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The Jew of Celsus and *adversus Judaeos* literature

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Abstract: The appearance in Celsus' work, *The True Word*, of a Jew who speaks out against Jesus and his followers, has elicited much discussion, not least concerning the genuineness of this character. Celsus' decision to exploit Jewish opinion about Jesus for polemical purposes is a *novum* in extant pagan literature about Christianity (as is *The True Word* itself), and that and other observations can be used to support the authenticity of Celsus' Jew. Interestingly, the *ad hominem* nature of his attack upon Jesus is not directly reflected in the Christian *adversus Judaeos* literature, which concerns itself mainly with scripture (in this respect exclusively with what Christians called the Old Testament), a subject only superficially touched upon by Celsus' Jew, who is concerned mainly to attack aspects of Jesus' life. Why might this be the case? Various theories are discussed, and a *plea* made to remember the importance of what might be termed counter-narrative arguments (as opposed to arguments from scripture), and by extension the importance of Celsus' Jew, in any consideration of the history of ancient Jewish-Christian disputation.

Keywords: Celsus, Polemics, Jew

1 Introduction

It seems that from not long after it was written, probably some time in the late 240s,¹ Origen's *Contra Celsum* was popular among a number of Christians. Eusebius of Caesarea, or possibly another Eusebius,² speaks warmly of it in his response to Hierocles' anti-Christian work the *Philaletes* or *Lover of Truth* as pro-

¹ For the date of *Contra Celsum* see Henry Chadwick, introduction to idem, ed. and trans., *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge, 1953), (ix-xxxii) xiv-xv. His arguments reflect the consensus.

² Aaron P. Johnson, "The Author of the *Against Hierocles*: A Response to Borzi and Jones," *JThS* n. s. 64 (2013): 574–594.

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viding a comprehensive guide to objections to Christianity.³ In the middle of the 4th century, it was the most cited work in the compilation of Origen's writings known as the *Philocalia*; and Jerome, writing to Magnus, the Roman orator, could compare it favourably with the responses of Methodius, Eusebius and Apollinaris to Porphyry.⁴ Indeed it may have begun a trend of Christians writing responses to anti-Christian works through citation of the latter, such as we find in the already referred to response to Hierocles, or the later work of Cyril of Alexandria against Julian.

The importance of Origen's eight-book work, possibly seen also in the fact that it is the longest complete work of Origen to survive in the original Greek,⁵ is striking for it was a response to a work of perhaps some 70 years earlier,⁶ which attacked and sought to dissuade people from a Christianity which pre-dated Origen's birth. Much had happened to Christianity between the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Philip the Arab which would render Celsus' work partially anachronistic. Yet Ambrosius, Origen's patron, had insisted on a thorough response, a request which Origen only reluctantly fulfilled but did so in a way that answered Celsus' objections one by one,⁷ a procedure which Origen found onerous and which rendered the structure of his work cumbersome.⁸

³ Pseudo?-Eusebius, *Adversus Hieroclem* 1 (SC 333, 98,11–100,25 Forrat/des Places).

⁴ Jerome, *Epistula* 70,3 (CSEL 703, 10–15 Hilberg).

⁵ The only other writings of Origen to survive complete in Greek are the much shorter *Ad Martyres* and *De Oratione*. On the textual transmission of the *Contra Celsum* see Chadwick, introduction (see note 1), xxix–xxxii.

⁶ For the traditional dating of *The True Word* see Chadwick, introduction (see note 1), xxvi–xxix; and Horacio Lona, *Die wahre Lehre des Kelsos* (Kommentare zu frühchristlichen Apologeten, Ergänzungsband 1; Freiburg, 2005), 54–55. For arguments in favour of an earlier date, in the reign of Hadrian, see Marco Rizzi, “Origen, Celsus and the Jews between Alexandria, Caesarea and Rome,” in *Jews and Christians in Antiquity: A Regional Perspective* (ed. Pierluigi Lanfranchi and Joseph Verheyden; Leuven, unpublished; Pagination according to manuscript kindly supplied by the author). In truth the only clear *terminus a quo* lies in the reference to the cult of Antinoos at *Contra Celsum* 3,36 (SC 136, 84,1–2 Borret) and 5,63 (SC 147, 170,4–5 Borret). The cult came into being soon after Antinoos' death in 130 and continued until the end of the fourth century. The fact that Celsus can refer to it in a negative way as if it conjures up ideas of nefarious activities may point to a date some time after Hadrian's death in A. D. 138.

⁷ He had originally intended to answer Celsus thematically but then changed his mind. See Origenes, *Contra Celsum*, praef. 6 (SC 132, 76,9–19 Borret).

⁸ On this see Michael Frede, “Origen's Treatise Against Celsus,” in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (ed. Mark Edwards et al.; Oxford, 1999), (131–156) 145–148. Frede's view that Celsus' argument lacked a coherent structure has recently been refuted by Johannes Arnold, *Der Wahre Logos des Kelsos: Eine Strukturanalyse* (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband 39; Münster, 2016). The latter asserts that Origen, for polemical purposes, has changed the order of Celsus' original work, creating a sense of disorder.

Celsus' *True Word* had not, as far as we know, been the subject of any detailed response from a Christian before Origen (hence Ambrosius' request). Indeed it is possible that the latter had not read it before he began writing his refutation of it. The presence, for instance, of numerous quotations from the work could imply that none of his readers had either,⁹ although it need not. After all, works in antiquity were very expensive to copy and it would be wrong to assume that the extensive quotations from Julian in Cyril of Alexandria's *Contra Julianum* or Augustine's quotations from Julian of Eclanum show that those quoted were obscure individuals. It should also be noted that some scholars have argued that Christian apologists such as Tertullian, Minucius Felix and Theophilus of Antioch betrayed knowledge of the contents of Celsus' work, even if this view has rarely seemed compelling.¹⁰ Indeed the absence of a demonstrable footprint of the *True Word* in the period before the writing of the *Contra Celsum*¹¹ could suggest that the work is most important for informing the scholar of the general context within which Christian apologists of the second century wrote rather than indicating some *Wendepunkt* in the history of Christian-pagan relations.¹²

The word *Wendepunkt* might be appropriate, however, in one respect. In relation to our evidence the *True Word* looks like a *novum*. Up to its appearance extant discussions of Christianity by pagan writers were at best cursory, short, and not obviously deeply informed.¹³ Celsus, however, appears to know a good

⁹ See Frede, "Origen's Treatise" (see note 8), 148.

¹⁰ For the most recent discussion of the reception history of *The True Word* see Karl Pichler, *Streit um das Christentum: Der Angriff des Kelsos und die Antwort des Origenes* (Regensburger Studien zur Theologie 23; Frankfurt am Main, 1980), 60–85, where the work of Vermander, Pélegaud and many others is discussed. Pichler questions evidence of Celsus' influence before Origen's writing of the *Contra Celsum*.

¹¹ It is also worth noting that Celsus himself left a minimal footprint in the wider pagan world (at best, according to the late Michael Frede, a minor figure in the history of ancient Platonism, and one whom Origen could confuse with an Epicurean writer mentioned by Lucian). See Frede, "Origen's Treatise" (see note 8).

¹² See Michael Fiedrowicz, introduction to *Origenes: Contra Celsum* 1 (FC 50; Freiburg i. Br., 2011), (9–122) 36: "In jedem Fall ist der *Alethes Logos* jedoch eine wertvolle Quelle, um den geistigen Hintergrund zu rekonstruieren, vor dem die Apologeten an der Wende vom 2. zum 3. Jahrhundert ihre Schriften verfassten."

¹³ Frede, "Origen's Treatise" (see note 8), 145, claims that Celsus was the first to write "a special treatise" against Christianity, but then, checking himself, notes that the fact that Celsus mentions no pagan sources for his work, amounts to very little. Strangely, Frede fails to mention Caroline Bammel's important article on Fronto's treatise against the Christians, apparently alluded to by Minucius Felix in the *Octavius*. See Caroline Bammel, "Die erste lateinische Rede gegen die Christen," *ZKG* 104 (1993): 295–311. Although its contents remain a matter of contention, the speech may well pre-date Celsus.

deal about the Christianity he describes,¹⁴ from its central theological claims, expressed in diverse and often contradictory terms, to its canon¹⁵ as well as other pertinent Christian and Jewish sources.¹⁶ How he attained such information has been explained in a variety of ways. Pélegaud, for instance, advanced the view, if only to reject it, that he was a former Christian who had apostatized, preferring the thesis that Celsus had access to Christian schools and the kind of debates and literature which were produced by such institutions.¹⁷ Certainly, the absence of evidence of detailed pagan engagement with Christianity until Celsus, however we might view reconstructions of the Roman senator, Fronto's, work, referred to by Minucius Felix,¹⁸ or the nature of the opposition of the Cynic, Crescens to Justin,¹⁹ makes the latter observation at least plausible.

14 See *Contra Celsum* 1,12 (SC 132, 106,8 B.), where Celsus claims to know everything (πάντα) about Christianity.

15 For a recent discussion of Celsus' knowledge of the Christian canon, see Wolfram Kinzig, "Pagans and the Bible," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible 1: From the Beginnings to 600* (ed. James Carleton Paget and Joachim Schaper; Cambridge, 2013), (752–774) 756–760. He assumes a limited knowledge of the LXX, knowledge of the Gospels but not of the rest of the New Testament, including the Pauline epistles. The latter claim is questionable. See, for instance, *Contra Celsum* 5,64 (SC 147, 172,23 B.), where he shows knowledge of Gal 6:14. For other places see Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 513–516.

16 See Pichler, *Streit um das Christentum* (see note 10), 58–59, summarizing a lengthy discussion; and Albert I. Baumgarten, "The Rule of the Martian in the Ancient Diaspora: Celsus and His Jew," in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: How to Write their History* (ed. Joshua Schwartz and Peter Tomson; Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 13; Leiden, 2013), (398–430) 400–401.

17 Elysée Pélegaud, *Un conservateur au second siècle: Celse et les premières luttes entre la philosophie antique et le christianisme naissant* (Paris, 1879), 396. He argued that it was more likely that Celsus gained his knowledge from what the latter terms Jewish prophets in Phoenicia and Palestine (*Contra Celsum* 7,9 [SC 150, 34,1–36,23 Borret]) and from Christian priests (*Contra Celsum* 6,40 [SC 147, 274,10–13 B.]), and even speculates as to whether he had engaged in argument with a writer like Justin, citing the latter's arguments with Crescens (Pélegaud, *Conservateur* [see above], 397–398) To this should be added Carl Andresen's argument that Celsus is a response to Justin, a view which has met with only partial approval. See Carl Andresen, *Logos und Nomos: die Polemik des Kelsos wider das Christentum* (AKG 30; Berlin, 1955).

18 See Bammel, "Die erste lateinische Rede" (see note 13).

19 See Justin, *Apologia pro Christianis* 2,8,1 (SC 507, 343,1–345,25 Munier). Although Justin attributes some importance to Crescens, he is uncertain about the level of his knowledge of Christianity, though this may well be little more than a rhetorical trope. Interestingly, Justin implies that the emperor may have heard of the dispute between himself and Crescens. See Peter Lampe, *Christians in Rome in the First Two Centuries: From Paul to Valentinus* (London, 2003), 275–276. For more recent comment see Runar M. Thorsteinsson, "Justin's debate with Crescens the Stoic," *ZAC* 17 (2013): 451–478, asserting that Crescens was a Stoic not a Cynic.

While there are many aspects of Celsus' reported attack upon Christianity which merit study,²⁰ I shall focus on his interest in Judaism, and more specifically, on the character of the Jew, who is presented by Celsus, *pace* Origen, as the main opponent of the Christians in the first two books of the latter's *Contra Celsum*. By raking over the coals of this much-discussed subject,²¹ I want to investigate the nature of the Jew's attack and what it might tell us about the development and character of Christian *adversus Judaeos* literature. Emerging from this will be some inevitably fragile but, I hope, suggestive, conclusions.

2 Celsus' Jew: a *novum*?

Origen's assertion that Celsus "thinks that he will more easily prove Christianity to be untrue if he can show its falsehood by attacking its origin in Judaism"²² is striking. A survey of those pagan authors who mention both Christians and Jews up to the time of the writing of the *True Word*, indicates that they had little or only a vague sense of Christianity's connection to Judaism,²³ let alone the possi-

²⁰ For some of these see Lorenzo Perrone, ed., *Discorsi di verità: Paganesimo, giudaismo cristianesimo a confronto nel Contro Celso di Origene* (Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum 61; Rome, 1998).

²¹ For recent discussions see Lincoln Blumell, "A Jew in Celsus' True Doctrine? An Examination of Jewish Anti-Christian Polemic in the Second Century C. E.," *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses* 36 (2007): 297–315; Baumgarten, "Martian" (see note 16); and Maren Niehoff, "A Jewish Critique of Christianity from the Second Century: Revisiting the Jew Mentioned in Contra Celsum," *J ECS* 21 (2013): 151–175; and Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), esp. 85–90, 215–220, 341–387, 454–457.

²² Origenes, *Contra Celsum* 1,22 (SC 132, 130,1–132,22 B.): Οίομένου τάχιον ψευδοποιήσιν τὸν χριστιανισμόν, ἔάν τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἰουδαϊκοῖς οὐσης λόγοις κατηγορῶν παραστήσῃ κάκεῖνον ψευδῆ.

²³ See John M. G. Barclay, " 'Jews' and 'Christians' in the Eyes of Roman Authors," in *Jews and Christians* (see note 16), 313–326. It is true that Tacitus, *Annales* 15,44 (ed. Heinz Heubner, *P. Cornelii Taciti Libri Qui Supersunt 1: Ab Excessu Divi Augusti* [Stuttgart, 1994], 369,5–13), asserts that Christians emerged from Judea, and that Lucian, *Peregrinus* 11–13 (ed. Karl Iacobitz, *Luciani Samosatensis Opera* 3 [Leipzig, 1881], 274,13–275,5), presents Christianity in a Jewish way. But Tacitus barely develops the implications of his assertion (note that he nowhere associates Christians with Jews in his long and polemical discussion of Judaism in *Historiae* 5,1–13 [ed. Kenneth Wellesley, *Cornelii Taciti Libri Qui Supersunt 2: Pars Prima Historiarum Libri* [Leipzig, 1989], 168,9–174,14]); and Lucian is describing Christianity in Palestine, so the Jewishness of what he reports is not surprising. Certainly he never associates Christians with Jews either here or elsewhere. The more convincing exception to Barclay's claim is Galen where in two passages (*De Pulsuum Differentiis* 2,4 [ed. Carl G. Kühn, *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia* 8 [Leipzig, 1821; repr.,

bility that such an association had polemical potential. As John Barclay argues, it was only later when a few intellectuals like Celsus became better acquainted with Christianity that this connection was used for polemical purpose.

Thus, as far as Romans were concerned, the association between “Christian” and “Jew” was not an early, but a late, phenomenon; two groups once clearly differentiated could now be closely associated, but only when a good deal was discovered about “Christian” beliefs and the “Christian” self-image.²⁴

In asserting this, caution is needed. Whether Celsus was in fact the first to exploit this connection cannot be established, and may be contradicted by the role that Jews and the Jewish scriptures play in, for instance, Justin’s *Apologia pro Christianis* 1, which might predate *The True Word*, and could be thought to assume a gentile audience.²⁵ But he is certainly the first as far as we know, and he makes considerable use of the connection. What Origen concentrates on in his opening remarks is Celsus’ desire to exploit that connection by attacking Jewish history and beliefs; and it is notable how much of his *True Word* is taken up with an attack upon Jews. This has led Marco Rizzi to argue that the *True Word* was in fact an attack upon both Jews and Christians, being misread by Ambrosius and Origen as directed against Christianity alone.²⁶

Hildesheim, 1965], 579,16] and 3,3 [657,1–2 K.]) Jews and Christians are held to be of “the school of Moses and Christ”—Μωϋσοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ διατριβήν and “followers of Moses and Christ”—Μωϋσοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ μεταδιδάξειεν. But, as Barclay notes, “it is not clear that he [J. C. P.: Galen] sees the inner connection between them.” (Barclay, “Roman Authors” [see above], 326).

24 Barclay, “Roman Authors” (see note 23), 326. Prof. Teresa Morgan of Oxford University told me that what Barclay identifies is perhaps not as surprising as one might initially imagine. The Romans, she asserts, “never talk explicitly about one cult evolving out of another, or one cult evolving into something rather different in the process of transplantation. This seems to me very striking and quite odd, but would certainly explain why they don’t register any interest in the evolution of Christianity out of Judaism. There is no sign e. g. that the Romans cared, or even noticed that cults of Mithras or Isis changed in transit from east to west, either, or that the cult of Fides evolved out of the cult of Jupiter Capitolinus etc.” (from an email dated 5. 12. 2017). If Morgan’s observation is true, Celsus’ decision to concentrate upon the Jewish origins of Christianity becomes more striking.

25 See especially Justin, *Apologia pro Christianis* 1,31–32 (209,1–2 M.), where the Christian association with the specifically Jewish scriptures is made explicit. The argument here would be that Justin could only make such a reference, without explanation, if the relationship between Jews and Christians was known among his supposedly pagan audience. Certainly Justin makes little effort to introduce the subject in a manner which assumed ignorance of this fact on the part of his audience.

26 Note Rizzi, “Origen” (see note 6), 7: “In short, the AL by Celsus appears as a treatise which is against Christians and Jews at the same time, rather than as one of the *Contra Christianos* works

There is something in Rizzi's observation, seen especially in the way in which both Jews and Christians are presented as being movements marked by rebellion, in the case of the Jews against the Egyptians and in the case of the Christians against the Jews;²⁷ in the way in which Jews and Christians are often referred to together;²⁸ and by the fact that criticisms are sometimes directed solely against the Jews.²⁹ Rizzi's thesis also explains why a Christian response to Celsus came so late—his work was not an exclusive attack upon Christianity and so fell beneath the radar screen of Christian authors.³⁰

But Rizzi, while emphasizing an important aspect of Celsus' work, overlooks the fact that the latter's use of the Jews appears principally to be a means of attacking Christianity (precisely what Origen affirms in the quotation above)—in this respect it is interesting to note that, insofar as Origen allows us to gain a sense of the contents of the *True Word*, Celsus appears to devote far more space to attacking Christianity than Judaism, and this is clearly the case from *Contra Celsum* 5,41, where he explicitly ceases to show any interest in Jews.³¹ Moreover, his criticisms rarely reflect well-known attacks upon Jews in the ancient world, that is, they are in the main tied to attacking aspects of Judaism which undermine Christianity's claim to truth rather than betraying a distinctive interest in polemizing against Judaism *per se*.³² Rizzi could also be seen to underestimate

which will be composed at a subsequent date . . . we can wonder whether the interpretation by Origen of the AL as an attack on Christians does not distort its nature and chronological and geographical contextualisation; a similar incomprehension was probably due to the indication received from Ambrose who thought that the treatise was potentially dangerous only for the Christians, as the Jewish problem had been already solved in the Roman world.”

27 See *Contra Celsum* 3,5 (SC 136, 20,1–22,9 B.), 8,2 (SC 150, 182,7–8 B.) and 8,14 (SC 150, 202,4 B.).

28 For places in the *Contra Celsum* where Jews and Christians are mentioned together, as if being attacked simultaneously, see *Contra Celsum* 3,1 (SC 136, 14,12 B.), 3,5 (SC 136, 20,1–22,8 B.), 3,14 (SC 136, 38,1–2, 40,19–20 B.), 4,3 (SC 136, 190,10 B.), 4,20 (SC 136, 230,5–9 B.), 4,48 (SC 136, 306,3 B.), 5,1 (SC 147, 14,6 B.), 5,2 (SC 147, 16,2 B.), 5,14 (SC 147, 48,7–8 B.), 5,33 (SC 147, 96,7–8 B.), 5,41 (SC 147, 120,2–3 B.), 5,59 (SC 147, 160,1–2 B.), 5,61 (SC 147, 164,2–3 B.), 6,22 (SC 147, 234,27 B.), 8,31 (SC 150, 240,1–2 B.), 8,69 (SC 150, 34,9–10 B.).

29 See especially *Contra Celsum* 5,6 (SC 147, 24,2–26,5 B.), and 5,14 (SC 147, 48,7–8 B.). See also *Contra Celsum* 5,33 (SC 147, 96,4 B.) where Origen quotes Celsus calling upon “the second chorus”—ὁ δεύτερος, here the Christians, to come forward.

30 The title of the work does not imply anti-Christian content, and its circle of readers may have been limited to Celsus' acquaintances, very few of whom would have been Christians.

31 It is also worth noting that Christians are the only people directly addressed by Celsus in relation to the issue of teaching (see *Contra Celsum* 7,42 [SC 150, 110,5 B.]), and the only individuals to whom a direct appeal is made (see *Contra Celsum* 8,66–71 [SC 150, 326,1–340,17 B.]). See also, however, *Contra Celsum* 5,2 (SC 147, 16,2 B.), where Jews and Christians are addressed together.

32 But see note 35 below.

Origen's ability to capture the purpose of a writing he must have mulled over for some time and which he termed "his [Celsus'] book against the Christians and the faith of the churches."³³ But especially difficult for Rizzi's case is the fact that Celsus uses a Jew to attack Christian belief and that this attack appeared in the first two books of his work—if the work had been aimed against both Jews and Christians, it might have been more logical to have started with an attack upon Judaism and then proceeded to an attack upon Christianity.³⁴ Here, surely, the sense that Christians rather than Jews are the principal focus of Celsus' attack becomes clear.³⁵

3 The attack of Celsus' Jew

The Jew of Celsus is Christianity's chief accuser in the first two books of the *Contra Celsum*. In book 1 the Jew attacks Jesus often, but not always, through direct address.³⁶ He exposes the paltry nature of his origins seen in the circumstances

³³ *Contra Celsum, praef.* 1 (SC 132, 64,7–8 B.): Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν . . . καὶ τῆς πίστεως τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν ἐν βιβλίῳ.

³⁴ If Origen is in fact giving us the order in which Celsus wrote his treatise, it seems to start with an attack upon Christianity as a secret society (*Contra Celsum* 1,1 [SC 132, 78,5 B.]), and then move to its barbarian origins in Judaism (1,2 [SC 132, 80,1–82,4 B.]), which in turn leads to some comments on Judaism. But, as Chadwick, introduction (see note 1), xxiv, notes, the discussion of the contents of *Contra Celsum* 1,1–27 (SC 132, 78,1–150,23 B.) probably does not reflect the order of Celsus' *True Word*, a point now supported at length by Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), esp. 15–34.

³⁵ Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), esp. 303, attributes considerable importance to the Jews in the structure of Celsus' work but notes that after *Contra Celsum* 5,41, where they appear to be formally dismissed (SC 147, 122,25–28 B.), the Jews cease to be the subject of discussion, with the Christians coming centre stage. This leads Arnold to assert that the latter are the *Hauptadressaten* of the *True Word*, though he is not explicit about whether Celsus addresses Jews in his work except as tools in his attack upon Christianity. In correspondence he has wanted to defend the idea that the Christians are the principal addressees but draws attention to hints in the text that Jews could be considered addressees. So there are places, e. g. at 5,6 and 5,14 where respectively, Jewish views on the resurrection and Jewish veneration of heaven and angels are mentioned as well as places where Jews seem to be addressed (see note 31 above). He thinks that these and other points mean that Celsus would not have excluded the possibility that Jews may have read his work. Arnold also notes the claim, made at *Contra Celsum* 5,41 that there are "those [pagans understood] who have abandoned their own traditions and professed those of the Jews"—τῶν καταλιπόντων τὰ σφέτερα καὶ τὰ Ἰουδαίων προσποιουμένων (SC 147, 122,5–6 B.), tentatively suggesting that Celsus may have wished to disabuse pagans of any attraction they might have felt to Judaism.

³⁶ *Contra Celsum* 1,41 (SC 132, 184,1–186,15 B.).

of his birth (he is the product of an illicit relationship between his mother and a Roman soldier, Panthera)³⁷ and in the impoverished, sinful and unattractive nature of his mother.³⁸ His own inherited poverty led him to go and hire himself out in Egypt where he learnt the arts of magic,³⁹ which in large part explains the character of his miracles, which can only be understood as the work of a sorcerer.⁴⁰ Events associated with his ministry, like the miraculous voice heard at his baptism,⁴¹ and the claim that Herod sought to kill him when he was born,⁴² are for various reasons untrue. He is not the one spoken of by the prophets,⁴³ and his life in no way comports with the actions of someone who can claim to be divine.⁴⁴ His followers were a small and contemptible rabble of sailors and tax collectors,⁴⁵ which is unsurprising given that Jesus had limited persuasive powers.⁴⁶ The conclusion of this first book is uncompromising: “These were the actions of one hated by God and of a wicked sorcerer,”⁴⁷ the very opposite of the kind of person Christians claim to follow.

The second book begins with the Jew attacking those of his compatriots who have become Christians and in so doing abandoned their ancestral law,⁴⁸ an accusation which can be aimed at Jesus, who observed the Jewish laws⁴⁹ but then abandoned them. The attack, however, rather than focusing on the actions of Christian Jews, concentrates upon Jesus, for central to the conviction of these converts to Christianity is the idea that Jesus is divine.⁵⁰ Inevitably, there is some repetition between the first and second books but the emphases are broadly different. Jewish failure to respond to Jesus is represented as odd (would we despise the Messiah when he came?).⁵¹ The attitude of his followers in betraying him is

³⁷ *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,9–152,18 B.) and 1,32 (SC 132, 162,1–5 B.).

³⁸ *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,9–152,18 B.), 1,32 (SC 132, 162,1–5 B.), 1,39 (SC 132, 182,1–11 B.).

³⁹ *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,9–152,18 B.).

⁴⁰ *Contra Celsum* 1,68 (SC 132, 266,9–19 B.).

⁴¹ *Contra Celsum* 1,41 (SC 132, 186,10–15 B.).

⁴² *Contra Celsum* 1,61 (SC 132, 242,1–5 B.).

⁴³ *Contra Celsum* 1,49–50 (SC 132, 210,12–212,7 B.).

⁴⁴ *Contra Celsum* 1,66–67 (SC 132, 258,1–266,28 B.) and 1,69 (SC 132, 268,3–4 B.).

⁴⁵ *Contra Celsum* 1,62 (SC 132, 244,2–5 B.).

⁴⁶ *Contra Celsum* 1,70 (SC 132, 272,11–12 B.).

⁴⁷ *Contra Celsum* 1,71 (SC 132, 272,3–4 B.): ταῦτα θεομισοῦς ἦν τινος καὶ μοχθηροῦ γόητος.

⁴⁸ *Contra Celsum* 2,1 (SC 132, 280,66–70 B.) and 2,4 (SC 132, 288,5–8 B.).

⁴⁹ *Contra Celsum* 2,6 (SC 132, 294,1–2 B.).

⁵⁰ *Contra Celsum* 2,8 (SC 132, 298,7–9 B.).

⁵¹ *Contra Celsum* 2,8 (SC 132, 298,12–14 B.).

questioned. “No good general who led many thousands was betrayed.”⁵² Those same disciples, likened to a robber band,⁵³ and so enabling Celsus to refer to Jesus as the leader of such a band, have invented claims that Jesus prophesied the bad events which would happen to him for what man who could foresee such things would not himself have wished to escape them.⁵⁴ The fact that he was betrayed by his own followers,⁵⁵ unable to persuade many,⁵⁶ indeed unable to persuade those who were expecting the messiah,⁵⁷ is a sign of his paltry nature. Jesus could not have been the one prophesied as Israel’s redeemer,⁵⁸ or indeed the pure and holy Logos⁵⁹ for his actions are not those which befit a messianic figure or indeed a god. How could that be the case when he led the life he did,⁶⁰ died the death he did⁶¹ in the circumstances in which he did.⁶² Not even his miracles help the case for his divinity but confirm the opposite.⁶³ The greatest miracle of all, the resurrection, is a lie,⁶⁴ the result of hallucinations⁶⁵ or even tricks⁶⁶ and testified to by one woman and only a few of his followers.⁶⁷ The conclusion is clear: Jesus “was a mere man . . . as reason shows,”⁶⁸ whose actions and character and mode of death stand in stark contrast to claims of his divinity,⁶⁹ and the teachings that Christians peddle are nothing more than stale stuff,⁷⁰ produced by those who

52 *Contra Celsum* 2,12 (SC 132, 314,1–2 B.): στρατηγὸς μὲν ἀγαθὸς καὶ πολλῶν μυριάδων οὐδεπώποτε προῦδόθη. See also *Contra Celsum* 2,12 (SC 132, 314,1–316,8 B.) and 2,21 (SC 132, 344,4–5 B.).

53 See *Contra Celsum* 2,44 (SC 132, 384,14–15 B.):

54 *Contra Celsum* 2,15 (SC 132, 324,1–3 B.).

55 *Contra Celsum* 2,12 (SC 132, 314,1–316,8 B.) and 2,45 (SC 132, 386,6–7 B.).

56 *Contra Celsum* 2,46 (SC 132, 388,1–3 B.).

57 *Contra Celsum* 2,8 (SC 132, 298,12–14 B.), and 2,75 (SC 132, 460,6–7 B.).

58 *Contra Celsum* 2,28–29 (SC 132, 356,8–358,10, 358,5–7 B.).

59 *Contra Celsum* 2,31 (SC 132, 362,3–5 B.).

60 *Contra Celsum* 2,39 (SC 132, 376,2–4 B.), and 2,41 (SC 132, 378,2 B.)

61 *Contra Celsum* 2,31 (SC 132, 362,5 B.).

62 *Contra Celsum* 2,24 (SC 132, 348,4–6 B.), 2,33 (SC 132, 366,1–3 B.), 2,34 (SC 132, 368,31–33 B.), and 2,39 (SC 132, 376,3–4 B.).

63 *Contra Celsum* 2,48 (SC 132, 390,5–6 B.), and 2,49 (SC 132, 396,21–34 B.).

64 *Contra Celsum* 2,54 (SC 132, 412,4–5 B.).

65 *Contra Celsum* 2,60 (SC 132, 424,4–5 B.).

66 *Contra Celsum* 2,61 (SC 132, 426,1–3 B.).

67 *Contra Celsum* 2,55 (SC 132, 414,19 B.) and 2,70 (SC 132, 452,11 B.)

68 *Contra Celsum* 2,79 (SC 132, 474,2–3 B.): Ἐκεῖνος μὲν οὖν ἄνθρωπος ἦν . . . καὶ ὁ λόγος δεῖκνυσιν.

69 Cf. Lona, *Wahre Lehre* (see note 6), 145: “Die Distanz zwischen dem erhabenen, reinen und heiligen Logos und der Gestalt des hingerichteten Jesus war so gewaltig, dass man im Namen der Vernunft die Christen mit ihrer Entscheidung allein lassen durfte.”

70 *Contra Celsum* 2,5 (SC 132, 292,7 B.).

have deserted the Judaism from which they originated,⁷¹ accusations which are probably linked.

But what of this Jew? Is Celsus citing a document or documents known to him written by a Jew? If so, no title or author is given to us, at least by Origen. Or is he indulging in *prosopopeia*, that is, artificially creating a figure for particular rhetorical and polemical purposes? After all, would it not have suited Celsus' aim in writing his *True Word* to have one of the major antagonists of the Christians be a Jew, a representative of the very entity from which Christianity claimed its origin and of which Celsus himself had such a low opinion?

This is Origen's accusation, which appears at the point at which he introduces Celsus' Jew (often described as τὸν παρ' αὐτῷ/Κέλσου Ἰουδαῖος):⁷²

He also introduces an imaginary character, somehow imitating a child having his first lessons with an orator, and brings in a Jew who addresses childish remarks to Jesus and says nothing worthy of a philosopher's grey hairs. This too let us examine to the best of our ability and prove that he has failed to keep the character entirely consistent with that of a Jew in his remarks.⁷³

Interestingly, these comments constitute a general introduction to Celsus' Jew and it is difficult to tell whether Origen thinks all of what Celsus attributes to the Jew is unbelievable. After all, Origen does not question the appropriateness for a Jew saying what he goes on immediately to quote (the passage concerning Jesus' birth by an adulterous woman and his wanderings in Egypt). Elsewhere, however, he raises specific questions about the appropriateness of various comments, whether the Jew is presented as quoting from Greek literature,⁷⁴ which he does on a number of occasions, holding inappropriate opinions,⁷⁵ or omitting to do things Origen thinks that he should have done like quoting from scripture.⁷⁶

How, then, does one go about supporting or refuting Origen's claim, however we understand its extent? For some the fictive character of the Jew seems obvious, not least because of the benefits of the invention of such a person for Celsus.

⁷¹ *Contra Celsum* 2,4 (SC 132, 292,35–38 B.).

⁷² *Contra Celsum* 1,56 (SC 132, 228,1 B.), 1,57 (SC 132, 232,12 B.).

⁷³ *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,1–6 B.): Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ προσωποποιεῖ, τρόπον τινὰ μιμησάμενος ἐν ῥήτορος εἰσαγόμενον παιδίον, καὶ εἰσάγει Ἰουδαῖον πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν λέγοντά τινα μεϊρακιωδῶς καὶ οὐδὲν φιλοσόφου πολιᾶς ἄξιον· φέρε κατὰ δύναμιν καὶ ταῦτα ἐξετάσαντες ἐξελέγξωμεν ὅτι οὐδὲ τὸ ἀρμόζον πάντῃ τῷ Ἰουδαίῳ πρόσωπον ἐν τοῖς λεγομένοις τετήρηκε.

⁷⁴ *Contra Celsum* 1,67 (SC 132, 264,1–2 B.).

⁷⁵ *Contra Celsum* 1,34 (SC 132, 168,1–3 B.), 2,1 (SC 132, 276,7–13 B.), 2,28 (SC 132, 358,19–23 B.) and 2,34 (SC 132, 368,5 B.).

⁷⁶ See *Contra Celsum* 1,34 (SC 132, 168,1–3 B.) and 2,28 (SC 132, 358,19–23 B.). For a further list of Origen's objections to some claims of the Jew, see Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 215.

Moreover, some endorse the artificial character of some of the claims made by the Jew, not least those that portray him as conversant with Greek literature. They also claim that some of the opinions attributed to him could as easily have come from non-Jewish sources.⁷⁷ Horacio Lona is typical in showing how helpful the Jews' refutation of Christianity is, given Celsus' view, expressed on a number of occasions, that Christianity is a stasis or revolt from Judaism.⁷⁸ Who better to affirm this than a Jew whose traditions Christians lay claim to?⁷⁹ True, there may be things that Celsus' Jew says which are appropriate for a Jew to say but these result from what Celsus knows about Jews and their views rather than from written Jewish sources. So there is a sense in which Celsus, contrary to what Origen asserts, is engaging in good *prosopopeia*, just as Theon in his *Progymnasmata* can commend Homer for a good form of the latter and condemn Euripides for bad usage of the same.⁸⁰ Lona, along with others, is also clear that some of the

77 Lona, *Wahre Lehre* (see note 6), 173, without much comment, speaks of the artificiality of Celsus' creation, citing some of the so-called Greek opinions of the Jew, and those places where Origen questions the authenticity of the Jew (see *Contra Celsum* 1,28 [SC 132, 150,1–8 B.], 1,48 [SC 132, 208,94–98 B.], 1,49 [SC 132, 210,11–12 B.], 2,55 [SC 132, 416,26–35 B.], 2,76 [SC 132, 462,1–4 B.]).

78 See *Contra Celsum* 3,5 (SC 136, 22,8 B.), 3,8 (SC 136, 28,36 B.), 3,14 (SC 136, 38,4 B.), 8,14 (SC 150, 202,4 B.).

79 Lona, *Wahre Lehre* (see note 6), 176–177, emphasizes that the Jew can highlight the claim that Christianity is a rebellious movement sprung from Judaism, that there is nothing new in what Christians assert and that the Christians, as a perversion of Judaism, itself a perversion of the truth, are distant from anything believable. For a detailed engagement with the question of the purpose of the Jew, see Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 342–343. For Arnold use of a Jew would suggest to the reader that Celsus had his information firsthand; it enabled him to make harsh, non-philosophical objections to Jesus and the Christians, while not associating himself with such criticisms directly (*ibid.*, 342 [note 467], where Arnold lists criticisms of Jesus made by the Jew but not contained in *Contra Celsum* 3–8), arguing that this material shows up the rather base nature of the dispute between Jews and Christians to which Celsus would make reference at *Contra Celsum* 3,1 (SC 136, 14,1–16,28 B.). Also in Arnold's view, which space does not allow me to discuss, the section of the *True Word* devoted to the Jew and his objections anticipates many subjects, but not all, which will be discussed from *Contra Celsum* 3,1–2 (SC 136, 14,1–18,24 B.), admittedly from a pagan perspective, and in this capacity has the structural role of a *narratio* (see Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 341–364, esp. 363). None of these observations leads Arnold to make a judgment as to the genuine or fictitious nature of Celsus' Jew. His interest is exclusively in a *Strukturanalyse* of a reconstructed *True Word*.

80 In the *Contra Celsum* and elsewhere Origen displays a good knowledge of the principles of *prosopopeia*, not least in relation to those enunciated by Theon in his *Progymnasmata*. See especially *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,1–3 B.), 1,43 (SC 132, 188,1–10 B.), 1,48 (SC 132, 200,1–202,26 B.), 2,1 (SC 132, 276,1–10 B.). For a helpful list of these passages and their content see Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 215–216. For further discussion see Andrea Villani, "Origenes als Schriftsteller: ein Beitrag zu einer Verwendung von Prosopopoeie mit einigen Beobachtun-

contents of the first two books can be seen as the result of an inverted reading of the Gospels, here following the Jew's own claim, typical of polemic, that, "these objections come from your own writings, and we need no other witness; for you provide your own refutation."⁸¹

Those who support the authenticity of Celsus' Jew do so by various means. In an inversion of the argument that posits the polemical benefits to Celsus of having a Jew speak out in his favour, Niehoff attempts to show why it was not helpful to Origen to have such a person speak out against Christians.⁸² And the same scholar points to the distinctive character of what she terms the dialogical form in the first two books, with Jesus addressed in book 1 and the turncoat Jews in book 2, a mode of argument never repeated in the subsequent six books. She also shows how Origen is clear about where the Jew is introduced and where he

gen über die philologische Exegese," *Adamantius* 14 (2008): (130–150) 135–137. Whether this increases the sense of Origen as a sincere critic of Celsus' Jew, or simply an adroit user of contemporary literary-critical language is another matter. For a sceptical attitude to Origen's comments on Celsus' use of *prosopopeia* see Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 217–220.

81 *Contra Celsum* 2,74 (SC 132, 458,2–4 B.): Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ὑμῖν ἐκ τῶν ὑμετέρων συγγραμμάτων, ἐφ' οἷς οὐδενὸς ἄλλου μάρτυρος χρήζομεν· αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἑαυτοῖς περιπίπτετε. This is not strictly fair to Lona, who argues that the claim in 2,74 is an exaggeration placed there for polemical reasons. See our discussion below.

82 Niehoff, "Jewish Critique" (see note 21), 158–159, for instance, presents grounds for Origen's opinion: "Each side [J. C. P.: Christian and pagan] was eager to show that the Jews supported their point of view. While the Greeks argued that Jews were likewise appalled by the Christian doctrine, the Christians insisted that they faithfully continued Jewish traditions. Evidence of an earlier Jewish polemic against Christianity was thus problematic for Origen." But whether in fact Christians would have been bothered by the presence of a Jewish interlocutor is a question. Christians expected Jewish opposition and presented it as a reality in many places, including New Testament texts. Origen is also clear in the *Contra Celsum* that the Jews disagree with the Christians but is more concerned with Celsus' attack upon the Jews insofar as it undermines Christian claims about the Hebrew scriptures and related matters. It is possible that Origen's keenness to see Celsus' Jew as little more than an exercise in *prosopopeia* is motivated by a desire to present Celsus as an unreliable witness rather than out of a fear of the potential difficulty such a witness might cause. Baumgarten, "Martian" (see note 16), 406, gives voice to this, noting that Origen can misrepresent other matters on account of his polemical objectives. Note should be taken here of his accusation that Celsus was an Epicurean when he was probably a Platonist or that Celsus' work was of so little value that it merited no response (*Contra Celsum, praef.* 4 [SC 132, 72,12–19 B.]). Some scholars think that Origen's mistake is a genuine one as the Jews, whom he knew in Caesarea, were not Hellenised and differed in other ways from the Judaism of Celsus' Jew. For this see Ernst Bammel, "Die Zitate in Origenes' Schrift wider Celsus," in idem, *Judaica et Paulina* 2 (WUNT 91; Tübingen, 1997), (57–61) 61; and Rizzi, "Origen," (see note 6), 12. Niehoff, "Jewish Critique" (see note 21), 158, rejects this view on the grounds that Origen would have first become acquainted with Judaism in an Alexandria where a Hellenized Judaism would still have existed.

stops talking;⁸³ and how there is evidence of continuity between the two books. So at the end of the first section of book 2 the Jew is made to say: “What was wrong with you, citizens, that you left the law of our fathers, and, being deluded by that man whom we were addressing just now were quite ludicrously deceived and have deserted us for another name and another life.”⁸⁴ Positively, Niehoff affirms the appropriateness of the opinions attributed to the Jew, not least those which show an interest in and a use of Greek myths to attack Jesus,⁸⁵ and argues that

83 See *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,6–7 B.) and 2,79 (SC 132, 474,1–2 B.). The break in *Contra Celsum* 3,1 (SC 136, 14,1–7 B.) is clear. “Celsus’ original treatise . . . thus allowed him to identify rather clear boundaries of a Jewish text”; and Origen states that he will in fact deal with Celsus himself in book 3, rather than the Jew (see Niehoff, “Jewish Critique” [see note 21], 156). But to some scholars all this shows is the structure of Celsus’ book rather than giving proof of an original Jewish text.

84 *Contra Celsum* 2,1 (SC 132, 280,66–70 B.): Τί παθόντες, ὧ πολῖται, κατελίπετε τὸν πάτριον νόμον καὶ ὑπ’ ἐκείνου πρὸς ὃν ἄρτι διειλέγημεθα, ψυχαγωγηθέντες πάνυ γελοίως ἐξηπατήθητε καὶ ἀφ’ ἡμῶν ἀπυτομολήσατε εἰς ἄλλο ὄνομα καὶ εἰς ἄλλον βίον. “A clear division of Celsus’ Jewish source thus emerges; the first part was formulated as a direct response to Jesus and analyzed the Gospels, while the second part addressed fellow Jews who had embraced the new doctrine and left their father’s customs.” (Niehoff, “Jewish Critique” [see note 21], 157). Of course, the two parts basically deal with the same subject, Jesus, and while repeating some of the same accusations, rarely cross-reference each other (except for the passage in *Contra Celsum* 2,1 [SC 132, 280,66–70 B.], referred to above).

85 On a number of occasions Celsus’ Jew is made to speak warmly of Greek heroes or gods. So at *Contra Celsum* 1,67 (SC 132, 264,3–6 B.), while referring skeptically to the stories of their births, he invokes the marvelous achievements on behalf of mankind of Perseus, Amphion, Aeacus and Minos; and at *Contra Celsum* 2,33 (SC 132, 366,1–3 B.) and 2,34 (SC 132, 366,4 B.), he expresses admiration for Dionysus. For some, most recently John G. Cook (“Celsus,” in *The Reception of Jesus in the First Three Centuries 3: From Celsus to the Catacombs: Receptions of Jesus in Pagan, Visual, and Liturgical Sources of the Second and Third Centuries CE* (ed. Chris Keith, Helen K. Bond and Jens Schröter; London, forthcoming), such expressions of admiration for Greek gods and heroes seem to give voice to a level of Hellenism, which seems inappropriate for a Jew. But such scepticism seems unwarranted. So, for instance, Philo, in a well-known section from the *Legatio ad Gaium* 78–114 (ed. Leopold Cohn and Paul Wendland, *Philonis Opera* 6 [Berlin, 1915], 170,12–176,10.), attacks Caligula for likening himself to (and dressing himself as) demigods, and also those who were straightforwardly divine, asserting that the emperor utterly lacked the great virtues which each of them were renowned for (see *Legatio ad Gaium* 81 [170,28 C./W.]). In this respect see especially *Legatio ad Gaium* 82–89 (171,2–172,2 C./W.) on Dionysus and the Dioscourioi; on Herakles, see *ibid.*, 90–92 (172,11–25 C./W.); on Hermes see *ibid.*, 99–100 (173,23–174,10 C./W.); on Apollo *ibid.*, 103–110 (174,13–175,26 C./W.); and on Ares *ibid.*, 111–113 (175,26–176,10 C./W.), which display strikingly positive attitudes to these figures (expressed at greater length in fact than those of Celsus’ Jew). It may well have been the Hellenised nature of this Jew, comparable as we have noted to that of Philo, which, if he is a single person, attracted Celsus to him. Certainly the opinions attributed to him may account for Celsus’ acquaintance with him or his work.

the manner in which the Jew criticizes the Gospels shows evidence of methods of literary criticism associated with Alexandria. We shall return to this.

Proceeding somewhat differently, Marc Lods, who argues against the idea of a single source, though in favour of the essentially Jewish origins of the opinions attributed to Celsus' Jew, sets out three criteria for discerning genuine Jewish opinion.⁸⁶ Authenticity is assured, he claims, if (a) an anti-Jesus tradition in Celsus corresponds to a known anti-Jesus tradition witnessed in Jewish sources; (b) if it contradicts an argument found elsewhere in Celsus' work; and (c) if it contradicts or ignores gospel tradition. But Lods also introduces another unstated criterion, namely if it seems unlikely that a tradition derives from a Jewish source, then we might assume adaptation on the part of Celsus of an originally Jewish argument.

Lods' criteria might be thought problematic if certitude is our aim. Can we know that a tradition is exclusively Jewish in character and could not have come from a source other than a Jewish one? Norelli, for instance, has argued that some of the things Celsus' Jew asserts about the birth of Jesus are likely to have a pagan origin or even reflect Christian apocryphal traditions, as well as simply being inversions of what we find in the Gospels, especially the *Gospel of Matthew*.⁸⁷ Moreover, Norelli argues, many of the sources Lods uses to verify the Jewish nature of Celsus' Jew's opinions are considerably later than Celsus' *True Word* (rabbinic sources, the *Toledot Yeshu* and the *Slavonic Josephus*); and even if we can show that there are places where sentiments attributed to the Jew of Celsus contradict sentiments found in the books where Celsus himself is speaking, most famously on the resurrection,⁸⁸ can we be clear that this indicates that the view attributed to the Jew is genuine, deriving from an original Jewish source?⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Marc Lods, "Étude sur les sources juives de la polémique de Celse contre les chrétiens," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 21 (1941): (1–33) 4–5.

⁸⁷ Enrico Norelli, "La tradizione sulla nascita di Gesù nell' 'ΑΛΗΘΗC ΛΟΓΟC di Celso,'" in *Discorsi* (see note 20), 133–169. Niehoff argues a similar case, that is, for inversion of Gospel traditions in *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,9–152,18 B.) and 1,32 (SC 132, 162,2–5 B.), but is clear, as noted, that it is a Jew inverting the tradition.

⁸⁸ Compare *Contra Celsum* 2,77 (SC 132, 468,2–5 B.) with the many attacks upon the idea of a physical resurrection in the rest of Celsus (see especially *Contra Celsum* 5,14 [SC 147, 48,1–50,25 B.]).

⁸⁹ Pichler, *Streit um das Christentum* (see note 10), 132, argued that for Celsus the role of the opening two chapters is not just to slander the Christians, and in particular, Jesus, but to show up difficulty with the opinions of the Jews, too, who will also feature in Celsus' subsequent polemic. The point is not convincing, but partially taken up by Arnold, who argues that the speeches of the Jew offer concrete starting points for his later attempts to contradict and ridicule Judaism (see Arnold, *Kelsos* [see note 8]).

Lods runs into difficulties, too, when he discusses adaptation of originally Jewish material. For him the discernment of such adaptation, lies in espying what is not Jewish in sentiments attributed to the Jew. Here he appears to endorse Origen's view that knowledge of matters Greek implies an opinion not attributable to a Jew. But is it possible to engage in such clear-sighted bifurcation, not least when some scholars are keen to affirm precisely the Hellenistic aspect of the Jew of Celsus,⁹⁰ and when we know that Hellenized Jews had not disappeared? So, for instance, Lods draws a distinction between what he takes to be a Jewish objection to Jesus' suffering, namely that it is incompatible with Jesus being the Messiah,⁹¹ and an apparently non-Jewish one, namely that it is incompatible with the majesty of divinity.⁹² But could the Jew not have been arguing a case along two lines, in part inspired by the Christian claim that Jesus was the messiah, in part by the claim that he was the divine Logos, the Son of God? After all, the view that Jesus was the son of David and the pre-existent son of God is basic Christian fare from an early stage in Christian history, a point which becomes clear in Paul's letters (compare Rom 1:4 and 1 Cor 8:6) and *John's Gospel*.⁹³

When we add to these various difficulties the fact that the Jew comes to us as a figure mediated by Celsus and then by Origen, our problem becomes yet more difficult. So, for instance, it seems clear that Origen has sometimes abbreviated discussions in books 1 to 2, which may well have provided more information about the opinions of the Jew. This seems clear at 2,32 (here concerning Jesus' exorcisms)⁹⁴ and 2,79 (here referring to omitting things not worth mentioning),⁹⁵

90 This is the great strength of Niehoff, "Jewish Critique" (see note 21).

91 See *Contra Celsum* 1,61 (SC 132, 244,32–35 B.), 2,29 (SC 132, 358,5–7 B.), 2,31 (SC 132, 362,1–5 B.) and 2,47 (SC 132, 388,2–390,6).

92 *Contra Celsum* 2,23 (SC 132, 346,1–4 B.), 2,24, (SC 132, 348,3–6 B.), 2,33 (SC 132, 366,1–3 B.), 2,34 (SC 132, 368,18–19 B.), 2,35 (SC 132, 370,1–4 B.) and 2,41 (SC 132, 378,2–3 B.). See Lods, "Sources juives" (see note 86), 27.

93 On this matter see now Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 219. See also Lods' discussion of the related matter of Davidic descent, discussed at *Contra Celsum* 2,32 (SC 132, 364,9–11 B.). He holds that the emphasis on the fact that Mary was not of royal descent is a Jewish argument against the messianic claims of the Christians. But in the hands of Celsus' Jew it has become a quite different argument about the unlikelihood of Mary being ignorant of such a lineage. He also sees evidence of adaptation in the places where Jesus' followers are mentioned negatively (see *Contra Celsum* 1,62 [SC 132, 244,2–5 B.], and *Contra Celsum* 2,12 [SC 132, 314,1–316,10 B.]) as well as their activities, which in a Jewish setting was used to illustrate Jesus' imposture but in a pagan adaptation comes to be associated with his baseness and arrogance (Lods, "Sources juives" [see note 86], 32).

94 *Contra Celsum* 2,32 (SC 132, 364,1 B.).

95 *Contra Celsum* 2,79 (SC 132, 476,37 B.).

and to be implied at 2,7,⁹⁶ 2,34,⁹⁷ and 2,40–42,⁹⁸ where it is likely that Celsus is summarizing things asserted by Celsus.

In spite of these concerns, I want to make a number of points in support of the authenticity of Celsus' Jew. I shall begin with some general observations and then move to more detailed ones connected with the actual material attributed to the Jew. Some of these points will emphasize questions of appropriateness; others will emerge from comparison with the rest of the *Contra Celsum*; and some from consideration of the kind of historical situation implied by the Jew.

- (1) The question about whether Origen is correct to state that Celsus is engaging in a form of prosopopeia is, at one level, at least, of principal interest to those who want to see him using a Jewish source, or possibly several. Even if Celsus is engaging in prosopopeia, that does not mean that he is not reflecting Jewish opinion (in contradistinction to what Origen states, at least on occasion). He may in fact be doing such a thing but through a literary construct of his own. That, in different ways, is the claim of a number of scholars.⁹⁹
- (2) In deciding not only to note but also to *exploit* Christian association with Judaism, the pagan Celsus was engaging in something apparently unprecedented, or certainly something which was not a known trope of pagan anti-Christian polemic.¹⁰⁰ Although he knew something about the nature of Jewish-Christian dispute,¹⁰¹ would he have had the wherewithal to have created his Jew as he comes down to us in books 1 and 2 of the *Contra*

⁹⁶ *Contra Celsum* 2,7 (SC 132, 294,1–2 B.).

⁹⁷ *Contra Celsum* 2,34 (SC 132, 366,1–2 B.).

⁹⁸ *Contra Celsum* 2,40–42 (SC 132, 378,1–380,3 B.) For a fuller discussion of these and other places where Origen appears to be guilty of omitting material from Celsus' treatise see Chadwick, introduction (see note 1), xxii–xxiv. See also Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 10–32.

⁹⁹ To a lesser and greater extent this is the argument of Lona, *Wahre Lehre* (see note 6), 172, who defends the broadly genuine character of the opinions attributed to the Jew, even if these are of an educated representative of Hellenistic Judaism. Norelli, "Nascita" (see note 87), also concedes this point, but to a lesser extent. Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 214–220, defends Celsus' skills as an exponent of prosopopeia (against Origen) but not on the basis of the verisimilitude of the opinions attributed to the Jew by Celsus.

¹⁰⁰ See our discussion above.

¹⁰¹ It is worth noting that Celsus shows knowledge in books 3–5 of the *Contra Celsum* of traditions Jews and Christians held in common (see, for instance, his reference to allegorizing Old Testament stories at *Contra Celsum* 5,5 [SC 147, 22,1–2 B.]; or the idea of the resurrection at *Contra Celsum* 5,14 [SC 147, 48,1–50,25 B.]). He also shows knowledge of Christian views about the fall of Jerusalem as punishment for the killing of Jesus (*Contra Celsum* 4,22 [SC 136, 234,1–5 B.]); and he knows something of their recent experience (*Contra Celsum* 8,69 [SC 150, 334,3–12 B.]). That they quarreled with each other was also known to him (see *Contra Celsum* 3,1 [SC 136, 14,10–21 B.] and 4,23 [SC 136, 238,1–6 B.]). See Baumgarten, "Martian" (see note 16), 401–403.

Celsum? Some say yes because of his familiarity with the *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*.¹⁰² If this was the only work he knew in which a Christian confronted a Jew, the dialogue form might have seemed a natural way to present Jewish objections to Christianity, though it has to be admitted that what we have in *Contra Celsum* 1–2 is barely dialogical (a polemical monologue, marked by apostrophe, seems a better description).¹⁰³ To this we might add that had *Jason and Papiscus* been his main source, we might have expected the content of books 1–2 to have been different.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, according to Origen, Celsus had a very low opinion of this work, and so we cannot know that either its contents or its form would have appealed to him.¹⁰⁵ We shall return to this matter below.

- (3) The observation that it helped Celsus' cause to have a Jew accuse Christians is not in itself a strong argument in favour of invention. It can be employed as easily to explain why he used the mooted Jewish source/s concerned, if indeed he was using *a* source; and there is, as already noted, a potential logic to Origen's dismissal of the Jew as a real person, or the representative of real opinions, resulting from self-interest or a genuine befuddlement at aspects of the opinions expressed.
- (4) Anyone who addresses this question needs to ask why it is only in the first two chapters of this text that we find Celsus arguing through a particular person other than himself.¹⁰⁶ Could this imply that he is following a source, or sources? Why might Celsus have chosen to present the matter in this way? As the Jew is introduced by Origen without any indication of the original context in which Celsus first deployed him in his work, we are deprived of clear evidence of what Celsus was trying to achieve through the use of the Jew.

102 *Contra Celsum* 4,52 (SC 136, 318,15–320,27 B.).

103 For faint indications of a dialogue form see *Contra Celsum* 2,8 (SC 132, 298,12–14 B.).

104 Origen makes it clear that the contents are strongly scriptural in character (that is, relating to what Christians came to call the Old Testament), claiming that the argument centres on scriptural evidence for the messiahship of Jesus (*Contra Celsum* 4,52 [SC 136, 318,23–320,27 B.]). As I shall argue, this hardly comports with the content of *Contra Celsum* 1–2.

105 Origen also knew the work and while admitting its shortcomings (it was written for a simpler reader), had a higher opinion of it than Celsus, holding the manner in which the Jew is represented to be believable. If Celsus' Jew had been based upon his reading of *Jason and Papiscus*, perhaps Origen would have been less scathing about what Celsus wrote, making it clear that Celsus was little more than a plagiarizer of *Jason and Papiscus*. For further discussion of *Jason and Papiscus* see Lawrence Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish believers in Christian-Jewish dialogues through the sixth century (excluding Justin)," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik; Peabody, 2007), 585–591.

106 See Baumgarten, "Martian" (see note 16), 407.

- (5) Familiarity with Jewish tradition. While it is true that many of the Jewish traditions with which Lods and others compare aspects of the claims attributed to Celsus' Jew, come from much later rabbinic sources, or sometimes from the *Toledot Yeshu*, it should be noted that determining the date of such traditions on the basis of the date of the documents in which they appear is difficult—such documents may in fact reflect much earlier traditions;¹⁰⁷ and secondly, it remains the case that the best extant parallels are in Jewish sources, making attribution to a Jew more likely, not least because it is historically probable that Jews would have been the first to circulate such negative stories about Jesus.¹⁰⁸

107 This is a complex debate, which has elicited a vast literature. Some of this, as it relates to both rabbinic material and the *Toledot Yeshu* is covered briefly in James Carleton Paget, “The Four among Jews,” in idem, ed., *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity* (WUNT 251; Tübingen, 2010), 267–286. For views on the relative earliness of these Jewish traditions see William Horbury, *A Critical Examination of the Toledoth Yeshu* (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 1970); and Philip Alexander, “Types of Jewish Anti-Christian Polemic in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages and their Historical Setting” (unpublished ms.), 3. Skeptical views can be found in Johann Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung* (Darmstadt, 1978), and from a different perspective Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, 2006). See now Peter Schäfer and Michael Meerson, introduction to idem, eds. and trans., *Toledot Yeshu: The life story of Jesus* 1 (2 vols.; Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 159; Tübingen, 2014), (3–124) 3–18; and also Peter Schäfer, Michael Meerson and Yaacov Deutsch, eds., *Toledot Yeshu (“The Life Story of Jesus”) revisited: a Princeton conference* (Studien zum antiken Judentum 143; Tübingen, 2011). In this volume views on the question of the earliness of *Toledot* traditions vary. Compare the essays of Schäfer and Yassif, with that of Piovaneli. The problem lies in the fact that the first explicit reference to something like the *Toledot* occurs in the writings of the Christian bishop, Amulo, in the 9th century. Claims for the existence of *Toledot*-like traditions before that, including passages in *Contra Celsum*, constitute the mainstay of those who wish to argue such a case (see note 195 below), as well as the more general view of the likelihood that such traditions would have evolved from an early stage. Talmudic traditions about Jesus, which are surprisingly rare, if one considers the vastness of that corpus (and always appear to illustrate points rather than being discussions devoted to Jesus), but found in texts earlier than the reference to *Toledot*-like traditions in Amulo, can only with difficulty be made into a narrative. It is possible, however, that while the Rabbis did not generate *Toledot*-like traditions, nor transmit them, they knew of such traditions and alluded to them.

108 The parallels are noted by Lods, “Sources juives” (see note 86). The best known relate to the circumstances of Jesus' conception (born of an adulterous relationship with a Roman soldier called Panthera) and the life of his mother (see esp. *Tosephta Shehitat Hullin* 2,22 [ed. Moses Samuel Zuckermantl, *Tosephta* [Jerusalem, 1882; repr. Jerusalem, 1970], 503,13–16) and 2,24 [503,18–30 Z.]; *Babylonian Talmud Shabbath* 104b [ed. and trans. Isidore Epstein and Harry Freedman, *The Hebrew-English edition of the Babylonian Talmud 1: Shabbath* [New York, 1972]], his activities in Egypt (*Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin* 107b [ed. and trans. Jacob Shachter and Harry Freedman, *The Hebrew-English edition of the Babylonian Talmud 19: Sanhedrin* [New York, 1987]]), his mirac-

- (6) The issue of contradiction and plausibility. Ernst Bammel, taking up Lods' point, has emphasized contradictions between *Contra Celsum* 1–2 and the rest of the work. These range from small matters (the fact that at 1,28 it is claimed that Jesus is born in the open but in 7,18 it is implied that he is born in Nazareth),¹⁰⁹ to larger ones relating to differently expressed views on the resurrection, already referred to (compare 2,77 and 5,14),¹¹⁰ and contrary views on Christian claims to newness.¹¹¹ Bammel highlights other differences. In particular he notes the manner in which quotations from classical authors are deployed.¹¹² So in *Contra Celsum* 1–2 all such quotations are used in polemic against Jesus,¹¹³ whereas in the section running from book 3, such quotations, which include sections from Plato, a writer never quoted in books 1–2 but a particular favourite of Celsus,¹¹⁴ are used to attack or defend dogmatic-philosophical positions.¹¹⁵ According to Bammel, such a difference implies the presence of two different voices.¹¹⁶ Bammel also argues for the distinctive Jewish character of some of the traditions found in *Contra*

ulous activity conceived as deceit (*Tosephta Shehitat Hullin* 2,22 [503,13–16 Z.]), and his execution as the work of Jews (*Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin* 43a (S./F.)). Other traditions, notably his execution with John the Baptist, the lowly, even revolutionary, nature of his followers, and his apparent escape from the hands of his captors, all traditions difficult to derive from the Gospels, are witnessed in the *Toledot* and the *Slavonic Josephus*. On some of these see below.

109 *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,14–152,15 B.) and *Contra Celsum* 7,18 (SC 150, 54,9 B.). The claim is a little tenuous as Jesus is simply called the man of Nazareth in 7,18.

110 *Contra Celsum* 2,77 (SC 132, 468,2–5 B.), 5,14 (SC 147, 48,1–50,25 B.).

111 Compare *Contra Celsum* 2,5 (SC 132, 292,7 B.) with *Contra Celsum* 3,5 (SC 136, 20,1–22,9 B.) and many other passages.

112 Bammel, “Zitate” (see note 82), 57–61.

113 *Contra Celsum* 1,66 (SC 132, 260,13 B.; repeated at 2,36 [SC 132, 370,3 B.]) and 2,34 (SC 132, 366,4 B.).

114 Bammel, “Zitate” (see note 82), 60.

115 Bammel, “Zitate” (see note 82), 61. See *Contra Celsum* 3,26 (SC 136, 60,5–11 B.), 4,77 (SC 136, 376,7 B.), 5,34 (SC 147, 100,1–104,48 B.), 6,3 (SC 147, 182,1–184,7 B.), 6,12 (SC 147, 208,18–22 B.), 7,30 (SC 150, 80,1–82,4 B.), 7,31 (SC 150, 82,1–84,8 B.), 7,58 (SC 150, 148,1–150,25 B.), 7,62 (SC 150, 158,1–17 B.), 8,44 (SC 150, 270,27 B.). Many other examples of citations of Plato, Herodotus, Heraclitus and others could be given.

116 Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 456–457, makes a similar point to Bammel (noting the presence of mythological material and pagan poetry in the presentation of the Jew but the absence of references to philosophical works), but argues that this aspect of his presentation conforms to Celsus' presentation of the Jews more generally, that is, in Celsus' opinion, Jews are not philosophically literate. Arnold draws attention to the fact that the Jew is dismissed by Celsus (see *Contra Celsum* 5,41 [SC 147, 122,25–28 B.]) before proper philosophical texts (principally Platonic ones) are discussed. See also *Contra Celsum* 1,14 (SC 132, 114,26–32 B.) and 1,16 (SC 132, 116,1–4 B.), where Celsus does not include the Jews among the wise peoples.

Celsum 1–2.¹¹⁷ None of this proves that Celsus' Jew is genuine—contrary to Origen's claim, Celsus has engaged in a good form of prosopopeia—but it potentially supports that possibility.

- (7) There is a sometimes vague, undeveloped and contradictory character to the traditions mentioned about Jesus in *Contra Celsum* 1–2. So, for instance, at 1,41 and 1,48¹¹⁸ there is reference to the fact that John the Baptist and Jesus were executed together, which is not developed (and indeed is not mentioned later on in book 2, where the author mentions the circumstances of the death of Jesus), but insofar as we have information about such a tradition elsewhere, it is Jewish.¹¹⁹ Further, at *Contra Celsum* 2,9, there is a reference to what looks like an account of a second escape of Jesus from custody but no reference to this in any detail.¹²⁰ Again a Jewish source may give us evidence of this tradition.¹²¹ Although Jesus' death features as a significant factor in the criticisms

117 Ernst Bammel, "Der Jude des Celsus," in idem, ed., *Kleine Schriften 1: Judaica* (WUNT 37; Tübingen, 1986), (265–283) 270–271, highlights a few items: the claim that Jesus gathered to himself most wicked tax-collectors (*Contra Celsum* 1,62 [SC 132, 244,3 B.]), asserting that such individuals only had a negative reputation among Jews; the reference to the hatred of Mary by Joseph (*Contra Celsum* 1,39 [SC 132, 182,7 B.]), arguing for its technical meaning in Jewish divorce law; and the negative reference to women in discussion of the resurrection (*Contra Celsum* 2,55 [SC 132, 414,19 B.] and *Contra Celsum* 2,70 [SC 132, 452,11 B.]), reflecting a low opinion of women in Jewish law.

118 *Contra Celsum* 1,41 (SC 132, 186,15 B.), 1,48 (SC 132, 208,91 B.).

119 See Ernst Bammel, "Origen *Contra Celsum* i.41 and the Jewish tradition," in idem, ed., *Kleine Schriften 1* (see note 117), 194–195. He draws attention to a tradition in a version of the *Toledot* found in the Cairo Genizah which mentions a question of Pilate about the reason for the condemnation of "Jesus the wicked one and John" (ibid., 194–195). It appears in the trial of the five disciples of Jesus (see New York, Library of Jewish Theological Seminary, 2529,2, f. 1r,5–9 [ed. Michael Meerson, *Toledot Yeshu: the life story of Jesus 2* [Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 159; Tübingen, 2014], 52; trans. Meerson, *Toledot 1* [see note 107], 135]). Another fragment from the same Aramaic tradition could be taken to refer to a similar claim (see St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, *Evr.* 1,274, f. 26r,8–11 [ed. Meerson, *Toledot 2* [see above], 77; trans. Meerson, *Toledot 1* [see note 107], 164], though the reference here is to Johanan the dyer). At *Contra Celsum* 2,4 (SC 132, 292,35 B.), however, there is the hint of a more positive tradition concerning John who is seen as "our prophet and the prophet of our God"—ἡμέτερος . . . ὁ προφήτης καὶ τοῦ ἡμετέρου θεοῦ. Lods, "Sources juives" (see note 86), 10–13, argues that both negative and positive traditions about John the Baptist existed within Judaism. In relation to the latter, he refers to traditions in the *Slavonic Josephus* which make of John the prophet of a messiah who will bring liberty and freedom from the powerful but will act in a politically turbulent manner. The mix of both positive and negative traditions would then imply a Jewish provenance.

120 *Contra Celsum* 2,9 (SC 132, 300,7–8 B.).

121 See Lods, "Sources juives" (see note 86), 18–19, for relevant literature both from *Toledot* and *Slavonic Josephus*. See also Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire, 3974, f. 172v,11–13 (ed. Meerson *Toledot 2* [see note 119], 90; trans. Meerson, *Toledot 1* [see note 107], 175) and New

the Jew throws at Jesus (these occur on many fronts), we hear little of why Jesus was executed,¹²² and almost nothing about his trial. In the early part of book 2 Jesus is presented as observing the Jewish law¹²³ but also as a seducer of his nation.¹²⁴ It is possible also to see tensions between what we are told about the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth in 1,28¹²⁵ and what we hear about the same in 1,32,¹²⁶ and similarly between 1,28, where Jesus' sojourn in Egypt is connected with his early life and 1,66,¹²⁷ in line with *Matthew's Gospel*, where it is associated with the flight when he is a baby.¹²⁸ Similar contradictions, or at least, disconnectedness, might be seen in the apparent tensions between what is implied about John the Baptist in *Contra Celsum* 1,41, 1,48 and 2,4.¹²⁹ This evidence may imply that Celsus had access to more material than he presented, possibly indicating sources or a source, only partially used. This is the implication of 2,13 where Celsus' Jew states that he could say much more about what happened to Jesus, "which is true and nothing like what the disciples have written about him."¹³⁰ The claim could be exagger-

York, Library of Jewish Theological Seminary, 2221, f. 41r,19–24 (ed. Meerson, *Toledot* 2 [see note 119], 105; trans. Meerson, *Toledot* 1 [see note 107], 197). The possibility that this tradition could be derived from the Gospel accounts, perhaps from Jesus' words at Matt 26:36, as suggested by Lona, *Wahre Lehre* (see note 6), 128, seems unlikely.

122 At *Contra Celsum* 2,9 (SC 132, 300,4 B.) his judges appear convinced that he should be convicted and at 2,5 (SC 132, 292,3 B.) it is asserted that he was appropriately punished by the Jews. This idea of Jewish responsibility for Jesus' death, which is a feature of rabbinic and *Toledot* traditions, appears to be contradicted at *Contra Celsum* 2,34 (SC 132, 368,20 B.), where, without mentioning the name of Pilate, it is Pilate who appears to be responsible for Jesus' death. Clearly Celsus' Jew is speaking in all the passages. Again this may hint at variant sources.

123 *Contra Celsum* 2,6 (SC 132, 294,2 B.).

124 *Contra Celsum* 2,1 (SC 132, 276,16 B.) and 2,4 (SC 132, 288,3 B.).

125 *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,10–14 B.).

126 In *Contra Celsum* 1,32 (SC 132, 162,2–4 B.), in agreement with *Matthew's Gospel* (Matt 1:18), Mary is described as engaged at the time of her adultery but in *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,10–14 B.), as married; at Matt 1:28 we hear of the birth of Jesus from Mary and at *Contra Celsum* 1,32 of her pregnancy; and at 1,32, as in 1,28, her divorce is mentioned, and the name of Panthera is introduced as the father of Jesus. The contradictions here can be overdone (see Lona, *Wahre Lehre* [see note 6], 100) but they point to two slightly different tales with the one in *Contra Celsum* 1,32 being more clearly based on *Matthew's Gospel* and the other on extra-biblical Jewish tradition. For a more detailed attempt to make sense of these differences see Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 85–90.

127 *Contra Celsum* 1,66 (SC 132, 258,2–3 B.)

128 See Lods, "Sources juives" (see note 86), 9.

129 See note 114 above.

130 *Contra Celsum* 2,13 (SC 132, 318,3–4 B.): ἀληθῆ καὶ οὐ παραπλήσια τοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν μαθητῶν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ γραφεῖσιν ἐκὼν ἐκεῖνα παραλείπω.

ated, as Origen believes, but some of what has been observed above might support it.¹³¹ It could indicate that Celsus was summarizing material, as Lods claimed;¹³² or that either the Jew or Celsus himself had access to variant sources, which neither has bothered to harmonize. Whatever the case, the text is sufficiently lumpy to render the idea that Celsus is simply inventing material unlikely and makes it more credible that he is drawing on a range of sources, or even oral traditions, which imply larger narratives.

- (8) Related to this is the matter of the role of the canonical Gospels. This has always been a part of the discussion, not least in determining how much of what Celsus attributes to the Jew is derivable from those texts. Most recently the subject has been given prominence by Maren Niehoff. In her opinion much of what Celsus' Jew argues emerges from a view of the text of the Gospels as both implausible and contradictory, observations which support the idea that the story of Jesus is a fabrication, which conceals the real story, possibly contained within an original, true text, a point implied in the reference to altering the original text "three or four or several times."¹³³ Celsus' Jew is engaged, then, in a kind of subversive, textual-

131 Baumgarten, "Martian" (see note 16), 421, thinks that the claim in *Contra Celsum* 2,13 may be an example of *paralepsis*, that is, the invoking of a subject by denying that it should be invoked, on the basis that it is difficult to see why Celsus would have omitted any such material. Certainly the passage appears to contradict what we find asserted at *Contra Celsum* 2,74 (SC 132, 458,1–4 B.), namely that the Jew has found all his material in the Christians' own works, which itself must be an exaggeration. Interestingly, at *Contra Celsum* 2,10 (SC 132, 306,4 B.), Origen refers to Celsus as misunderstanding certain stories and making use of Jewish tales (δηγματων ιουδαϊκων), a combination which might account for what we have in the *Contra Celsum*.

132 See Lods, "Sources juives" (see note 86), 32.

133 *Contra Celsum* 2,27 (SC 132, 356,1–5 B.): τριχῆ καὶ τετραχῆ καὶ πολλαχῆ. The passage could refer to the canonical Gospels and the differences between them, and to efforts to iron these out, though ἐκ τῆς γραφῆς could imply an attempt to change an original document, something like a *Grundschrift*, by persistent reworking. Whether apocryphal or non-canonical Gospels are referred to also in the word πολλαχῆ is unclear, though Origen seems to think that the work of Marcion and the Valentinians in "altering" (μεταχαράξαντες) is the object of the assertion, without implying new Gospels. Certainly the sense that the writings reflect differences among Christians (τὸ ἐφεστάναι αὐτοῖς) points to the production of apocryphal Gospels, though it could also refer to the canonical Gospels as well. In all of this care needs to be shown about assuming clear distinctions at the time Celsus was writing (thought by some to be in the 140s) between canonical and apocryphal Gospels. If Celsus was writing at a date earlier than the one generally proposed, these distinctions may not have existed in the way Origen assumes they do, and we may be dealing with a situation in which large numbers of Jesus traditions were broadly available. It is perhaps, however, the numbers mentioned by Celsus' Jew, especially four, which makes a possible reference to canonical and apocryphal gospels suggestive, though the phrase could be traditional for many and so the numbers less important (see Eusebius, quoting Atticus, in

ly-oriented re-reading of the Gospels. Certainly, Celsus' Jew is keen to show that the Christian story about Jesus is a fabrication (and indeed, probably for polemical purposes, he claims that all that he has written is taken from the Christians' own writings),¹³⁴ and yet it is not clear that this is achieved through detailed exegetical engagement—in fact we struggle to gain a real sense of the text the author is combatting,¹³⁵ and on occasion he produces

Praeparatio Evangelica 15,4,17 [GCS 43,2, 354,11 Mras], where the same phrase appears to refer to many). See Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 352, for an attempt to relate this discussion to other places in the *Contra Celsum* where Celsus mentions divisions among Christians.

134 *Contra Celsum* 2,74 (SC 132, 458,2–4 B.).

135 To some it is clear that Celsus or his Jew knew *Matthew's Gospel*. So it is easiest to derive the idea of Mary as an adulterer (see *Contra Celsum* 1,28 [SC 132, 150,9–152,18 B.], 1,32 [SC 132, 162,2–4 B.]) from *Matthew*, where there is more than a hint that Joseph wished to be rid of Mary once he knew that she was pregnant (Matt 1:18), although there is no hint of verbal knowledge (see Norelli, “Nascita” [see note 87], 158 [note 86]), except possibly in the shared use of the verb *μνηστεύομαι* at Matt 1:18 and *Contra Celsum* 1,32 (SC 132, 162,1–5 B.). Knowledge is also shown of the appearance of the star at Jesus' birth (*Contra Celsum* 1,34 [SC 132, 168,18–19 B.] and Matt 2:2); the story of the wise men and the slaughtering of the innocence (*Contra Celsum* 1,58 [SC 132, 234,2–8 B.] and Matt 2:1–2), though the story of the star is not associated directly with the wise men, and Herod appears to be confused with Herod Antipas (he is described as a Tetrarch, and not as Herod the Great). Knowledge is also shown of the flight to Egypt (*Contra Celsum* 1,66 [SC 132, 258,1–260,8 B.] and Matt 2:13–14); Jesus' cry to have the cup of suffering removed from him (*Contra Celsum* 2,24 [SC 132, 348,3–6 B.] and Matt 26:39); his mocking before the crucifixion (*Contra Celsum* 2,34–35 [SC 132, 368,31–370,4 B.] and Matt 27:28–29); the genealogy of Jesus (*Contra Celsum* 2,32 [SC 132, 364,9–11 B.] and Matt 1:6–7); and the reference to Jesus drinking vinegar and gall on the cross (*Contra Celsum* 2,37 [SC 132, 372,3–5 B.] and Matt 27:34). Knowledge of *Luke* is less clear. Some have suggested that the mention of two angels at *Contra Celsum* 1,66 (SC 132, 258,1–260,8 B.) is an allusion to the angels of *Luke's* annunciation (Luke 1:26–38) but this seems unlikely. Reference to a genealogy at *Contra Celsum* 2,32 (SC 132, 364,9–11 B.) which talks of Jesus as descended from the first-born as well as from the kings of the Jews could allude to *Luke's* genealogy and its claim of Jesus' descent from Adam. Norelli disputes this, claiming that the words “from the first born” (ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου φύντορος) could refer to Abraham and so to *Matthew's* genealogy, though this seems an unlikely suggestion (Lona, *Wahre Lehre* [see note 6], 146 [note 633]). In fact the reference to Jesus' genealogy in *Contra Celsum* 2,32, with its non-biblical claim that the genealogy relates to Mary, may reflect developing Christian traditions found, for instance, in Ignatius (*Ad Ephesos* 18,2 [SUC 1, 156,6–9 Fischer]; *Ad Smyrnaeos* 1,1 [SUC 1, 204,10 Fischer]; *Ad Trallianos* 9,1 [SUC 1, 176,22 Fischer]). Knowledge of *John* has been suggested at *Contra Celsum* 1,67 (SC 132, 264,9 B.; John 10:23), where Jesus is criticized for not revealing his identity in the temple; at *Contra Celsum* 2,31 (SC 132, 362,4 B.) with its reference to Jesus as Logos and son; and at *Contra Celsum* 2,70 (SC 132, 452,10–13 B.) where there may be a possible allusion to the appearance to Mary Magdalene and Thomas, though none of these references seem compelling. Allusions to gospel texts are seen at a number of places, e. g. *Contra Celsum* 1,39 (SC 132, 182,5–7 B.) where it is stated that divine power did not help Mary, here possibly alluding to Matt 1:21's reference to an angel; *Contra Celsum* 1,54 (SC 132, 222,2–3 B.), where the Jew's reference to Jesus' failure to

a story¹³⁶ without demonstrating how he has arrived at such a narrative, a narrative which he is just as likely to have inherited from an already extant counter-narrative, or counter-narrative tradition of Jesus' life, a point supported by the presence of parallels in other Jewish writings.¹³⁷ So when, for instance, Niehoff asserts that Celsus' approach to the infancy narratives shows evidence of the kind of approach to the Gospel text shown by the 3rd-century B. C. Aristarchus in his textual work on Homer, in which implausible accretions are removed in an attempt to get to an original text, she goes beyond the evidence as presented to us in the *Contra Celsum*.¹³⁸ Moreover, moments where one would expect closer textual engagement, e. g. when discussing Jesus' genealogy, they are missing.¹³⁹ Relevant also are the obser-

be helped on the cross is taken as an allusion to Matt 27:40.43. Some might think that none of the above demonstrates knowledge of the canonical Gospels and might more frequently suggest knowledge of sources related to them, a point suggested by the general absence, except in a few cases, of verbal parallels between *Contra Celsum* and the Gospels (as an exception see *Contra Celsum* 1,58 [SC 132, 234,2–8 B.] and Matt 2:2.24 and 26:39). For a detailed presentation of the evidence, which assumes knowledge of the Gospels see John Granger Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 3; Tübingen, 2000), 85–102.

136 E. g., *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,9–152,18 B.), 1,32 (SC 132, 162,2–5 B.), 1,62 (SC 132, 244,2–5 B.).

137 See Bammel, “Jude” (see note 117), 279, who argues that the Jew of Celsus had access to a free-standing narrative of Jesus' life, compiled by a Jew, as well as the Gospels. He tended to summarise the former. This is a possibility when one notes the presence of the two conflicting stories about Egypt in *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,9–152,18 B.) and 1,66 (SC 132, 258,2–260,8 B.), the former approximating to a summary of an extra-biblical source, the latter to a straightforward reference to the flight of the holy family as found in *Matthew*.

138 For her own reconstruction of the editorial processes of Celsus' Jew, see Niehoff, “Jewish Critique” (see note 21), 163–164, assuming knowledge of *Matthew* (and possibly *Luke*) for the account of Jesus' birth found at *Contra Celsum* 1,28 (SC 132, 150,9–152,18 B.) and 1,32 (SC 132, 162,1–5 B.). Such a view cannot be disproved but the absence of verbal allusions to *Matthew* (or indeed *Luke*) and the presence in *Contra Celsum* 1,32 (SC 132, 162,1–5 B.) of the Panthera tradition make pure invention unlikely, and reference to a pre-existing tradition probable.

139 *Contra Celsum* 2,32 (SC 132, 364,9–11 B.). The reference to Jesus' genealogy above does not highlight the contradiction between *Luke's* and *Matthew's* genealogy (indeed it may give evidence of knowledge of a combined version of that genealogy, in which descent from Adam [*Luke*] and Jewish kings [*Matthew*] is assumed, and where, contra the New Testament, the genealogy is thought to relate to Mary and not to Joseph, which seems to have been a problem for Christians as early as Africanus), but rather notes the contradiction between Mary's base behavior and a claim that she could have been of royal descent. Niehoff, “Jewish Critique” (see note 21), 170, notes the latter contradiction but doesn't find striking the absence of any reference to the contradictions between the Lukan and Matthean genealogies, which would surely have struck the textually-oriented mind of her reconstructed Jew.

vations made in (7) above, where there appears to be evidence of a possibly more detailed narrative of Jesus' life, not straightforwardly derivable from the Gospels.¹⁴⁰ To some extent such a discussion might be deemed irrelevant to the question of authenticity. People can agree that the Gospels play a significant role in the formation of the counter-narrative of Celsus' Jew without arriving at the view that the latter is an invention of Celsus (Niehoff herself is an example of this). But if it can be shown that the Gospels play less of a role and that independent tradition is an important factor, that adds further support to the view that the Jew is not an invention.

- (9) At the opening section of book 2 Origen distinguishes between the first book, which has been a response to attacks launched by the Jew upon Jesus (τὴν . . . πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν προσωποποιῶν),¹⁴¹ and the second book which will be a reply to the charges brought by Celsus' Jew against those of the Jewish people who have believed in Jesus. Whether this implies the use of two separate Jewish works and not one is not the issue here.¹⁴² Rather I want to focus

140 I am not arguing that all of Niehoff's claims about the Jew are wrong. Some of the arguments she presents in favour of the Jew making use of the criterion of plausibility, as seen in Niehoff, "Jewish Critique" (see note 21), 165–166, seem believable. I simply question the idea that the Jew is working closely with the Gospel texts.

141 *Contra Celsum* 2,1 (SC 132, 276,3 B.).

142 Whether these two books should be seen to be part of the same book is difficult to establish. Lona, who holds Celsus to be the originator of the Jew, argues for a clear connection between Books 1 and 2. In Book 1 we are privy to a *Vituperatio*, or a personal assault on the person of Jesus, and in Book 2 a *Disputatio* in which the Jewish Christians, Jesus' followers, are accused in a legal setting of following Jesus, and in which the accuser (the non-Christian Jew) must justify why he is not a believer (*Contra Celsum* 2,38 [SC 132, 374,2–5 B.]). Elements of the *Vituperatio* inevitably manifest themselves in the *Disputatio*, but the logic of having the two together is clear. After the *Vituperatio* one would expect no one to believe in Jesus but such people do exist and so the need for the *Disputatio*, and the inevitability of overlap between the two (Lona, *Wahre Lehre* [see note 6], 173–175). Bammel assumes the existence of at least two sources, one a straightforward attack upon Jesus, which combines material based upon the synoptic Gospels and pre-existing Jewish material about Jesus, and the other based much more on dialogic engagement, implied at *Contra Celsum* 2,8 (SC 132, 298,12–14 B.) and 2,47 (SC 132, 388,2–3 B.), and in the references to "you" and "we," in which there is an attempt to persuade the Christian Jew to return to his or her former *politeia*. Bammel, "Jude" (see note 117), 278–281, describes this source as a *Glaubenswerbung* and compares it to Jewish works like 4 *Maccabees* and Pseudo-Philo's *De Sampson* and *De Jona*, which may be synagogue sermons. In further justifying his position, Bammel notes the almost complete absence from the second book of any extra-Gospel Jewish traditions about Jesus (much of what is attributed to the Jew in Book 2 could be taken as little more than subversive readings of the Gospels) The matter is difficult, though Niehoff's highlighting of the second quotation from the Jew in *Contra Celsum* 2,1 (SC 132, 280,68 B.), where the Christian Jews are described as those "whom we were just addressing"—ὃν ἄρτι διεiléγημεθα, is an important

on four different points which emerge from this section. First, there is the bitterness with which the Jew refers to his apostatizing compatriots. He calls them “deluded” (ἐψυχαγωγῆσθαι) and “ludicrously deceived” (ἠπατήσθαι πάνυ γελοίως).¹⁴³ Such bitterness might arise from the fact that their desertion is seen as a real threat to the Jewish community captured in the word πολῖται or “citizens,” which reappears when the passage is repeated at the end of section 1,¹⁴⁴ implying a sense of individuals who are still considered part of the community but whose actions in going over to Jesus are conceived as threatening its integrity. The Jew of Celsus, it might be thought, writes in a period “in which Jews and Christians could certainly be distinguished, but were still much closer and more entwined than Origen could consider credible in his own times.”¹⁴⁵ Hence Origen’s bewilderment at the subject of the Jews’ complaint (Christian Jews rather than Gentiles as Origen would have expected). Origen writes at a time when the church is predominantly gentile and where the issue of Jewish conversion does not loom large. Entwinement and proximity may, as indicated, explain the sense of threat which the Jew of Celsus perceives the Christian community as representing, concerns captured in Acts 21:21, where Paul is described as causing Jews to apostatize from the Jewish law, or 24:5 where the same person is presented as “a fomentor of discord among the Jews all over the world”;¹⁴⁶ and 1 Thess 2:14 where Jews are seen as attempting to prevent Christians preaching.¹⁴⁷ In such a context Christians are perceived as very close to Jews and those who become Christians are understood as deserting their ancestral law (πάτριον νόμον) for

observation, though not one that proves the Jewish provenance of this apparently single source. It is striking that, aside from this passage, in spite of the repetition of material between the two parts, there are no references in Book 2 back to what we find in Book 1. See also Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 454–455, who airs the possibility that written sources lie behind Celsus’ Jew. He also records the opinions of others including Bammel but does not commit himself.

143 *Contra Celsum* 2,1 (132, 276,16 B.).

144 Bammel, “Jude” (see note 117), 282, notes the relative rarity of this word in Jewish sources and sees it as conveying the idea of a Jewish community within a city state which possesses particular rights, exemplified, for instance, in Alexandria or Antioch, preferring to see the former as the likely city from which the author hails. See Lona, *Wahre Lehre* (see note 6), 121–122, for the idea that this section is set up as a political speech addressed to an assembly of citizens. Lucio Troiani, “Il giudeo di Celso,” in *Discorsi* (see note 20), (115–128) 121, notes places where the term can refer to the whole *oikoumene* of the Jews and so should not have a restricted sense. See *Aristeas* 36 (SC 89, 124,7 Pelletier), 44 (128,16–17 P.); Aristoboulos in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 13,12,1 (191,1 M.); and Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 265 (204,12 C./W.).

145 Rizzi, “Origen” (see note 6), 5.

146 Acts 24:5: κινουῦντα στάσεις πᾶσι τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις τοῖς κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην.

147 Troiani, “Giudeo” (see note 144), 121.

another name and another life.¹⁴⁸ What should be stressed is that there is an element of genuineness in the presentation of the Jew who feels a passionate concern about those of his countrymen who desert to Christianity;¹⁴⁹ that it is telling that Origen is bamboozled by the presentation; and that it is difficult to explain this as an invention of Celsus. In this context it is interesting to note that when Justin's Trypho comes to discuss Jews who become Christians,¹⁵⁰ he is most concerned to know how they are treated by Christians, rather than to cast aspersions upon them for desertion—he may be a Christian construct but his more distant attitude is striking when compared with that of Celsus' Jew, who possibly represents an earlier reaction to Jews becoming Christians.¹⁵¹ Those who want to see the Jew of Celsus as a product of his imagination, have argued that the point about desertion is precisely the one that Celsus wanted his Jew to emphasize because Celsus is keen to present Christianity as a revolt or stasis from the Jews, a people who themselves emerged from a revolt from Egypt.¹⁵² This point could be said to undermine the case of those who argue that there is something telling about the fact that Celsus' Jew only focuses on Jews who become Christians—the point is hardly telling because the logic of Celsus' position that Christianity is a stasis from Judaism necessitates an exclusive emphasis on Jews who become Christians.¹⁵³ But there is a difficulty with this observation,¹⁵⁴ and here I come to my third point,

148 For similar sentiments expressed by the Jew, see *Contra Celsum* 2,4 (SC 132, 288,5–9 B.): “Or why do you take your origin from our religion, and then, as if you are progressing in knowledge, despise these things, although you cannot name any other origin for your doctrine than our law.”—ἢ πῶς ἄρχεσθε μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἱερῶν, προϊόντες δὲ αὐτὰ ἀτιμάζετε οὐκ ἔχοντες ἄλλην ἀρχὴν εἰπεῖν τοῦ δόγματος ἢ ἡμέτερον νόμον. Niehoff, “Jewish Critique” (see note 21), 173, states: “Our author writes these lines with a clear sense that an ineffaceable borderline has been drawn between Christians and Jews. He moreover perceives a Christian self-definition that relies on the notion of progress by dismissing its Jewish roots.”

149 See Troiani, “Giudeo” (see note 144), 120–128.

150 Justinus Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* 47 (PTS 47, 146,1–39 Marcovich)

151 See the reference to χθὲς καὶ πρώην in *Contra Celsum* 2,4 (SC 132, 288,2 B.), translated by Chadwick as “quite recently” (trans. Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* [see note 1], 69) and by Borret as “hier ou avant-hier” (trans. SC 132, 289 Borret), and related to the Jewish decision to punish Jesus. This could imply a very early date for Celsus' Jew, though the term is a standard Greek idiom.

152 *Contra Celsum* 3,5 (SC 136, 22,8 B.), 3,15 (SC 136, 40,9 B.), 8,2 (SC 150, 182,7 B.), 8,14 (SC 150, 202,4 B.).

153 In correspondence, Johannes Arnold suggested to me that it is precisely for this reason that Celsus appears intentionally to omit any reference to pagans who become Christians.

154 The observation grows in force if we recall that the only dialogue between a Christian and a Jew that Origen gives us explicit evidence of Celsus knowing, is the *Dialogue of Jason and*

which highlights the manner in which the Jew describes the desertion. This is not described as a stasis, a term, whether in its substantive or verbal form, which is so important to Celsus in his description of Christianity and Judaism from book 3 onwards, and their relationship to each other.¹⁵⁵ Rather he talks of leaving the ancestral law,¹⁵⁶ language which, is only paralleled in Jewish Greek writings, in this case the LXX and Josephus,¹⁵⁷ a point which further

Papiscus. In another reference to that work Jason is described as *Hebraeus Christianus* and *Papiscus* as *Alexandrinus Iudaeus* (see *Ad Vigilium* 8 [CSEL 3,3, 128,12–13 Hartel]. For whole text see 128,8–130,4 H.. For a translation see Laetitia Ciccolini, “La *Controverse de Jason et Papiscus*: le témoignage de l’*Ad Vigilium episcopum de Iudiacae incredulitate* faussement attribué à Cyprien de Carthage,” in *Les dialogues adversus Iudaeos: Permanences et mutations d’une tradition polémique* [ed. Sébastien Morlet, Olivier Munnich and Bernard Puderon; Collection des études Augustiennes 196; Paris, 2013], 165 [note 10]). Given the Hellenized character of Celsus’ Jew and the way in which he is depicted by Origen as presenting a Jew attacking a Christian Jew, it is possible to see how *Jason and Papiscus* could become a model for his presentation (a view tentatively advanced by Frede, “Origen’s Treatise” [see note 8], 132) and even a way of explaining why Celsus’ Jew focuses exclusively on Jewish conversion to Christianity. For more on this passage from Celsus’ *Epistula ad Vigilium* and its importance for an understanding of *Jason and Papiscus* see Ciccolini (see above), 159–174. For further references to *Jason and Papiscus* in patristic literature see Lahey, “Evidence” (see note 105), 585–591.

155 See *Contra Celsum* 3,5 (SC 136, 20,1–4 B.). According to Celsus the Jews were Egyptians by race, and left (interestingly rendered by καταλειπόνται, the verb which the Jew is presented as using to describe abandonment of Jewish customs by Jewish Christians in *Contra Celsum* 2,1 [SC 132, 276,15 B.]) Egypt after “revolting”—στασιάσαντας against the Egyptian community and despising the religious customs of Egypt. He goes on to assert, *pace* Origen, “that what they did to the Egyptians, they suffered in turn through those who followed Jesus and believed him to be the Christ; in both cases a revolt against the community led to the introduction of new ideas.”—ἄπερ ἐποίησαν Αἰγυπτίοις πεπονηθέναι ὑπὸ τῶν προσθεμένων τῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ πιστευσάντων αὐτῷ ὡς Χριστῷ, καὶ ἀμφοτέροις αἴτιον γεγονέναι τῆς καινοτομίας τὸ στασιάζειν πρὸς τὸ κοινόν (*Contra Celsum* 3,5 [SC 136, 22,5–8 B.]). For further references to stasis see note 78 above. Rizzi, “Origen” (see note 6), 9, argues that the prevalence of the issue of stasis implies that Celsus was writing at a time not long after the Bar Kokhba revolt, which he sees as reflected in such places as *Contra Celsum* 8,69 (SC 150, 334,10–11 B.), where Celsus refers to the fact that Jews have been left with barely a patch of land. But if Rizzi is right, it is odd that Celsus should never explicitly associate Jewish stasis with that event (he never explicitly mentions that revolt, or indeed the first Jewish revolt or Trajanic revolt).

156 *Contra Celsum* 2,1 (SC 132, 276,15 B.): καταλιπόντες τὸν πατριον νόμον. Note also the way in which Celsus represents departure from Judaism in *Contra Celsum* 2,3 (SC 132, 286,4 B.), where again the term stasis is missing and καταλείπω is used.

157 See 1 Macc 2:22, 10:14; 2 Macc 6:28; Ecclesiasticus 49:4; and Josephus, *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 12,240 (ed. Benedikt Niese, *Flavii Iosephi Opera* 4 [Berlin, 1955], 113,1–2). In the last of these passages, Josephus is referring to the Maccabean revolt so may be aping vocabulary in 1 and 2 Macc. His reference to πατρίους νόμους καταλιπόντες comes closest to what we find in *Contra Celsum* 2,1 (SC 132, 276,15 B.) and 2,3 (SC 132, 286,3 B.).

supports the Jewish origin of Celsus' Jew. Fourthly, in this section Origen mentions the fact that the Jews who join the Christian church are called Ebionites. This is again an indication of the time in which he is writing when the term Ebionite may have become a general term for what scholars have come to call, helpfully or not, Jewish Christians. What is more important in the current context is that later on Origen will quote Celsus citing the example of Ebionites as a sect of Christians who observe the law like the Jews (*Contra Celsum* 5,61),¹⁵⁸ a phenomenon which would not seem to be implied by what he says at *Contra Celsum* 2,1 or 2,4, betraying another possible contradiction between books 1–2 and 3–8.¹⁵⁹

All of the above does not mean that what we have in *Contra Celsum* 1,28–2,79¹⁶⁰ is a transcription of a source, or possibly sources—just as Celsus' presentation of Christianity may have been made up of an amalgam of Christian sources, so could his presentation of the Jew. Moreover, Origen is not afraid to note at least one instance of a Christian text he claims Celsus knows (the already mentioned *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*), and so had Celsus mentioned the name of a Jewish source, Origen would no doubt have mentioned it. I do believe, however, that there are good *prima facie* grounds for thinking that at the *minimum* Celsus had access to written Jewish material, which he used selectively.

4 Some intermediate thoughts

- (1) Celsus' Jew's attack is focused upon Jesus. In this respect it is fitting that both books should end with lapidary statements about Jesus, describing his actions as those of one hated by God and of a wicked sorcerer, and describing him as a mere man. It is also shown in the fact that book 2, which osten-

¹⁵⁸ *Contra Celsum* 5,61 (SC 147, 166,28–30 B.). Strictly speaking it is not Celsus who uses the word “Ebionite” but Origen, who assumes that Celsus' reference to Christians “who still want to live according to the law of the Jews”—ἐτι δὲ κατὰ τὸν Ἰουδαίων νόμον ὡς τὰ Ἰουδαίων πλήθη βιοῦν ἐθέλοντες must be to two types of Ebionites. But it remains the case that, against *Contra Celsum* 2,1 (SC 132, 276,15 B.), Jews who observe the law are mentioned.

¹⁵⁹ Bammel, “Jude” (see note 117), 277 (note 60e): “Kann es auf dieselbe Feder zurückgehen, wenn in II.1 und noch einmal in II.4 den Christen gewordenen Juden vorgeworfen wird, das Gesetz verlassen zu haben und vom Judentum abgefallen zu sein? Gewiss, es wird beides, Abfall vom Gesetz und Beibehaltung desselben gegeben haben. Aber es ist ganz unwahrscheinlich, dass ein und derselbe Verfasser beides erwähnt, ohne sich über den Unterschied auszulassen.”

¹⁶⁰ *Contra Celsum* 1,28–2,79 [SC 132, 150,1–476,42 B.].

sibly concerns itself with the desertion of Jews to Christianity, is an attack upon Jesus because it is precisely belief in Jesus that marks out the Christian Jew.¹⁶¹

- (2) Its principal aim is to show that Jesus is not the person Christians claim him to be. It challenges the truthfulness of the Christian account implicitly through reports about Jesus which contradict the canonical account and through more discursive engagement with that material, questioning its claims to truth on grounds of reason. At one point Celsus' Jew claims that all he writes has been gleaned from what he finds in the Christian scripture.¹⁶² This, as I have suggested, is only partially true but there is material in the first two chapters of the *Contra Celsum*, especially the second, which is taken from the Gospel, or at least a version of it (probably *Matthew*, even *John* or *Luke*).
- (3) The character of the attack is all-consuming and negative. Indeed, as some have noted, the attack made by Celsus' Jew strongly contrasts with the nature of the attack made by Trypho in Justin's *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo*.¹⁶³ Where Trypho is interested in the response of Justin to his questions, Celsus' Jew appears simply to address Jesus or his followers with his accusations, barely allowing the Jewish believer in Jesus to respond to his accusations (and certainly he takes little interest in them),¹⁶⁴ where Trypho takes a potentially positive view of Jesus as a man, even rejecting negative stories about Jesus,¹⁶⁵ and is keen to learn things from Justin, Celsus' Jew thinks of Jesus in starkly negative terms, applying a range of derogatory terms to him (a pes-

161 Note Origen's characterization of the Christian Jew as someone who believes in Jesus (*Contra Celsum* 2,1 [SC 132, 276,18–19 B.]: οἱ ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν πιστεύοντες).

162 *Contra Celsum* 2,74 (SC 132, 458,2–3 B.).

163 For a comparison see Niehoff, "Jewish Critique" (see note 21), 157, here contrasting the supposedly pallid and constructed Trypho with the livelier and more genuine Jew of Celsus. For a more detailed comparison see Timothy J. Horner, *Listening to Trypho: Justin Martyr's Dialogus reconsidered* (Contributions to biblical exegesis and theology 28; Leuven, 2001), 189–193, who also plays up the more moderate tone of Trypho, while arguing strongly for its realistic aspect over against that of Celsus' Jew, whom he sees as "highly stylized" (ibid., 193) and only superficial in character. Horner's view is an interesting challenge to convention. There are, however, a number of places where we discern a sharpness in Trypho's tone, e. g. *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* 8,3 (85,15–20 M.), where it is stated that it would have been better for Justin to have remained a Platonist rather than being deceived by false words, abandoning God and putting his confidence in a man.

164 This may be the case simply because Celsus is uninterested in the *interna* of Jewish-Christian debate. As Arnold asserts, the function of this section of the dialogue is as a *Vorlage* for subsequent attacks upon Christians and Jews.

165 *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* 10,2 (87,12–15 M.), 67,2 (185,10–12 M.).

- tilent figure, arrogant, greedy, profane, a deceiver, hateful, a robber leader etc.). The tone is closer to Lucian's *Alexander*.
- (4) The Jew might be thought to reflect educated, aristocratic Jewish opinion.¹⁶⁶ This is seen in the distaste which he shows towards the origins of Jesus, emphasizing his poverty, and the lowly and base nature of his mother; the sense that he seems to convey of the character of Jesus' followers¹⁶⁷ and his association of them with robbers,¹⁶⁸ reflecting an attitude akin to that of Josephus towards the Jewish rebels against Rome in the Jewish revolt;¹⁶⁹ and in the evidence of knowledge of Greek myths and Greek tragedy.
- (5) A striking feature of this polemic is the absence of Old Testament citation.¹⁷⁰ In fact the only texts the Jew quotes are pagan ones.¹⁷¹ It is true that prophecies are mentioned and importance is attached to the failure of Jesus to conform with these prophecies.¹⁷² But reference to the latter is presented

166 For this argument see Niehoff, "Jewish Critique" (see note 21), 168–169.

167 *Contra Celsum* 1,62 (SC 132, 244,2–6 B.).

168 *Contra Celsum* 2,12 (SC 132, 314,3 B.) and 2,44 (SC 132, 384,14 B.).

169 See Troiani, "Giudeo" (see note 144), 118. Jesus is implicitly likened to a λήστραρχος (*Contra Celsum* 2,12 [SC 132, 314,3 B.]) and his followers are described as λήσται (*Contra Celsum* 2,44 [SC 132, 384,15 B.]), a term which is used regularly by Josephus to describe bandits. For further discussion of this matter see William Horbury, "Christ as Brigand in ancient anti-Christian polemic," in *Jesus and the Politics of his Day* (ed. Ernst Bammel and Charles F. D. Moule; Cambridge, 1984), (183–196) 189–190.

170 Jeffrey W. Hargis, *Against the Christians: The Rise of Early Anti-Christian Polemic* (New York, 1999), 37–38, notes this point but thinks it shows that Celsus was not using Jewish sources. Blumell, "Celsus" (see note 21), also notes the same point but sees it as proof that Celsus was not using written sources, though why one should follow from the other is not clear. This is one of a number of reasons for thinking that Niehoff's view that Celsus' Jew is responding to the *Epistula Barnabae* is misguided (Niehoff, "Jewish Critique" [see note 21], 171–175). If he was, surely he would have engaged in more scripturally-based arguments just as *Epistula Barnabae* had (not least ones about the Torah), rather than concentrating his attack upon Jesus' life, which is not a major feature in *Barnabas*, save possibly for chapter 5 (see esp. *Epistula Barnabae* 5,9 [SUC 2, 150,9–12 Wengst]), where he states that Jesus' followers sinned beyond all others, a passage referred to by Origen at *Contra Celsum* 1,63 (SC 132, 250,11–252,12 B.), who suggests knowledge of *Epistula Barnabae* on the part of Celsus, a passage not mentioned by Niehoff.

171 Bammel, "Zitate" (see note 82), 61.

172 See *Contra Celsum* 1,49 (SC 132, 210,12–14 B.), 1,50 (SC 132, 212,5–7 B.), 1,57 (SC 132, 232,13–14 B.), 2,4 (SC 132, 292,32–34 B.), 2,28 (SC 132, 356,1–2.9–358,10 B.), 2,29 (SC 132, 358,5–7 B.), 2,75 (SC 132, 460,7–8 B.). Celsus questions why Jesus should be the subject of prophecies rather than thousands of others (*Contra Celsum* 1,50 [SC 132, 212,5–7 B.], 2,28 [SC 132, 356,1–2 B.]), and elsewhere Jesus is seen not to conform with the idea that the one who will come will be a great prince, lord of the whole earth and of all nations and armies (*Contra Celsum* 2,29 [SC 132, 358,5–8 B.]); see similar sentiments at *Contra Celsum* 1,49 [SC 132, 210,12–14 B.]).

in summary form—that is, there is no discussion of specific Old Testament passages.¹⁷³ Origen himself notices this when he asserts a propos of the discussion of the circumstances of Jesus' birth that “it would have been appropriate to the words he has put into the mouth of the Jew to have quoted that Emmanuel shall be born of a virgin”¹⁷⁴ (here referring to Isa 7:14), assuming that Celsus was either ignorant of the quotation or intentionally omitted it. Elsewhere Origen objects to the idea that a Jew would assert that the prophecies could be applied to countless other people with greater probability than to Jesus. Rather the Jew, in Origen's opinion, would state his own explanation of each prophecy in responding to the Christian interpretation.¹⁷⁵ Where Origen talks elsewhere of the context in which he has contact with Jews, this is always scriptural.¹⁷⁶ Insofar as any texts are debated by the Jew, it is gospel-like material, though again this is not straightforwardly textual in character.¹⁷⁷

- (6) The omission of detailed scriptural arguments could be seen as unsurprising if the Jew is Celsus' creation. After all, Celsus had little regard for the LXX, and it is unclear how well acquainted he was with it¹⁷⁸—by and large he seems only to betray a knowledge of or perhaps interest in *Genesis*.¹⁷⁹ General, rather than specific, references to prophecies might then be thought to be understandable if the Jew is his creation. There are a number of responses to this point. First, and less importantly, Celsus' Jew is clear that those he is addressing have abandoned the law (*Contra Celsum* 2,1.4)¹⁸⁰ and yet there is no reference to scriptural arguments in favour of its retention, as one would expect, if one examined the New Testament and both early and later Chris-

173 Lona, *Wahre Lehre* (see note 6), 175–176, argues that the theme of scriptural fulfillment is an important one, but fails to mention the absence of actual texts from the discussion. See further Arnold, *Kelsos* (see note 8), 227–228, 355, who also asserts a central role for messianic prophecies in Celsus' presentation of the Jew, while admitting the absence of engagement with particular texts (see esp. *ibid.*, 228 [note 89]).

174 *Contra Celsum* 1,34 (SC 132, 168,1–3 B.): Καὶ οἰκεῖόν γε φαίνεται μοι πρὸς τὴν τοῦ Ἰουδαίου προσωποποιίαν παραθέσθαι τὴν τοῦ Ἡσαΐου προφητείαν, λέγουσαν ἐκ παρθένου τεχθῆσεσθαι τὸν Ἐμμανουήλ.

175 *Contra Celsum* 2,28 (SC 132, 358,18–23 B.).

176 *Contra Celsum* 1,34 (SC 132, 168,1–170,36 B.) and 1,55 (SC 132, 224,1–5 B.).

177 This is the view of Niehoff, “Jewish Critique” (see note 21), though she makes nothing of the absence of Old Testament citation.

178 A brief discussion of this, summarizing a mass of other literature, is found in Kinzig, “Pagans and the Bible” (see note 15), 756–760.

179 See, *inter alia*, *Contra Celsum* 4,41 (SC 136, 98,14–17 B.), 6,50 (SC 147, 304,1–4 B.), 6,60–61 (SC 147, 326,1–332,36 B.).

180 See *Contra Celsum* 2,1 (SC 132, 276,15–16, 280,67–70 B.), 2,4 (SC 132, 288,3 B.).

tian *adversus Judaeos* texts.¹⁸¹ Secondly, the way in which Celsus characterizes the debate between Jews and Christians as one about the shadow of an ass and relates this to a discussion about Jesus' messianic status as this concerns scripture,¹⁸² would lead us to expect scriptural references. Indeed, the sense that the argument between Jews and Christians is marked by scriptural exchange in the mind of Celsus is also evident when we look at the one place where he explicitly refers to a named Christian source, the *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*. As has been noted, he is scornful of the latter's contents.¹⁸³ These, Origen states, and subsequent sources confirm,¹⁸⁴ concern a dispute about whether the biblical prophecies fit Jesus. The point, then, is that insofar as Celsus seeks to represent the Jewish-Christian dispute in places in the *Contra Celsum* outside of 1,28–2,79, it is about scripture. We might then expect his invented Jew to reflect that point more than he does. Instead we have a Jew in *Contra Celsum* 1–2, who argues an *ad hominem* case against Jesus with little reference to the Jewish scriptures except in rather summary form.¹⁸⁵

The possibility cannot, however, be excluded that getting into the specificity of arguments from scripture was alien to the philosophically-minded Celsus—it was enough for him simply to refer to this as an area of dispute between Jews and Christians rather than regale his possibly predominantly pagan audience with details. Moreover, there was a sense in which these arguments were superfluous as far as Celsus was concerned. The idea of a suffering God, indeed of the descent of God at all, was an absurdity to him¹⁸⁶ and so in truth the details of supporting scriptural arguments were not his concern. These two observations might imply that even if Celsus was using Jewish sources, or a Jewish source, in *Contra Celsum* 1,28–2,79, he was being selective, tapering his selections to his overarching purposes, which did not include recording detailed scriptural arguments. While this point cannot be

181 This is another reason for contesting Niehoff's claim that Celsus' Jew is responding to *Epistula Barnabae* (see note 170). If anything this text is taken up with the abandonment of a literal interpretation of the law based upon Old Testament citations and yet the issue, though present in *Contra Celsum*, hardly looms large. Baumgarten, "Martian" (see note 16), 423, notes this absence, arguing that it may lead us to question the idea that praxis rather than doctrine were fundamental to Jewish objections to Christianity.

182 *Contra Celsum* 3,1 (SC 136, 14,13–15 B.).

183 *Contra Celsum* 4,52 (SC 136, 318,22 B.). See our discussion above.

184 For the scriptural character of the fragments of *Jason and Papiscus* see Lahey, "Evidence" (see note 105), 588–589.

185 This against Lona, *Wahre Lehre* (see note 6), 176.

186 *Contra Celsum* 7,14 (SC 150, 44,3–12 B.). See also 5,2 (SC 147, 16,1–5 B.).

disproved, it should be noted that (a) there may have been capital for Celsus in illustrating the character of Christian-Jewish disputation about scripture, a disputation he saw as fundamentally absurd; and (b) even if the observation were true, Celsus' source/sources still imply a much stronger interest in *ad hominem* arguments against Jesus among Jews than scriptural ones. As will be seen in the rest of this article, this point is of significance.

5 Celsus' Jew and *adversus Judaeos* literature

It is now that I, finally, come to the issue of Christian *adversus Judaeos* literature. All those who are familiar with this literature, defined as texts aimed against Jews whether in the form of a treatise, a testimony collection or a dialogue, know that it is nothing if it is not exegetical.¹⁸⁷ This is clear from a text as early as the second century *Epistula Barnabae* and as late as the fifth or sixth century *Dialogus Timothei et Aquilae* or of *Dialogus Athanasii and Zacchaei*. Moreover, in these texts we find little direct reference to the kinds of accusations we find in Celsus. As an example let us take Isa 7:14 and its use—in most of the *adversus Judaeos* texts where we find this text discussed, it is used as proof of the virgin birth, but never as an answer to an accusation about Jesus' origins as a bastard and the fruit of an adulterous relationship involving a Roman soldier. In relation to Jesus' messianic identity, proof texts again proliferate but not as explicit responses to accusations about Jesus' inadequacy as a messianic figure of the kind we find in Celsus. Moreover, we find little attempt to answer the *ad hominem* attacks upon aspects of Jesus' ministry, which are so much in evidence in Celsus' Jew's polemic (in fact New Testament texts, in particular the Gospels, are rarely the subject of negative scrutiny, which is then answered).¹⁸⁸ Put bluntly, the extant *adversus*

187 Lahey, "Evidence" (see note 105), 581–582: "*Contra Judaeos* works argue for the truth of Christianity over Judaism based primarily on Old Testament proof texts. There are approximately three forms of *contra Judaeos* writings: Testimony Collections, biblical proof texts grouped by themselves, without additional argumentation, under different headings; Tractates, argued presentations based on biblical texts (under this category one could include some sermons and letters by church Fathers); lastly Dialogues, back and forth discussion portrayed between a Christian and a Jew or several participants in order to work through Christian proofs and Jewish objections."

188 The Gospels are mentioned, sometimes to defend their reliability (cf. *Dialogus Athanasii et Zacchaei* 58–78 [ed. Fred C. Conybeare, *The Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and of Timothy and Aquila: Edited with Prolegomena and Facsimiles* [Oxford, 1898], 36,1–44,14]), but here the Gospels, or indeed the story of Jesus, is not submitted to acute scrutiny, in the way they are by Celsus' Jew. Note also the appearance in Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* of the Mem-

Judaeos texts are not explicitly defences of Jesus' life as found in the Gospels, as, for instance, Origen is forced to engage in in the *Contra Celsum* (though they do occasionally allude to the Gospels) as he combats Celsus' Jew, but defences of the Christian message to which Jesus is obviously central through the medium of scripture. The subjects discussed range widely from a defence of a non-monadic God, to the related question of the divinity of Jesus, to the fact that his suffering was in accord with scriptural promises, to a defence of the disinheritance of the Jews and the divine choice of the church as the church of the gentiles, to the Christian failure to observe the Jewish law.¹⁸⁹

What is striking about this is that very rarely are *adversus Judaeos* texts defences of Christian positions relating to Jesus and presented as direct counters to these kinds of accusations enunciated by Celsus' Jew. This is interesting because it seems clear in some cases that the individuals who engaged in this form of writing knew about the kind of accusations. Justin, in his *Dialogue*, refers on a number of occasions to leaders of the Jews who send messengers abroad defaming Jesus. So at *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* 108, Justin claims that

you have not only not repented, after you learned that he rose from the dead, but, as I said before, you have sent chosen and ordained men throughout all the world to proclaim that a godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified, but his disciples stole by night from the tomb, where he was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven. Moreover, you accuse him of having taught those godless, lawless and unholy doctrines which you mention to the condemnation of those who confess Him to be the Christ, and a teacher from, and son of God.¹⁹⁰

oires of the Apostles. Whatever these constituted (and they seem to come close to content found in the canonical Gospels), they are not straightforwardly the subject of discussion between Trypho and Justin, and their content is not openly disputed (see *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* 100,4 [242,25–26 M.], 101,3 [244,23 M.], 102,5 [245,37 M.], 103,6 [248,44 M.], 103,8 [249,1–2 M.], 104,1 [250,1 M.], 105,1 [250,8–9 M.], 105,5–6 [251,30–33 M.], 106,1 [252,10 M.], 106,4 [253,27–28 M.]).

189 For presentations of such content see Pseudo-Cyprian's *Testimonia (Ad Quirinum [Liber Testimiorum])* and Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa's *Testimonia adversus Judaeos*.

190 Justinus, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* 108,2 (255,6–15 M.): <καί> οὐ μόνον οὐ μετενοήσατε, μαθόντες αὐτὸν ἀναστάντα ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἀλλ', ὡς προεῖπον, ἄνδρας χειροτονήσαντες ἐκλεκτοὺς εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐπέμψατε, κήρυσσοντας ὅτι αἴρεσίς τις ἄθεος καὶ ἄνομος ἐγήγερται ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ τίνος Γαλιλαίου πλάνου, ὃν σταυρωσάντων ἡμῶν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ κλέψαντες αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ μνήματος νυκτός, ὁπόθι κατετέθη ἀφηλωθεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ, πλανῶσι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους λέγοντες ἐγγεργῆαι αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀνεληλυθέναι, <καί> κατειπόντας δεδιδαχέναί <αὐτὸν> [καί] ταῦτα, ἅπερ κατὰ τῶν ὁμολογούντων Χριστὸν καὶ διδάσκαλον καὶ υἱὸν θεοῦ εἶναι παντὶ γένει ἀνθρώπων ἄθεα καὶ ἄνομα καὶ ἀνόσια λέγετε. See Justinus, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* 16,4 (96,18–97,23 M.), 35,8 (129,41–42 M.), 47,4 (147,33–34 M.), 137,2 (306,7–307,8 M.), for references to Jewish cursing of Christ.

And yet Trypho never engages in such criticisms of Jesus—indeed Trypho is made into a figure different from those who are presented as sending messengers to spread negative views about Jesus.¹⁹¹ Tertullian, in another well-known passage (*De Spectaculis* 30), imagines speaking to the Jews at Christ's parousia with these words:

This is he, I shall say, the son of the carpenter or of the whore, the desecrator of the Sabbath, the Samaritan and the one possessed of a demon; this is he whom you purchased from Judas, this is the one struck with a rod and fists, disgraced with spittle, given a draught of vinegar and gall; this is he whom, you say, they stole away secretly so that he may be said to have risen or else that the gardener removed him lest his lettuces be damaged by the throng of visitors.¹⁹²

The sentiments of this passage are not reflected, at least as known Jewish abuses, in Tertullian's *Adversus Judaeos*. And such comments, that is, about the absence of *ad hominem* attacks upon Jesus, could be replicated in relation to other *adversus Judaeos* literature.¹⁹³ Indeed it is telling that scholars who seek evidence for the existence of something like a continuous Jewish counter-narrative of Jesus' life from the early history of Christianity are forced to make use of sources which cannot be classified as *adversus Judaeos* literature.¹⁹⁴

191 See Horner, *Trypho* (see note 163), esp. 132–146, arguing that Trypho is different from the Jewish teachers presented by Justin, though without mentioning the point made above. Trypho, according to Horner, may have known of the kinds of *ad hominem* arguments put forward by the teachers and indeed by the likes of Celsus (see *Dialagus cum Tryphone Judeao* 10,1 [86,1–87,9 M.]) but he chooses not to refer to them. Horner's Trypho is an interested but politely skeptical opponent of Christian claims about Jesus.

192 Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 30,6 (SC 332, 324,28–326,34 Turcan): *hic est ille, dicam, fabri aut quaestuariae filius, sabbati destructor, Samarites et daemonium habens; hic est quem a Iuda redemistis, hic est ille harundine et colaphis diverberatus, sputamentis dedecoratus, felle et aceto potatus; hic est, quem clam discentes subripuerunt, ut surrexisse dicatur, vel hortulanus detraxit, ne lactucae suae frequentia commeantium adlaederentur*. On the passage more generally, see William Horbury, "Tertullian on the Jews in the light of *De Spect.* XXX, 5–6," in idem, ed., *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh, 1998), 176–179.

193 See *Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani* 6,22 (CChr.SL 64, 276,1–277,14 Demeulenaere) for a possible exception to this, where there is a reference to Christ as the enemy of the Jewish people.

194 Aside from the passages from Justin and Tertullian, mentioned above, scholars often invoke Commodian, *Carmen Apologeticum* 2,439–443 (ed. and trans. Antonio Salvatore, *Carme apologetico* [Corona Patrum 5; Turin, 1977], 9–13); *Martyrium Cononis* 4 (ed. Herbert Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* [Oxford early Christian texts; Oxford, 1972], 188,29–190,33); Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes* 1,43 (ed. Franz Oehler, *Arnobii oratoris Adversus nationes libri septem* [Bibliotheca Patrum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum Selecta 12; Leipzig, 1846], 29,10–12); and Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* 5,3,4 (CSEL 19, 407,12–14 Brandt). For discussion of these passages see Horbury,

How, then, to explain this failure to refer to the *ad hominem* remarks about Jesus we find in Celsus of which there are hints elsewhere? One answer lies in asserting that there were no such counter-narratives or polemical interactions with Gospel material in the early history of Christianity. But this is to overlook evidence for the existence of such material, albeit fragmentary, from an early stage in the history of Christianity.¹⁹⁵ Another answer might lie in reflecting upon the development of tradition. Philip Alexander, for instance, has suggested that Jewish arguments against Christianity can be divided into counter-narrative, counter-exegesis and counter-propositional ones.¹⁹⁶ Alexander implies that coun-

Toledoth (see note 107); Carleton Paget, “Four” (see note 107), 280–282; and Meerson and Schäfer, introduction (see note 107), 6–9, the last of these arguing that none of these passages evidence a continuous counter-narrative equivalent to the *Toledot* (they omit discussion of Conon and Lactantius).

195 Much of the debate in relation to this question has been taken up with the extent to which an early version of the *Toledot Yeshu* can be discerned in early patristic sources (as already mentioned). So Krauss, Horbury, Alexander, Piovaneli and others have argued for evidence of an early version of the *Toledot*, while others, most recently, Meerson and Schäfer, have argued for its late appearance. The arguments are complex and cannot be rehearsed here. Defining the *Toledot* is difficult because the traditions usually thought to be related to it are varied and most are agreed that there was no original *Toledot* of which all others are variants. Rather we should talk about a creative folk tradition developing in a variety of ways (in fact, as Philip Alexander and others have suggested, it would be misleading to suggest a kind of *Urtext* of the *Toledot* from which all other texts are derived. As he notes: “What we have (in the *Toledot*) is a cycle of anecdotes about Jesus, emanating from a Jewish milieu, unified by a certain style of story-telling and list of topics, and occasionally overlapping, but not, fundamentally a literary tradition.” [unpublished ms. discussing the relationship of the *Toledot* to rabbinic traditions about Jesus]). However we assess ancient precedents for such traditions, discussion of Jewish counter-narrative should not be restricted to comparisons with *Toledot* material with differences and similarities pressed in favour of contrasting positions. So, for instance, Meerson and Schäfer, introduction (see note 107), 7–8, may be right to reject the view that Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 30,6 (324,27–326,34 T.) is sufficiently close to known *Toledot* traditions to be thought as evidence of an early version of the latter, but that need not mean that the passage does not give evidence of a developing Jewish counter-narrative, which came to be crystallized in the later *Toledot*. Similarly, Celsus may on occasion evidence *Toledot*-like material (e. g. in relation to Jesus’ birth, his miraculous activity, his followers, as well as his relationship to John the Baptist, and his trial), as well as failing to evidence other traditions associated with the *Toledot* (e. g. those associated with the stealing of the name, and the preamble to the trial, including traditions associated with Judas) but again wooden comparison fails to take sufficient account of the fluid nature of these traditions and the likelihood that they developed from an early stage in response to Gospel stories (and the Gospel stories could even reflect such counter-narrative, e. g. the story of the virgin birth in *Matthew* [1:19–20], or the so-called Beelzebub controversy [Mark 3:22–27]).

196 See Philip Alexander, “Types of Jewish Anti-Christians Polemic in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages and their Historical-Social Setting” (unpublished ms.): “In counter-narrative they

ter-narrative¹⁹⁷ is the earliest form of argument, for which the canonical Gospels give evidence of both the narrative countered and of a possible response to very early anti-Christian Jewish narrative traditions. The implication here could be that the kinds of arguments which we find in Celsus marked an early stage in the Jewish-Christian debate (after all, it is possible to date Celsus' Jew to the middle or third quarter of the second century and this would explain Origen's scepticism about his genuineness—Jews simply did not argue like him any more), but that they became less popular as the debate between Jews and Christians moved onto a different footing with exegetical arguments, and subsequently philosophical ones becoming more important. But such a view is too schematic and probably would not be supported by Alexander, who is clear that counter-narrative attacks upon Christianity have a long and ongoing history among Jews,¹⁹⁸ reflected in the diversity of the traditions in the *Toledot Yeshu*, whose origins, in contradistinction to some, he sees as very ancient.¹⁹⁹ The various forms of Jewish arguments against Christianity, outlined by Alexander, went on simultaneously, and were not always straightforwardly distinct.²⁰⁰

Another explanation, related to the previous one, lies in highlighting the artificial nature of Christian *adversus Judaeos* literature, and the claim that it has more to do with the needs of inner-Christian *parenesis* than with actual encounter with Jews. Here Celsus' Jew, viewed as evidence of genuine Jewish attack upon Christian claims, is used to question the view that *adversus Judaeos* texts evidence a real debate between Jews and Christians. But this observation is too sweeping and fails to take into account evidence that *adversus Judaeos* texts might reflect

take a story which has sanctity and authority in Christianity and retell it in a way that counters its implicit claims. In counter-exegesis they provide an alternative interpretation of a biblical text which refutes the Christian interpretation of it. In counter-argument, they advance and rationally defend a set of propositions which negate cardinal beliefs of Christianity.”

197 “Counter-narrative” is usually understood to consist of a polemical inversion of the story of one's opponent. As Amos Funkenstein has put it, its “method consists of systematic exploitation of the adversary's most trusted sources against the grain” (Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* [Berkeley, 1993], 36).

198 See Philip Alexander, “Jesus and his Mother in the Jewish Anti-Gospel (the *Toledot Yeshu*),” in *Infancy Gospels* (ed. Claire Clivaz et al.; WUNT 281; Tübingen, 2011), (588–616) 604.

199 Alexander is clear that *Toledot Yeshu* traditions as we have them are much later than the canonical Gospels but argues that traditions like them were doing the rounds at a very early stage in Christian history.

200 Alexander argues that these strategies, as he calls them, do not map neatly onto extant literary texts; and this is probably the case with Celsus, where straightforward counter-narrative, understood as a polemical retelling of a story, sit side by side with forensic critiques of the Christian Gospel material as well as hints, as we have shown, of scriptural arguments. See Alexander, “Jesus” (see note 196), 593.

actual encounter between Jew and Christian and in their exegetical concern show real areas of discussion between Christian and Jew, as Origen himself implies.²⁰¹

Another explanation lies in noting (a) that Christians did not want to give the oxygen of publicity to these kinds of accusations; and (b) that some realized that the latter were best addressed, indirectly, through the use of scripture. In this context it is worth noting how Justin responds to the accusation that Jesus is a magician in his *First Apology*:

What should prevent that he whom we call Christ, being a man born of men, performed what were called his mighty works by magical means (an accusation that is important in Celsus)? We will now offer proof, not trusting mere assertions, but being of necessity persuaded by those who prophesied.²⁰²

In the game of accusation and counter-accusation, appeal to scripture seemed a surer refuge for the defender of the Christian message. Hence beneath the citation and exegesis of scripture in Christian *adversus Iudaeos* literature may lie elements of a counter-Gospel, no doubt with many variants, which the Christian author is wary of repeating but to which he obliquely responds. Indeed the presence of a counter-narrative may also be seen in some of the Christian apocryphal texts, especially apocryphal gospels, where retellings of the Jesus story can appear to reflect Jewish counter-narrative.²⁰³ The view that scripture, understood as the Jewish scriptures or the Old Testament, was the predominant factor in Jew-

201 For this debate see James Carleton Paget, “Anti-Judaism and early Christian identity,” in idem, ed., *Jews, Christians* (see note 107), 43–76.

202 Justin, *Apologia pro Christianis* 1,30 (208,1–4 M.): “Ὅπως δὲ μή τις εἴπη ἀντιτιθεὶς ἡμῖν, τί κωλύει καὶ τὸν παρ’ ἡμῖν λεγόμενον Χριστόν, ἄνθρωπον ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ὄντα, μαγικῆ τέχνη ἃς λέγομεν δυνάμεις πεποικέναι καὶ δόξαι διὰ τοῦτο υἱὸν Θεοῦ εἶναι, τὴν ἀπόδειξιν ἤδη ποιησόμεθα, οὐ τοῖς λέγουσι πιστεύοντες, ἀλλὰ τοῖς προφητεύουσι πρὶν ἢ γενέσθαι κατ’ ἀνάγκην πειθόμενοι. See also Justin, *Apologia pro Christianis* 1,53 (266,1–5 M.).

203 The view that apocryphal gospels contain evidence of responses to Jewish counter-narrative is found, *inter alia*, in Hugh J. Schonfield, *According to the Hebrews* (London, 1937), esp. 87–101 and 106–131; Hillel Newman, “The Death of Jesus in the *Toledot Yeshu* Literature,” *JThS* 50 (1999): (59–79) 65–72; and Pierluigi Piovaneli, “The *Toledot Yeshu* and Christian Apocryphal Literature: The Formative Years,” in *Toledot Yeshu* (see note 107), 89–100. Most of the texts discussed here are late, e. g. the *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle*, the *Acta Pilati (Gospel of Nicodemus)*, *The Lament of Mary* (called *The Gospel of Gamaliel*) and the *Book of the Cock*. Some, however, are earlier, e. g. the *Protevangelium Jacobi* and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. Piovaneli suggests that the *Book of the Cock* gives evidence of older Jewish Christian traditions, though he is skeptical about Schonfield’s suggestion, adapted from views held by Samuel Krauss, that *Toledot* is dependent upon or paraphrases a *Gospel according to the Hebrews*.

ish-Christian disputation may be true,²⁰⁴ but the role of the narrative of Jesus' life should not be underplayed.²⁰⁵ It is this to which Celsus' Jew witnesses.

6 Conclusion

Just as Celsus' polemic against Christianity has very little traceable precedent among known pagan authors, so does his attempt to make polemical use of Christianity's origins among Jews. In fact, Celsus could be said to have been the first pagan writer to exploit the association of Jews and Christians, an association barely acknowledged by a pagan author before him. The Jew, who forms one of his means of attacking Christianity, is potentially a figure of great importance within the history of ancient Judaism and of Christianity, as a survey of the historiography of his study shows.²⁰⁶ He plays a role in a variety of significant debates from the problem of the origins of the *Toledot Yeshu*, to the history of Hellenistic Judaism,²⁰⁷ to the nature of Jewish-Christian interaction.²⁰⁸ Critical in all of this is the degree to which his authenticity can be proven. Arguing for a positive view of this matter, this paper has attempted to show how the Jew of Celsus raises questions about the character of Christian *adversus Judaeos* literature. Juxtaposed with such literature, with its strong exegetical emphasis and its apparent omission of evidence for a counter-Gospel or of overt attacks upon the Jesus of the Gospels, at least of a detailed kind, Celsus' Jew looks strange as he did to Origen. Indeed,

204 Certainly this is true in relation to the extant evidence. This may reflect the experience of the educated pagans like Justin, Tatian and Theophilus, who claim that their conversion to Christianity arose from their interest in scriptural proof. See Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* 8,1 (84,1–12 M.); Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 29 (PTS 43, 55,9–19 Marcovich); and Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 1,14 (PTS 43, 34,1–8 Marcovich).

205 Piovaneli, "Apocryphal Literature" (see note 203), 99, talks about "a polemical debate between Jewish and Jewish Christian believers, carried out through the medium of popular, oral retellings of the Gospel."

206 See Bammel, "Jude" (see note 117), 283.

207 See Niehoff, "Jewish Critique" (see note 21), arguing for the view that the Jew provides us with a helpful insight into Jewish educated opinion after the Trajanic revolt when she dates the Jewish source, though with no explicit justification.

208 The last two points play an important role in Baumgarten, "Martian" (see note 16), who emphasizes (a) how the content of Celsus' Jew's insistence upon the fact that Jews and Christians are different is a challenge to those who would argue for a much more blurred and less easily defined separation between Jews and Christians in the second century; and (b) that Celsus' Jew's attack upon Christian beliefs about Jesus also challenges the familiar view that it was questions of practice and not doctrine that were the principal area of dispute between Christians and Jews.

it is striking that in spite of the fact that Origen's *Contra Celsum* left a considerable impression on later Christian writers, managing, almost uniquely among Origen's writings, to be preserved complete in Origen's original Greek, the Jew of Celsus, such an important part of that work, did not become a subject of discussion. Moreover, he never makes an explicit appearance in any known Christian *adversus Judaeos* text, an interesting point if the *Contra Celsum* was a much-read text. Perhaps subsequent readers were persuaded of Origen's dismissal of the Jew as nothing more than a childish example of prosopopeia. In this view Celsus' Jew can be seen as an oddity, an upper-class curmudgeon, possibly writing in the wake of the Bar Kokhba revolt against Rome, or a little later, the nature of whose anti-Christian attack quickly became an anachronism. But this dismisses him too easily. What he represents, namely the Jewish assault upon the gospels or at least traditions associated with them, through a bitter attack upon Jesus, was more common and more significant than we have assumed, a point hinted at in our comments on Christian apocryphal texts which, perhaps from an early stage, betray knowledge of accusations found in Jewish counter-narratives. The *Toledot Yeshu* did not emerge from nowhere, and Celsus' Jew, importantly, represents a part of the complex historical background to such a tradition of anti-Christian Jewish polemic. His broadly "narrative polemic,"²⁰⁹ should be accorded a greater place in the history of ancient Jewish-Christian interaction.

209 I use the word "narrative polemic" rather than "counter narrative" (for a definition of the latter see note 197 above) because while the *Contra Celsum* contains evidence of a polemical retelling of the Jesus story through inversion (see esp. *Contra Celsum* 1,28 [SC 132, 150,9–152,18] but other places, too), much of what is written consists in polemical reinterpretations of material associated with the Gospels.