and where the Romans came to know about Jesus. According to Mark, Jesus’ mission took place predominantly within the frontiers of Galilee,55 but he does also represent him as active in Judaea on his way toward Jerusalem. John’s Gospel, however, portrays Jesus as working actively among the people in every area of Israelite heritage, in Samaria and the Trans-Jordan as well as in Galilee, but primarily in Judaea. Thus Jesus may have worked for a time in Judaea as well as in Galilee.56 Despite the necessary vagueness of every deduction due to the character of our sources, what emerges from the foregoing discussion is that the Romans might have been – and probably were – knowledgeable about Jesus independently of any information provided by the chief priests.

This conclusion leads us back to the Gospel portrayals of the prefect as a single-handed man and their mutism regarding his staff. As I have argued, even an equestrian prefect like Pilate must have had some kind of *officium* to assist him in his administrative (civil and military) tasks. My point is that in his staff there must have been someone responsible for internal security of the province, who would have at his disposal a body of – military or civil – informants. Of course, in the first century any kind of secret service seems to have been still in an embryonic stage of development within the Roman Empire. Moreover, since it is not clear how large a provincial staff Pilate actually had, we can only surmise how wide or limited his surveillance and intelligence-gathering capacities were.57 Admittedly, on the issue of gathering intelligence, Josephus – our sole comprehensive source for Roman Judaea in the first century – tells us next to nothing about the

55 Although Mark refers to the extension of Jesus’ mission into surrounding areas beyond Galilee, it is difficult to judge whether this happened during his life or it is a retrojection of the Nazorean mission after his crucifixion.

56 Mark’s chronological and topographical remarks are the invention of the evangelist, as compellingly showed in Schmidt 1919.

57 This helps explain why a recent article on counterinsurgency is mainly limited to the First War period; see Russell 2016.
prefects’ and procurators’ use of informants. Nevertheless, several lines of reasoning allow us to be fairly sure that informants were available to Pilate.

Firstly, there is a general, almost commonsense argument. Intelligence gathering, evaluation, and analysis have always been part not only of war, but also of any imperial rule over foreign nations. Every Roman governor – irrespective of his category –, once installed in his province, needed to become acquainted with the nature of any potential threat which faced them, and this means that he needed to have reliable information about the current state of his province from a security point of view, public order being a main concern both for the emperor and the governor. The jurist Ulpian describes a fundamental priority of Roman rule by advising that “a good and serious governor should see to it that the province he rules remains pacified and quiet” (Congruit bono et gravi praesidi curare, ut pacata atque quieta provincia sit quam regit). His contemporary Paulus reiterated the importance of this public-order function: “The emperors’ mandata state that he who commands the province must take care to purge the province of evil men” (In mandatis principum est, ut curet is, qui provinciae praeest, malis hominibus provinciam purgare). This means that there must have been some kind of surveillance. Although the majority of the Roman forces was based mostly at Caesarea, where the Roman prefect set up his headquarters, there were also troops assigned to the Antonia fortress, and probably a few other fortlets, garrisons, and towers dispersed along the provincial road system that permitted soldiers to go on daily patrol routines. After all, unlike the modern military, police work was one of the duties of ancient armies, so military outposts would be stationed throughout the provinces for tracking down both brigands and insurgents, with some troops assigned to road patrols. One is accordingly bound to assume

---

58 Of course, it is not surprising that little knowledge has survived of practices protecting the security of the state and its provinces, which by definition was secret information.
59 See e.g. Dubovský 2006.
60 Austin – Rankov 1995, 143.
61 See resp. Dig. 1.18.13.Pr.; Paulus, Dig. 1.18.3.
62 Caesare[a] […] Iudaea caput est (Tac. Hist. 2.78.4).
63 At the outbreak of the Jewish revolt, some garrisons were scattered across the region (Bell. Iud. 2.318.408.484–486; 3.9–28.309). See Smallwood 1976, 147. Although literary sources rarely remark on the existence of fortlets and watchtowers, such structures have been uncovered by archaeologists (see Fischer 1996; Zeichmann 2018).
64 See Tert. Apol. 2; Phil. Flacc. 5; Front. Ad Ant. Pium 8 (militari industria circa quaerendos et continendos latrones). See Davies 1974, 323: “The New Testament provides an account of various police activities of Roman troops. They arrested and flogged Christ” (see also pp. 321–324). The function of Rome’s army as policing for small-scale threats has been emphasized in Isaac 1999.
that besides the main cohorts quartered in Caesarea, even in the first century a second-rate prefect like Pilate would have some ‘secret agents’. Since the forces available to the prefect were too small to effectively police Palestine, this kind of information ought to be mainly provided by spies and information agents – surely having years of experience within the province.

Secondly, this is all the more probable in a province like Judaea, near one of the most sensitive points in the Roman limes, namely, the frontier with the Parthian Empire, and accordingly of geopolitical importance. The main point is that, in this region, popular leaders could always call on a strong sense of deep-rooted native identity, developed through the centuries by legal and religious distinctive tradition, the tenacious myths of the ‘chosen people’ and of a glorious past – revived by the Maccabees –; all this turned Palestine into something like a powder keg. In fact, this was a particularly rebellious region, where serious revolts had compelled the legate of Syria to intervene with his legions only some decades before and to crucify about two thousand Jews outside of Jerusalem, where the so-called ‘Fourth Philosophy’ had emerged in 6 C.E., where occasionally the prefect had to cope with outbursts of violence and protest triggered by nationalistic and religious feelings, and where a few decades later a full-scale war would break out. Although in writing about the period before the Jewish War Tacitus referred to “quietness”, this is a broad judgment which oversimplifies the situation and should be carefully examined, to the extent that it could die the death of a thousand qualifications. Even subjugated, Judaeans and Galileans persisted in protest, resistance, and periodic rebellion against Roman rule. Since there are indications that the anti-Roman ideology of Judas the Galilean was alive and well for several decades both in Galilee and Judaea – in the forties two sons

65 It is extremely probable that secret agents would have been in constant touch not only with Roman bureaucracy but with the provincial population as well. Hence they would be in an excellent position to observe and to report on all kinds of situations of interest to the government. Although the Julio-Claudian policy involved an element of cooperation with the elites of Judaea, such a cooperation was to be expected only in large cities, in which lived a faction (usually the socially and economically prominent) for whom peace with Rome was preferable to insurrection, and which could convince or compel competing factions to refrain from revolt; such cooperation, however, could not be expected everywhere (see Russell 2016, 270).

66 See e.g. Loftus 1977.

67 _Sub Tiberio quies_ (Tac. Hist. 5.9.2). To start with, one should read the whole passage: _dein iussi a C. Caesare effigiem eius in templo locare arma potius sumpsere, quem motum Caesaris mors diremit_. On the probable meaning of Tacitus’ statement, see Schwartz 2013, 134–136.

68 In fact, as Martin Hengel perceptively remarked, “Das taciteische ‘sub Tiberio quies’ wird den Kleinkrieg in der Wüste kaum miteinbezogen haben” (Hengel 1976, 344).
of his were crucified by Tiberius Julius Alexander –, \(^6\) Romans must have been aware of the necessity of collecting reliable information about insurgents and their moves.

Thirdly, and more importantly, our conjecture seems to be proved by the effectiveness of prefects and procurators of Judaea at counteracting problems arising both in Jerusalem and other regions. In Josephus’ work there are several reports of popular prophets and/or messianic claimants in the first century in Judaea and Samaria who were not brought to trial, but were done away \textit{manu militari} by the action of a division of soldiers. Such are the cases (under Pontius Pilate) of the Samaritan prophet whom the masses followed to Mount Gerizim to find the holy artifacts ostensibly buried there by Moses, and the preemptive strikes leveled against the large multitude under the leadership of Theudas (during Fadus’ procuratorship) and the Egyptian (under Felix). \(^7\) In none of these cases are we told about how the Roman governors found out what was happening, but all these episodes took place outside Jerusalem, and some of them at a considerable distance (Samaria, the Judaean desert), others closer (the Mount of Olives). In every case the governor had obviously heard what was happening and sent heavily-armed troops in time to prevent those movements from gaining momentum and to nip them in the bud. \(^7\)

These convergent reflections entail the existence of an effective information network. Activity of surveillance and espionage, carried out with secrecy, can be inferred from the timely moves of the military. Although we should not imagine in this time and place a highly developed intelligence bureaucracy, and although we do not hear of information being gathered and do not know how it was collected, from the above-mentioned data it is a reasonable inference that some kind of reconnaissance and counterinsurgency service – however elementary – must have been at work. Such a network was presumably formed by a web of informants extending at a distance from Caesarea and Jerusalem and ready to search out and report on whatever disturbances were emerging, thereby allowing the

\(^6\) Bell. Iud. 2.220; Ant. Iud. 20.102. See Hengel 1976, \textit{passim}. For a defense and update of Hengel’s view of an ideologically consistent freedom movement traceable until the outbreak of the Jewish War, see Deines 2011.

\(^7\) See Josephus, Ant. Iud. 18.85–87; 20.97–98,118–136,167–172; Bell. Iud. 2.258–263. All these cases are also addressed in MacMullen 1966, 147.

\(^7\) The fact that the episode of the Egyptian prophet took place on the Mount of Olives (Bell. Iud. 2.262) is further relevant for my argument. Regarding Jesus’ arrest one could argue that it is more likely that a local police force, and not a detachment of Roman auxiliaries from outside Judaea, would be familiar with the layout of an area so close to Jerusalem. But, according to Josephus, the Egyptian’s attack was anticipated by the procurator Felix, who went to meet him with infantry.
prefect to anticipate the moves by the “enemies of the Roman order” whenever they took place.\textsuperscript{72}

Admittedly, we lack evidence of intelligence services in the auxilia for this period,\textsuperscript{73} but it is hardly credible that the security in a province like Judaea could have been obtained only through confining troops to barracks in a few cities and strongholds. Of course, we cannot assume that anti-insurgency intelligence gathering was normally provided by military personnel, although we cannot exclude it either. One of our problems is a limited knowledge of the constituency of the auxiliary troops. The troops under the command of Pilate were not crack legionaries or necessarily ethnic Italians, and in fact many of them must have been recruits from the Syro-Palestinian area, most of whom were enrolled from the predominantly pagan inhabited cities of Sebaste, Caesarea, and the Decapolis.\textsuperscript{74}

It is a reasonable surmise that, just as the auxiliary units were mainly enlisted from those predominantly Gentile cities, some informers could be also recruited from these areas. Nothing precludes there also being Jewish informants, because knowledge of Aramaic would have been essential to carry out tasks of surveillance and to blend in with a local population.\textsuperscript{75}

In the light of the former reflections, the assumption that the Romans would have relied solely on the information provided by the local (religious) authorities of Jerusalem becomes most unlikely. It is accordingly safer to assume that the prefect used agents and informers – delatores – to ferret out information and to detect and defuse any sort of potential subversion.\textsuperscript{76} This surveillance activity

\textsuperscript{72} The only mention of spies in the Gospels ascribes their use to religious authorities, although the issue involved (the payment of the tribute) and the allusion to the Roman governor gives much food for thought: “[The scribes and the chief priests,] keeping a close watch on him [scil. Jesus], sent spies [ἀπέστειλαν ἐγκαθέτους] who pretended to be righteous, so that they might catch him in some statement, so as to deliver him up to the power and authority of the governor [τῇ ἀρχῇ καὶ τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τοῦ ἡγεμόνος]” (Lk 20:19–20).

\textsuperscript{73} Of course, auxiliary units of the Roman army also needed scouting and reconnaissance capabilities, so they had their own complement of exploratores and speculatores, but that evidence comes from a later period, and these units operated only in a battlefield context anyway, moving ahead of an army; see Sheldon 2005, 165, 168; Liberati – Silverio 2010, 57–62.

\textsuperscript{74} See Speidel 1982/1983.

\textsuperscript{75} It has been emphatically stated that “The soldiers in the ‘Roman’ garrison of Judaea spoke Aramaic” (Mattern 2010, 173), but the linguistic capacities of such troops are far from clear: they must have known Greek, and Latin may have played a crucial role in the auxiliary forces, although it was probably less vital among the homogeneous levies of the early Empire; see Haynes 1999, 169–172.

\textsuperscript{76} The Gospel story of Judas makes sense in this context, representing an example of how delatores on a provincial level helped to meet opposition and resistance to Roman rule: “As the follower of a subversive group which faced imminent arrest and prosecution by the authorities,
would have been all the more necessary because insurgents may have remained in close contact with villagers, who protected them and viewed them as heroes of resistance. As to Jesus, there were many reasons (e.g. preaching about an imminent world turnabout, an armed retinue, royal claims, probable opposition to tribute, not to mention some disruptive actions in Jerusalem) for the Romans to be increasingly wary of the Galilean preacher without having needed any initiative against him from the priestly circle.\textsuperscript{77}

Of course, the former reflections do not mean that I am overplaying the systematic nature of Roman imperial rule: it should be obvious that even modern surveillance agencies sometimes have difficulty identifying potential threats.\textsuperscript{78} Nevertheless, I am not simply assuming that the Romans must have known Jesus’ group, but arguing that this is the most likely hypothesis when all the available evidence is gathered and considered. In fact, two further factors should be seriously taken into account. On the one hand, the Gospels witness the popularity of Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem like his success in the Galilee, and this is likely to represent the historical situation; however congenial such reports would be to the evangelists, there is every indication that the accounts hinting at Jesus’ popularity have a historical kernel.\textsuperscript{79} On the other hand, even if the belonging of some of Jesus’ disciples to organized groups of anti-Roman resistance is doubtful, the violent disposition of at least some of them is well attested in the tradition: the title “Boanerges” for James and John (Mk 3:17) suggests a rowdy reputation and a hot temper which are significantly displayed in Mark 9:38, and more harshly by their desire to resort to violence against a village of uncooperative Samaritans (Lk 9:51–56).\textsuperscript{80} These facts increase the probability that the Romans were on the track of Jesus and his group.

Judas will have turned \textit{delator} with a view to gaining immunity from the harsh punishments which could potentially follow” (Rutledge 2001, 75). Let us also note that tax-collectors, as native-born and multi-lingual persons, might have been an important source of credible information about local dissidents.

\textsuperscript{77} Although New Testament scholars have systematically overlooked Roman intelligence, it is intriguing that the German exegete Gerd Theissen, in his novel “The Shadow of the Galilean”, depicts the story of Andreas, a Galilean merchant, who becomes involved with Roman officials and ultimately collects information for them about Jesus of Nazareth; see Theissen 1986.

\textsuperscript{78} For instance, Fergus Millar has emphasized the limitations on the exercise of imperial power forced, for the most part, to deal reactively to situations as they arose (Millar 1977).

\textsuperscript{79} “The reaction of the Romans to Jesus, his death and the subsequent continuation of his movement demanded a figure of significance and stature […]. His evident power, popularity and charisma are the starting point for subsequent elaboration of his role” (Elliott 1982, 51).

\textsuperscript{80} “Jesus’ colleagues appear to have been the sort of people likely to alarm the Roman authorities” (Elliott 1982, 57).
Sources of Information (II): Client Rulers

Among the array of sources of strategic information available to each Roman governor, the client princes within and beyond his frontiers played a truly important role. Any client-king (or client-tetrarch) was expected to maintain order in his kingdom (or tetrarchy), so they had a vested interest in peace and security. Even if they had intractable and unruly populations, client rulers would know particularly well their subjects’ idiosyncrasies and they would accordingly be on the spot to deal with trouble. At the same time, for safety reasons, regular maintenance of close contact between client rulers and Roman governors was to be expected, particularly when the territory of the former was enclosed or surrounded by directly administered Roman territory. As has been recalled, this must have been especially true of the various tetrarchs and kings of Judaea.\footnote{See Austin – Rankov 1995, 145.} Therefore, we should turn now our attention to the tetrarch from Galilee and Peraea.

Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great by his Samaritan wife Malthace, after having received his early education at home, seems to have gone for the completion of his education to Rome, probably ca. 8 or 7 B.C.E., for some of his teenage years.\footnote{Ant. Iud. 17.20.} He was appointed tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea by Augustus after the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C.E. Moreover, the fact that he governed the territory of Galilee and Peraea as tetrarch for more than forty years (4 B.C.E. – 39 C.E.), ruling under three emperors (Augustus, Tiberius and Gaius Caligula), means that he was in good standing with Rome. When he rebuilt Sepphoris, he re-named it Autocratoris, in honor of the emperor (αὐτοκράτωρ being the Greek equivalent of the Latin imperator, a title received by Augustus). He fortified Betharamphtha in Peraea and renamed it Livias, in honor of Livia, Augustus’ wife (and subsequently Julias, when she became Julia Augusta in accordance with Augustus’ will). Moreover, he built a new city, Tiberias, named after Augustus’ successor.\footnote{See Ant. Iud. 18.27,36; Bell. Jud. 2.168.} As the names of these urbes Caesareae indicate, Antipas had learned from watching his father how to flatter the emperor.\footnote{Of course, this is a sequel to the initiatives of Antipas’ father: Herod had named the fortress Antonia in the Temple complex at Jerusalem after Mark Antony, and the city of Caesarea after Augustus.} He was personally very Hellenized and Romanized, and – as shown by inscriptions in his honour from Greek islands like Cos and Delos – he supported Graeco-Roman cults when away from Palestine.
As expected from a good client ruler, Antipas was prone to maintain public order in his domains and hold his potentially subversive subjects in check, thereby suppressing low-intensity threats.\(^{85}\) Admittedly, we do not have a lot of information available on Antipas’ internal politics: Josephus, by far the most informative literary source on the tetrarch, does not describe his reign in any profound detail, and does not provide us with evidence about his methods of keeping control of his tetrarchy. Nevertheless, the iron fist of his father, Herod – who had to cope with several uprisings and plots to assassinate him – must have taught him something.\(^{86}\) A revealing episode about Antipas’ political fears and his reaction to any perceived threat is his treatment of John the Baptist, a revered prophetic figure whom he put to death. The Gospels’ colourful and legendary account (attributing the responsibility for John’s death to the wiles of naughty women) is well known, but its historical reliability is suspect.\(^{87}\) Josephus’ version is significantly different; according to his account, John’s execution took place for fear of a revolt. Since the Baptist was an eloquent preacher who had ascendancy over the Jewish people, Antipas considered it wise to prevent any possible upheaval through a pre-emptive strike:

“When others too joined the crowds about him, because they were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons, Herod feared that such great persuasiveness over the people might lead to some kind of sedition [στάσις], for it looked as if they would do everything by his advice. Herod decided therefore that it would be much better to get rid of him before some innovation [νεώτερον] from him took place, striking first to remove any change coming about, so as not to regret getting into complicated affairs. Therefore, on account of the suspicion [ὑποψία] of Herod, John was sent in chains to Machaerus […] and there he was killed.”\(^{88}\)  

Josephus does not depict John as a dangerous man, but several reasons indicate that there was more than paranoia in Antipas’ decision to do away with him. On the one hand, the Gospels attest to the fact that he was an eschatological prophet announcing the impending doom – and such preaching had potentially obvious destabilizing effects on hearers. On the other, John seems to have said something directly critical against Antipas: either for having married his living half-brother’s wife, Herodias – witnessed by Mark 6:18 –, a union against the Law (according to Leviticus 18:16; 20:21); or for having disregarded the Torah on some occasions (Josephus tells that Antipas had built Tiberias on an old graveyard, an unclean

---

85 Braund 1984, 91 f.  
86 On the several measures taken by Herod to police his kingdom, see Gracey 1986.  
87 The Gospel account (Mk 6:17–29 and par.) is mainly inspired by Jewish stories elaborating on 1 Kings 21 and on the book of Esther; see Hoehner 1972, 118, n. 1; Aus 1988, 1–7, 39–74.  
88 Ant. Iud. 18.118–119.
area), or because of other reasons. This rebuke of Antipas, raised by an eloquent man with a fame of prophet before crowds assembled in the wilderness, might have taken on politically far-reaching implications.

Although it would have not been difficult for Antipas to know of John’s preaching, the tetrarch must have had some kind of informers in his realm, local leaders and troops being able to provide the tetrarch with detailed first-hand information. Antipas was well aware that some of his own subjects had no particular affection for him, all the less so because some cities in his kingdom stood as vast monuments to the king’s connections with Rome in general and the emperor in particular, and this in turn might generate further resentment. Moreover, Galilee had a steady stream of troublemakers, beginning with the “chief robber” Hezekiah in 47 B.C.E. and following through Judas “the Galilean”. And although the notion that Galileans were exceptionally belligerent and disposed to revolution might be no more than a Judaean stereotype, it would have not been taken lightly by the cautious Antipas. The fact that he stayed in power for so long might mean that he relied, among other aspects, on an effective information network which allowed him to restrain public resentment and successfully quell any existent tension or conflict.

Several facts demonstrate that Antipas was a trustworthy ruler for Tiberius. For instance, the tetrarch was given a role in the top-level political meeting between Rome and Parthia on the Euphrates, in which he acted as broker: according to Josephus, after Artabanus and the legate of Syria, L. Vitellius, had arrived at the terms of an agreement to establish peace between the two empires, Antipas gave a feast for them in a pavilion which he constructed in the middle of the river. Furthermore, when some years later Antipas was attacked by Aretas and his army was severely damaged, Tiberius took the tetrarch’s side in the quarrel and wrote to Vitellius to declare war on the Nabatean king. But when Gaius became emperor and Agrippa was appointed king the fortunes of Antipas changed.

---

89 See Ant. Iud. 18.36–38. Lk 3:19–20 states that John had reproached the tetrarch “concerning Herodias, his brother’s wife, and concerning all the evil things [περὶ πάντων ... πονερῶν] that Herod had done”.
90 See Webb 1991, 367; Taylor 1997, 238–241.
91 For the former, Bell. Iud. 1.204; Ant. Iud. 14.159,167–174. For the latter, Bell. Iud. 2.117–119; Ant. Iud. 18.4–10,23.
92 See Rappaport 1992; Goodman 2001, 613–617.
93 Let us note that the term οπεκουλάτωρ (a Latin loanword, speculator, originally meaning “spy” or “scout”) is used by Mark to designate the guard sent by Antipas to execute John the Baptist (Mk 6:27). Tacitus uses it (Hist. 1.24–25; 2.73) for “a special body of imperial guards who tend to appear in moments of military intrigue” (Sherwin-White 1963, 109).
94 Ant. Iud. 18.115.
Although the Gospels have toned down the political dimensions of Jesus’ career, it is extremely remarkable that they have kept several convergent traces of a reciprocal hostility between Jesus and Antipas. In Mark 8:15 Jesus warns his disciples to beware of the leaven of Herod, a metaphor with a ring of genuineness because it was not used at all in the primitive Church. In Luke 13:2 Jesus calls Antipas “that fox (or: that jackal)”, thereby showing his disdain but perhaps also his fear.\(^95\) According to Mark 12:13–17, some ‘Herodians’ are mentioned as forming part of a group which asks Jesus whether it is lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not. A whole series of passages depict Jesus avoiding Antipas and trying to go unnoticed, as if he were aware that the tetrarch was hunting him down and Galilee was no longer a safe place for him;\(^96\) in fact, a plausible explanation for the fact that the Gospels do not mention Sepphoris and Tiberias at all is because Jesus avoided Antipas’ main cities for fear of the tetrarch.\(^97\) Other traces of such intense antipathy are more subtle: for instance, when Jesus, referring to John the Baptist, asks his hearers if they have gone out into the wilderness to see “a reed shaken by the wind” or “a man clothed in soft material” he could implicitly refer to Herod Antipas, whose coins showed a reed.\(^98\) What is even more sobering, Luke 13:1 tells that some Pharisees warn Jesus that Antipas wanted to kill him. This reciprocal hostility is understandable, in the first place because of the links connecting Jesus and John the Baptist. But, just as in the case of John, Antipas’ reasons to chase Jesus must have been political.

Since we have a convergent pattern of material, and since it is hard to imagine why this kind of negative information would have been contrived by the Christian tradition, there are good reasons to believe that Antipas knew about Jesus and that his stance towards him was deeply hostile. In fact, Jesus’ messianic and royal claims made him even more threatening for the tetrarch than the Baptist had been: Antipas must have regarded the Galilean preacher as a potential political rival.\(^99\)

\(^95\) The Greek ἀλώπηξ is usually translated as “fox”, but Jesus’ Aramaic word can only have been ta’alā, which also means “jackal”; this would have been a more pejorative label (see Casey 1998, 188 f.).

\(^96\) Mk 6:45.53; 7:31; 8:10.22.27; 9:2.30.33; 10:1. For a compelling treatment of this issue, see Tyson 1960.

\(^97\) See Chancey 2005, 86.

\(^98\) Mt 11:7–11; Lk 7:24–28. See Theissen 1989.

\(^99\) It has been noticed that Mark has purposefully constructed a narrative competition between Antipas and Jesus, the only two characters who are referred with the term βασιλεύς; see Gelardini 2011.
The former discussion has an obvious bearing on our subject. There is every indication that Antipas was well informed about Jesus and his group. If he had known Jesus’ plan to go to Jerusalem or had suspected that the preacher had abandoned Galilee to make inroads into Judaea, he would have undoubtedly warned Pilate about Jesus’ troubling activities. On the one hand, his duty as ally of the Romans was to ensure that public order prevailed, and to provide information about troublemakers. On the other hand, to have the prefect informed was not only his duty but also his real interest: if Pilate could do the dirty job of getting rid of Jesus, that meant one more problem solved. Moreover, Galileans causing important disturbances in Judaea could make Romans think that Antipas was not able to keep control over their own subjects (a precedent having already been that of Judas ‘the Galilean’, the mentor of the so-called ‘Fourth Philosophy’). As for Pilate, whether he had previously heard about Jesus or not, he would have been thankful to Antipas for providing him with such valuable information.

One could perhaps counteract what some scholars sometimes state, namely, that the relationship between Pilate and Antipas was not good. This contention seems to be drawn from a single sentence in Luke, which is a kind of coda to a section which, in turn, is contained only in this Gospel, according to which Jesus was sent from Pilate to Antipas for questioning, and possibly also for conviction (Lk 23:6–12). Before tackling the question of the relationship between Antipas and Pilate, the issue of the historical value of the Lukan account should be briefly discussed. There are, in fact, quite a few arguments allowing us to call into question the reliability of this passage. First, neither Mark nor Matthew knows anything about this alleged meeting of Jesus and Antipas, despite its obvious significance for the tradition, had it happened. Second, even if Luke is unclear about how Antipas judges Jesus, he is specific about how Pilate perceives his judgment, because the prefect backs his verdict of Jesus as innocent by referring to Antipas, so the prefect understands the tetrarch’s act as one of acquittal: “But also not Herod, for he sent him back to us” (Lk 23:15); now, this episode blatantly contradicts the whole picture of Antipas as an active pursuer of Jesus, which, as we have argued earlier, makes full sense from a historical standpoint: someone who had

100 “Antipas might even have attempted to use his servants and allies to spy on, oppose, and discredit Jesus in public [...]. At the very least, verisimilitude favors the idea of Antipas’s vigilance and interference” (Meier 2000, 746).

101 “He stirs up the people all over Judaea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here” (Lk 23:5).

102 A similar tradition reappears in Acts 4:27 (Herod and Pontius Pilate are mentioned together as those who rose against Jesus), but this cannot be counted as independent attestation, because either the author of the Books of Acts is the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke, or he knew him.
earlier tried to kill Jesus now has the chance to do exactly that and does not do it. Third, the sending of Jesus to Antipas assumes that Pilate himself had no good reasons to condemn Jesus, but this is – as argued above – unsound; according to Roman law, Pilate had very solid grounds to have Jesus crucified, so he did not need in the least Antipas’ judgment. Fourth, the texts asserts that Pilate sends Jesus to Antipas when – and because – the prefect learns that Jesus was a Galilean and accordingly under Herod’s jurisdiction (ἐκ τῆς ἔξουσίας Ἰηρώδου), but this explanation is suspect: it assumes that in that period the accused was put on trial in his home province (forum domicilii), but this custom seems to have been introduced only later, and the ordinary practice of the early Principate was that people who had been accused of anything were tried in the province in which the misdeeds had been performed (forum delicti). Fifth, the depiction of Antipas’ behavior is inconsistent, not to say simply pointless: at the outset he is exceedingly glad (ἐχάρη λίαν: 23:8) to see Jesus, but then he treats him with contempt and ridicules him. To sum up, there are many convergent reasons to infer that the Lukan pericope is nothing but a sheer figment of the author’s imagination.

Also suspect is the relationship between Antipas and Pilate, mentioned in the last verse. The Lukan pericope ends as follows:

“And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.”

This passage is the only source affirming that the prefect and the tetrarch had a bad relationship, and that this enmity found its resolution on the occasion referred to. Now, the main argument adduced in modern scholarship in support of the reliability of this report is that what Luke narrates elsewhere about “the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices” (Lk 13:1) must have had a negative bearing on the relationship between Pilate and Antipas: the tetrarch would have got angry at the prefect because he had some of his own

---

103 Hoehner’s arguments – “Probably he did this primarily to get rid of an awkward case. He may however have known that Antipas desired to see Jesus” (1972, 182) – are rather speculative.
104 See Sherwin White 1963, 28–31.
105 Other Christian sources endorse this information; see e.g. Iust. Mart. Apol. 140.5–6; Tert. Resurr. 20; Stridently tendentious works try to argue for a historical nucleus; see e.g. Brown 1993 785; Jensen 2006, 121 f.
106 Lk 23:12.
subjects killed.107 There are, however, several problems with that contention, which put it into serious doubt. There is no independent attestation for enmity between Herod and Pilate – and let us recall that many other pieces of information provided by the Passion accounts are unreliable –, but it is easy to glimpse the theological rationale which could have led Luke to invent the whole scene, as Martin Dibelius argued a century ago: the banding together of the two rulers could be inferred from Psalm 2:2 (Οἱ ἄρχοντες συνήχθησαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ κατὰ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ κατὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ), which depicts the world rulers gathering against the Lord and his Anointed;108 through the idea that Pilate, although originally Antipas’ foe, became friends with him through Jesus, Luke – or an underlying tradition – might have conveyed the notion that the soteriological effect of Jesus’ death (as a scapegoat) extends to the rulers, his trial being the occasion of their reconciliation. Furthermore, if the information about the Galileans killed by Pilate is trustworthy, this would have not had a negative effect upon the relationship of the prefect with Antipas and would not have presumably offended the tetrarch; far from it, the most probable reason for such intervention was the anti-Roman, subversive nature of those Galileans, but this means that Antipas would have been extremely pleased to see such troublemaking subjects neutralized (irrespective of whether such neutralization had been carried out by Roman troops).109 Therefore, the killing of some Galileans, for the simple fact that they were his subjects, would not have offended Antipas in the least. Quite the contrary, since for the pragmatic tetrarch a repressive action against insurgent Galileans would have only meant, once more, another problem solved.

To sum up, there are no compelling reasons to infer that the Roman prefect of Judaea and the pro-Roman tetrarch of Galilee had a strained relationship. This much is indeed clear: as a faithful and friendly client ruler, Antipas would have been a source of information for Pontius Pilate, particularly in everything related to public order and security.110 He willingly collaborated both with the Syrian governor and the prefect of Judaea, not only out of loyalty, but also because in such matters his political survival was at stake: the most important thing for the down-

---

107 See e.g. Hoehner 1972, 175 f. and 181 (“The slaughter of the Galilaeans [...] offended Antipas”).
108 See Dibelius 1915, 113–126; Dodd 1963, 117, n. 2; Müller 1979, 111–114.
109 Hoehner does indeed mention the opinion of several scholars (Eisler, Wood, Cullmann, Blinzler), but he simply asserts that “whether or not these Galilaeans were Zealots, as some suggest, is impossible to determine” (1972, 176). Of course it is impossible to be sure, but this is the most reasonable interpretation; see Blinzler 1957.
110 It has been indeed argued that Antipas was the prime mover behind Jesus’ crucifixion, and that, when Pilate leaps instantly on the issue of kingship (Mk 15:1) an obvious candidate for having initiated that charge was Antipas himself; see Parker 1987.
to-earth son of Herod the Great was political survival. Since his interests corresponded with those of Rome, irrespective of their personal relationships – and nothing indicates that they were on bad terms – the tetrarch would have informed Pilate as part of his client-ruler relationship.\footnote{This aspect is all the more important if, as it has been argued, counterinsurgency – as a facet of power – is viewed in the light of a network of social and personal relationships. On this ‘personal power’, see MacMullen 1986; Shaw 1993.}

**Conclusions and Further Remarks**

A careful approach to the Gospel passion accounts reveals their scarcely reliable nature as historical sources. Although they do indeed contain some helpful material which can be cautiously used to design a profile of their main character, the overall picture and many details reported in them are deeply biased by apologetic and polemical religious interests and do not deserve any credit. Only through a critical survey it is possible to glimpse an underlying and quite different story, and to reconstruct in a tentative way the identity of Jesus of Nazareth and his place within the history of Judaism in the Roman Empire.

One of the most unreliable elements of the Gospel accounts, which seems to involve a momentous distortion of facts, is the portrayal of Pontius Pilate as a puzzled and single-handed prefect who, as such, had to rely upon the Jewish authorities to get (misguided) information about Jesus, and who pronounced him innocent whilst had him scourged and crucified. Such a narrative has neither rhyme nor reason. This contribution provides some insights through which a more compelling reconstruction of the underlying story behind the Gospels can be carried out. To start with, it takes seriously into account the well-argued hypothesis that Jesus and his group were somehow involved in anti-Roman resistance; usually dismissed in confessionally-driven quarters as too radical and disturbing, this hypothesis, taken up since the sixteenth century until the present, makes best sense of the evidence. Once it is realized that Jesus was not an innocuous preacher of ‘peace and love’, but a popular prophet aiming at leading a movement of renewal in Israel, preaching the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God, harbouring a royal/messianic claim, in conflict with the pro-Roman tetrarch of Galilee, surrounded by an armed entourage, and probably having caused some unrest in Jerusalem, it is possible to introduce two inextricably related aspects into the discussion. On the one hand, the elementary fact that, as every provincial governor, even equestrian prefects like Pontius Pilate must have had an offic-
cium to help him in his administrative duties, and that in this staff there must have been someone responsible for internal security of the province. On the other hand is the reasonable assumption that, as every provincial governor, Pilate had several sources of information at his disposal, among which (military or civil) informers and/or the Herodian client rulers – particularly Herod Antipas – must have played a prominent role.\textsuperscript{112} Such an information network, which would have provided the Roman prefect with sensitive data on threats to public order, might afford the missing link for understanding the ludicrous Gospel story. This would clarify why the connection between Jesus’ bold claims and his crucifixion along with insurgents is not that offered by the Christian tradition – the (inexistent) abrogation of the Law or the (inexplicable) ‘envy’ or ‘hatred’ of the chief priests, the Pharisees, and so on –,\textsuperscript{113} but instead the reliable information regarding his anti-Roman preaching and activities.

When all those insights are gathered and connected, we glimpse a story which makes real sense, and allows – and even compels – us to dispel the Gospel version, according to which the Jerusalem religious authorities warned the prefect about an innocuous Jesus at the last minute, as extremely improbable from a historical standpoint. Quite the contrary, since Jesus’ movement was indeed threatening for the Roman imperial order, irrespective of whether Pilate found out what he knew about the Galilean from his own informers, Jewish collaborationists or the tetrarch (or from some or all of them), the most likely surmise is that he must have been kept informed in advance about him and must have taken the initiative to counter the danger. Therefore, the order for the arrest was given in all probability by a responsible Roman official, perhaps by Pilate himself.\textsuperscript{114}

This conclusion means that, although effaced by the Christian tradition, Romans seem to have been present from the very beginning in the events leading to Gethsemane, and from there to Golgotha. This hypothesis allows us to undo the striking imbalance pointed out in the introduction to this article: instead of a narration in which there are Jews at the beginning and Romans only at the end, we get a more consistent picture in which Romans are involved during the whole process. Such a picture makes, by far, more historical sense.

Furthermore, our survey could ultimately explain the emergence of the Lukian account of Pilate sending Jesus to Antipas. Admittedly, the role Antipas

\textsuperscript{112} This fact might be hinted at in the Fourth Gospel. When Pilate asks Jesus if he is the king of the Jews, he answers: “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” (Ἀπὸ σεαυτοῦ σὺ τοῦτο λέγεις, ἢ ἄλλοι σοι εἶπον περὶ ἐμοῦ;) (Jn 19:34).
\textsuperscript{113} See e.g. Mk 15:10 (διὰ φθόνον παραδέδωκεν αὐτὸν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς = “the chief priests had handed [Jesus] over to him out of envy”).
\textsuperscript{114} See e.g. Goguel 1910; Winter 1974, 204 f.
played in the conviction of Jesus, if any, cannot be ascertained beyond doubt, precisely because the Roman prefect had several sources of information at his disposal, and client rulers were just one of them.\textsuperscript{115} But, although I have argued that this account is highly doubtful from a historical standpoint, it might have relied on the memory (or even just the rumour) that Antipas was actively interested in silencing Jesus (as he had silenced John the Baptist), and in this way was somehow involved in Jesus’ arrest and death.\textsuperscript{116} Through this episode Luke – although in an inconsistent way – underscores the part that Antipas, as a faithful pro-Roman client ruler, might have played in Jesus’ fate.

This does not imply that some kind of participation of the Jewish authorities in Jesus’ fate is unthinkable and should be hastily ruled out. After all, the Jewish leaders were responsible for maintaining public order and peace in Jerusalem and had therefore the obligation to cooperate in the maintenance of the Roman government in their land. And it is perhaps easier to explain the Gospel attribution of a Jewish initiative against Jesus if some actual core is assumed. This possibility, however, does not represent an endorsement for the biased Gospel accounts. As Maurice Goguel argued, the Jewish presence in the tradition becomes understandable if, for instance, Pilate consulted the Sanhedrin just as a precautionary measure, in order to make sure that his action against Jesus and his group would not arouse opposition.\textsuperscript{117} In any case, a further consideration is in order: any move of the Jewish authorities against their own co-religionists in a context of imperial dominion must have been carried out under compulsion.\textsuperscript{118} This means that the ultimate responsibility for Jesus’ crucifixion lies with the Roman power, not only in the immediate and obvious sense that they crucified him, but also in the sense that they held control over the country, and therefore,

\textsuperscript{115} The idea that there was a tripartite conspiracy of Pilate, Antipas and the chief priests against Jesus, and that it was instigated by the tetrarch, was put forward by Pierson Parker. The problems with these contentions are, on the one side, that Parker assumes without further discussion the reliability of the Gospel accounts, and, on the other, that this scholar does not seem to realize that the idea of such a three-way alliance might be nothing but a theological theologumenon reflecting Psalm 2:2. Thus, Parker is right when he writes: “When Pilate, on confronting Jesus, pounces at once on the charge of kingship, it has to be because somebody has coached him beforehand” (1987, 200); only we cannot be sure whether the source of this information was Antipas, Roman intelligence or a \textit{delator}.

\textsuperscript{116} Let us note that, according to the Gospels, Jesus affected members of Antipas’ household too. See Lk 8:3; 24:10; Acts 13:1.

\textsuperscript{117} Goguel 1910, 321. For a lengthier treatment of the possibilities of a Jewish involvement, see Bermejo-Rubio 2016, 330–335.

\textsuperscript{118} This aspect can be drawn from Jn 11:47–50, and was convincingly argued by Winter 1974, 57.
they had put the Jewish authorities in the tricky, even tragic situation of having to
control and quash their own people’s longing for freedom, on pain of a bloodier
intervention. In this sense, it has been rightly asserted that the cooperation of
the Jewish authorities with the prefect is only conceivable if they are deemed not
autonomous, but a part of the system of Roman rule.119

It is unfortunate that, up to the very present, the desperately unrealistic
passion accounts are deemed as historically reliable in many scholarly quarters,
giving rise to all kind of outlandish pseudo-historical works.120 The reconstruc-
tion of Jesus’ fate offered in this paper is indeed hypothetical, and, given the lack
of hard evidence, it must be necessarily so. But, unlike the partisan version of the
facts contained in the Gospels – and in so many modern reconstructions heavily
relying on them –, this reconstruction makes sense of the available evidence,
has contextual plausibility and explanatory power, and provides an intelligible
account in the light of what we know about the actual procedures of the Roman
Empire in the provinces.121 In this way, the foregoing analyses substantially
underpin the modern critical contention that Jesus of Nazareth is not the enig-
matic and unfathomable being who has been contrived by the religious imagina-
tion, but becomes instead an understandable historical actor within Palestinian
Judaism in the first century, and more specifically within the trajectories of the
Jewish resistance to the iron fist of the Roman Empire.

Acknowledgements: I am deeply grateful to Henry MacAdam, Juanjo Palao,
Sabino Perea, Brent Shaw, and Christopher Zeichmann for their generous and
helpful comments on a first draft of this article.

119 “Teil des Systems der römischen Ordnungs- und Polizeipolitik” (Stegemann 2002a, 34).
120 “Those who investigate and write about Jesus are academically trained in and teach in the-
ological schools or in university religious/theological studies departments, not in the field of
history and history departments. Not surprisingly, the standard assumptions, procedures, and
conceptual apparatus of historical Jesus studies have been heavily influenced or determined by
modern western Christian theology” (Horsley 2012, 151). It has been recently argued that the
heavy dominance of confessional views in the New Testament field might have prevented impor-
tant advances in the historical study of Christian origins; see Crossley 2006, xiii–xiv.
121 See the answer given by Brandon to some unsound criticisms by Martin Hengel (Brandon
1971, 56).
Bibliography

Aichele 1998: G. Aichele, Jesus’ Violence, in: G. Aichele – T. Pippin (eds.), Violence, Utopia and the Kingdom of God. Fantasy and Ideology in the Bible, London 1998, 72–91.

Allison 2010: D. C. Allison, Constructing Jesus. Memory, Imagination, and History, Grand Rapids 2010.

Aus 1988: R. Aus, Water into Wine and the Beheading of John the Baptist. Early Jewish-Christian Interpretation of Esther 1 in John 2,1–11 and Mark 6,17–29, Atlanta 1988.

Austin – Rankov 1995: N.J.E. Austin – B. Rankov, Exploratio. Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World from the Second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople, London 1995.

Avalos 2015: H. Avalos, The Bad Jesus. The Ethics of New Testament Ethics, Sheffield 2015.

Bammel 1984: E. Bammel, The Trial before Pilate, in: E. Bammel – C.F.D. Moule (eds.), Jesus and the Politics of his Day, Cambridge 1984, 415–451.

Berger 1996: K. Berger, Der ‘brutale’ Jesus. Gewaltsames in Wirken und Verkündigung Jesu, Bibel und Kirche 51, 1996, 119–127.

Bermejo-Rubio 2013: F. Bermejo-Rubio, (Why) Was Jesus the Galilean Crucified Alone? Solving a False Conundrum, Journal for the Study of the New Testament 36, 2013, 127–154.

Bermejo-Rubio 2014a: F. Bermejo-Rubio, Jesus and the Anti-Roman Resistance. A Reassessment of the Arguments, Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus 12, 2014, 1–105.

Bermejo-Rubio 2014b: F. Bermejo-Rubio, Was the Hypothetical ‘Vorlage’ of the Testimonium Flavianum a ‘Neutral’ Text? Challenging the Common Wisdom on Antiquitates Judaicae 18.63–64, JSJ 45, 2014, 326–365.

Bermejo-Rubio 2015: F. Bermejo-Rubio, La pretensión regia de Jesús el Galileo. Sobre la historicidad de un motivo en los relatos evangélicos, SHHA 33, 2015, 135–167.

Bermejo-Rubio 2016: F. Bermejo-Rubio, Between Gethsemane and Golgotha, or Who Arrested the Galilean(s)? Challenging a Deep-Rooted Assumption in New Testament Research, AnnSE 33, 2016, 311–339.

Bermejo-Rubio 2018: F. Bermejo-Rubio, Is the Kingdom of God/Heaven a Promised Land? Traces of a Material View in Jesus of Nazareth’s Eschatology, Forma Breve 15, 2018, 81–98.

Bermejo-Rubio 2019: F. Bermejo-Rubio, La invención de Jesús de Nazaret. Historia, ficción, historiografía, Madrid 2019.

Blinzler 1957: J. Blinzler, Die Niedermetzelung von Galiläern durch Pilatus, NT 2, 1957, 24–49.

Blinzler 1969: J. Blinzler, Der Prozeß Jesu, Regensburg 1969.

Bond 1998: H. K. Bond, Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation, Cambridge 1998.

Bourgel 2012: J. Bourgel, Les récits synoptiques de la Passion préservent-ils une couche narrative composée à la veille de la Grande Révolte Juive?, NTS 58, 2012, 503–521.

Brandon 1967: S.G.F. Brandon, Jesus and the Zealots. A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity, Manchester 1967.

Brandon 1968: S.G.F. Brandon, The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth, London 1968.

Brandon 1971: S.G.F. Brandon, Jesus and the Zealots: Aftermath, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Manchester 54, 1971, 47–66.

Braund 1984: D. Braund, Rome and the Friendly King. The Character of the Client Kingship, London 1984.

Brown 1993: R. E. Brown, The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave I, New York 1993.

Bryan 2005: C. Bryan, Render to Caesar. Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower, Oxford 2005.
Buchanan 1984: G. W. Buchanan, Jesus. The King and his Kingdom, Macon 1984.
Casey 1998: M. Casey, Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel, Cambridge 1998.
Chancey 2005: M. A. Chancey, Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus, Cambridge 2005.
Crossley 2006: J. G. Crossley, Why Christianity Happened. A Sociohistorical Account of Christian Origins (26–50 CE), Louisville 2006.
Curran 2017: J. Curran, “To Be or to Be Thought to Be”. The Testimonium Flavianum (Again), NT 59, 2017, 71–94.
Davies 1974: R. W. Davies, The Daily Life of the Roman Soldier under the Principate, in: H. Temporini (ed.), Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt 2.1, Berlin 1974, 299–338.
Davies 1994: W. D. Davies, The Gospel and the Land. Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine, Sheffield 1994.
Deines 2011: R. Deines, Gab es eine jüdische Freiheitsbewegung? Martin Hengels “Zeloten” nach 50 Jahren, in: M. Hengel, Die Zeloten. Untersuchungen zur jüdischen Freiheitsbewegung in der Zeit von Herodes I. bis 70 n. Chr., Neuausgabe herausgegeben von R. Deines und C.-J. Thornton, Tübingen 2011, 403–448.
Destro – Pesce 2014: A. Destro – M. Pesce, La morte di Gesù. Indagine su un mistero, Milano 2014.
Dibelius 1915: M. Dibelius, Herodes und Pilatus, Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 16, 1915, 113–126.
Dise 1997: R. L. Dise, Trajan, the Antonines, and the Governor’s Staff, ZPE 116, 1997, 273–283.
Dodd 1963: C. H. Dodd, Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel, Cambridge 1963.
Dubovský 2006: P. Dubovský, Hezekiah and the Assyrian Spies. Reconstruction of the Neo-Assyrian Intelligence Services and Its Significance for 2 Kings 18–19, Rome 2006.
Eisler 1929/1930: R. Eisler, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑ. Die messianische Unabhängigkeit bewegung vom Auftreten Johannes des Täufers bis zum Untergang Jakobs des Gerechten I–II, Heidelberg 1929/1930.
Elliott 1982: J. K. Elliott, Questioning Christian Origins, London 1982.
Faoro 2011: D. Faoro, Praefectus, procurator, praeses. Genesi delle cariche presidiali equestri nell’Alto Impero Romano, Florence 2011.
Festinger 1957: L. Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, Stanford 1957.
Fischer 1996: M. Fischer et al., Roman Roads in Judaea, II: The Jaffa-Jerusalem Roads, Oxford 1996.
Fuhrmann 2012: C. J. Fuhrmann, Policing the Roman Empire. Soldiers, Administration, and Public Order, Oxford 2012.
Gelardini 2011: G. Gelardini, The Contest for a Royal Title. Herod versus Jesus in the Gospel According to Mark (6,14–29; 15,6–15), AnnSE 28, 2011, 93–106.
Ginzburg 1986: C. Ginzburg, Spie. Radici di un paradigma indiziario, in: C. Ginzburg (ed.), Miti, emblemi spie. Morfologia e storia, Turin 1986, 158–209.
Goguel 1910: M. Goguel, Juifs et Romains dans l’histoire de la passion, RHR 62, 1910, 165–182 and 295–322.
Goodman 2001: M. Goodman, Galilean Judaism and Judaean Judaism, in: W. Horbury et al. (eds.), The Cambridge History of Judaism, III: The Early Roman Period, Cambridge 2001, 596–617.
Gracey 1986: M. H. Gracey, The Armies of the Judaean Client Kings, in: P. Freeman – D. Kennedy (eds.), The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East, Oxford 1986, 311–323.
Green 2001: J. B. Green, Crucifixion, in: M. Bockmuehl (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Jesus, Cambridge 2001, 87–101.
Grünewald 1999: T. Grünewald, Räuber, Rebellen, Rivalen, Rächer. Studien zu Latrones im römischen Reich (Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei 31), Mainz 1999.
Haensch 1997: R. Haensch, Capita provinciarum. Statthaltersitze und Provinzialverwaltung in der römischen Kaiserzeit, Mainz 1997.
Haensch 2010: R. Haensch, The Roman Provincial Administration, in: C. Hezser (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine, Oxford 2010, 71–84.
Haynes 1999: I. Haynes, Military Service and Cultural Identity in the Auxilia, in: A. Goldsworthy – I. Haynes (eds.), The Roman Army as a Community. Including Papers of a Conference Held at Birkbeck College, University of London on 11–12 January 1997, Portsmouth 1999, 165–174.
Hengel 1976: M. Hengel, Die Zeloten. Untersuchungen zur jüdischen Freiheitsbewegung in der Zeit von Herodes I. bis 70 n. Chr., Tübingen 1976.
Herzog 2000: W. R. Herzog, Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God. A Ministry of Liberation, Louisville 2000.
Hoehner 1972: H. W. Hoehner, Herod Antipas, Cambridge 1972.
Horsley 1993: R. A. Horsley, Jesus and the Spiral of Violence. Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine, Minneapolis 1993.
Horsley 2012: R. A. Horsley, The Prophet Jesus and the Renewal of Israel. Moving beyond a Diversionary Debate, Grand Rapids 2012.
Isaac 1999: B. Isaac, The Limits of Empire. The Roman Army in the East, Oxford 1999.
Jensen 2006: M. H. Jensen, Herod Antipas in Galilee. The Literary and Archaeological Sources on the Reign of Herod Antipas and its Socio-Economic Impact on Galilee, Tübingen 2006.
Jones 1949: A.H.M. Jones, The Roman Civil Service (Clerical and Sub-Clerical Grades), JRS 39, 1949, 38–55.
Kautsky 1908: K. Kautsky, Der Ursprung des Christentums. Eine historische Untersuchung, Stuttgart 1908.
Kuhn 1982: H.-W. Kuhn, Die Kreuzesstrafe während der frühen Kaiserzeit. Ihre Wirklichkeit und Wertung in der Umwelt des Christentums, in: W. Haase (ed.), Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt 25.1, Berlin – New York 1982, 648–793.
Lémonon 1981: P. Lémonon, Pilate et le gouvernement de la Judée. Textes et monuments, Paris 1981.
Liberati – Silverio 2010: A. M. Liberati – E. Silverio, I servizi segreti in Roma antica. Informazioni e sicurezza dagli inizi Urbis all’impero universale, Rome 2010.
Lintott 1993: A. Lintott, Imperium Romanum. Politics and Administration, London 1993.
Loftus 1977: F. Loftus, The Anti-Roman Revolts of the Jews and the Galileans, Jewish Quarterly Review 68, 1977, 78–98.
MacAdam 1995: H. MacAdam, Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha. The Arrest, Trials, and Execution of Jesus of Nazareth, Irish Biblical Studies 17, 1995, 148–177.
Maccoby 1973: H. Maccoby, Revolution in Judaea. Jesus and the Jewish Resistance, London 1973.
MacMullen 1966: R. MacMullen, Enemies of the Roman Order. Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire, Cambridge (MA) 1966.
MacMullen 1986: R. MacMullen, Personal Power in the Roman Empire, AJPh 107, 1986, 512–524.
Martin 2014: D. B. Martin, Jesus in Jerusalem. Armed and Not Dangerous, Journal for the Study of the New Testament 37, 2014, 3–24.
Mattern 2010: S. Mattern, Counterinsurgency and the Enemies of Rome, in: V. D. Hanson (ed.), Makers of Ancient Strategy. From the Persian Wars to the Fall of Rome, Princeton 2010, 163–184.
Meier 2000: J. P. Meier, The Historical Jesus and the Historical Herodians, JBL 119, 2000, 740–746.
Meier 2001: J. P. Meier, A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus, III: Companions and Competitors, New York 2001.
Millar 1977: F. Millar, The Emperor in the Roman World. 31 BC–337 AD, London 1977.
Müller 1979: K. Müller, Jesus vor Herodes. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Lk 23,6–12, in: G. Dautzenberg et al. (eds.), Zur Geschichte des Urchristentums, Freiburg 1979, 111–141.
Nelis-Clément 2000: J. Nelis-Clément, Les beneficiarii. Militaires et administrateurs au service de l’empire (1er s. a.C. – VIe s. p.C.), Bordeaux 2000.
Oakman 2012: D. E. Oakman, The Political Aims of Jesus, Minneapolis 2012.
Parker 1987: P. Parker, Herod Antipas and the Death of Jesus, in: E. P. Sanders (ed.), Jesus, the Gospels, and the Church. Essays in Honor of William R. Farmer, Macon 1987, 197–208.
Pflaum 1950: H. G. Pflaum, Les procurateurs équestres sous le Haut-Empire Romain, Paris 1950.
Rankov 1999: B. Rankov, The Governor’s Men. The officium consularis in Provincial Administration, in A. Goldsworthy – I. Haynes (eds.), The Roman Army as a Community, Ann Arbor 1999, 15–34.
Rappaport 1992: U. Rappaport, How Anti-Roman Was the Galilee?, in: L. I. Levine (ed.), The Galilee in Late Antiquity, New York 1992, 95–102.
Russell 2016: F. Russell, Roman Counterinsurgency Policy and Practice in Judaea, in: T. Howe – L. L. Brice (eds.), Brill’s Companion to Insurgency and Terrorism in the Ancient Mediterranean, Leiden 2015, 248–281.
Rutledge 2001: S. Rutledge, Imperial Inquisitions. Prosecutors and Informants from Tiberius to Domitian, London 2001.
Sanders 1985: E. P. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism, London 1985.
Schiavone 2017: A. Schiavone, Ponzio Pilato. Un enigma tra storia e memoria, Turin 2017.
Schmidt 1919: K.-L. Schmidt, Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu. Literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesus-Überlieferung, Berlin 1919.
Schwartz 1992: D. R. Schwartz, Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity, Tübingen 1992.
Schwartz 2013: D. R. Schwartz, Reading the First Century. On Reading Josephus and Studying Jewish History of the First Century, Tübingen 2013.
Scott 1990: J. C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts, New Haven 1990.
Shaw 1984: B. D. Shaw, Bandits in the Roman Empire, P&P 105, 1984, 3–52.
Shaw 1993: B. D. Shaw, Tyrants, Bandits and Kings. Personal Power in Josephus, Journal of Jewish Studies 44, 1993, 176–204.
Sheldon 2005: R. M. Sheldon, Intelligence Activities in Ancient Rome. Trust in the Gods, but Verify, London 2005.
Sherwin-White 1963: A. N. Sherwin-White, Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament, Oxford 1963.
Smallwood 1976: E. M. Smallwood, The Jews under Roman Rule. From Pompey to Diocletian, Leiden 1976.
Speidel 1982/1983: M. P. Speidel, The Roman Army in Judaea under the Procurators, AncSoc 13/14, 1982/1983, 233–240.
Stegemann 1998: E. W. Stegemann, s.v. Jesus, in: DNP V, 1998, 910–922.
Stegemann 2002a: E. W. Stegemann, Wie im Angesicht des Judentums historisch vom Tod Jesu sprechen? Vom Prozess Jesu zu den Passionserzählungen der Evangelien, in: G. Häfner – H. Schmid (eds.), Wie heute vom Tod Jesu sprechen?, Freiburg i. Br. 2002, 23–52.
Stegemann 2002b: W. Stegemann, Jesus und seine Zeit, Stuttgart 2002.
Taylor 1997: J. E. Taylor, John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism, Grand Rapids 1997.
Theissen 1986: G. Theissen, Der Schatten des Galiläers. Historische Jesusforschung in erzählender Form, München 1986.
Theissen 1989: G. Theissen, Das schwankende Rohr (Mt 11, 7) und die Gründungsmünzen von Tiberias, in: G. Theissen (ed.), Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition, Göttingen 1989, 26–44.
Tyson 1960: J. B. Tyson, Jesus and Herod Antipas, JBL 79, 1960, 239–246.
Webb 1991: R. L. Webb, John the Baptizer and Prophet, Sheffield 1991.
Weiss 1900: J. Weiss, Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes, Göttingen 1900².
Winter 1974: P. Winter, On the Trial of Jesus, Berlin 1974².
Zeichmann 2017: C. B. Zeichmann, The Date of Mark’s Gospel Apart from the Temple and Rumors of War. The Taxation Episode (Mark 12:13–17) as Evidence, Catholic Biblical Quarterly 79, 2017, 422–437.
Zeichmann 2018: C. B. Zeichmann, A Guide to the Military and the New Testament, Lexington 2018.