Apologetics in the Roman Empire

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Pagans, Jews, and Christians

EDITED BY

Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman,
and
Simon Price

in association with
Christopher Rowland

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1

Introduction: Apologetics in the Roman World

MARK EDWARDS, MARTIN GOODMAN, SIMON PRICE, and CHRISTOPHER ROWLAND

The period with which this book is concerned is the first three centuries of the Roman Empire, from the first emperor Augustus (31 BCE–14 CE) to the first Christian emperor Constantine (306–37 CE). The period was marked by the existence of a great variety of religious traditions: civic cults, private religious associations, official cults of the Roman state, and personal observances. The adherents of these religions attacked each other with great ferocity at times. In response there emerged the practice of apologetic, the defence of a religion against actual or perceived opponents. It is the aim of this volume to examine the development of the literary expression of such apologetic among pagans, Jews, and Christians.

In commissioning contributions from scholars who work with very different literary materials, the editors laid down a working definition of apologetic, taking as the core meaning of the term the sense in which it is commonly applied to the formal treatises undertaken in defence of Christianity from the second century onwards. Apologetic is thus the defence of a cause or party supposed to be of paramount importance to the speaker. It may include *apologia* in the sense of Plato's *Apology*, the defence of a single person, but is distinguished from polemic (which need not assume any previous attack by the opponent) and from merely epideictic or occasional orations. Contributors were asked to consider how far a particular text or group of texts conforms to this definition.

This definition was only a starting-point. Several contributors to the volume, in responding to the definition, have argued that

there was no formal genre of apologetic in the ancient world. This is a useful piece of destabilizing, a questioning of common assumptions, but it is theoretically unsurprising. A common-sense view of genres like 'epic' or 'tragedy' is indeed that they exist unchanging over time and across cultures, and that individual works of literature instantiate the relevant genre more or less successfully. That is, the task of the critic is to classify, to pigeon-hole works in genres. This type of approach has been popular in, for example, studies of the New Testament, which have thought up new taxonomies for texts that once appeared to be unique. Theologians have seen the reduction of the Gospels and Epistles to a category (a genre, or *Gattung*), with the concomitant extension of that category to include texts that would otherwise lie far outside the range of their enquiries.[1] However, this view of genres, that they serve as a means of classification, has come to seem deeply unsatisfactory to literary critics. Genre should not be seen as a mechanical recipe-book for the production of texts, but rather as 'a discursive form capable of constructing a coherent model of the world in its own image'.[2] Genre is thus best seen as a way of talking about the strategies of writers (and readers) in different cultural traditions and particular contemporary situations.[3] The various essays in this volume seek to investigate what those strategies were in relation to ancient religious debates.

The Roman Empire in this period was united politically, but contained a great variety of cultures, which retained their sense of distinctiveness to different degrees.[4] In the eastern half of the empire, Greek language and culture were dominant: other, local traditions continued, but if they wished to move into the mainstream, they tended to relate themselves to Greek culture. So Jews outside Judaea and Christians from the beginning wrote not in Hebrew or Aramaic but in Greek. In the western half of the empire, the picture is rather different: local traditions tended to be suppressed or die out, and were replaced by a dominant Latin culture derived from Rome. The learned did recall some elements

[1] For recent treatments, see Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*; Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul*.
[2] Conte, *Genres and Readers*, 132.
[3] See also Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, in relation to English literature.
[4] Beard *et al*., *Religions of Rome*, which concentrates on the city of Rome.

of their local traditions (cf. below, Ch. 6, on Tertullian and Carthage), but the overall frame of reference for the educated classes was Roman. One theme that runs through this book is the question of how deep-rooted this difference between eastern and western parts of the empire was—for example, in the area of attitudes to the ruling power—and how this might have affected the literary defence of their cultures composed by provincials from different regions. Hellenism as an issue is central to Simon Swain's contribution (Ch. 8), and the differences between East and West recur in chapters on Christian authors writing in Greek (Ch. 5) and Latin (Chs. 6, 9, 11).

An important feature of the Greek tradition of the imperial period was its self-conscious recall of Greek culture of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Philostratus, writing his lives of intellectual figures of the second and third centuries CE, classified them as heirs of the Sophists of the classical period, as members of the 'Second Sophistic'. Philosophers too paraded their loyalty to the masters of the past—Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle—though they developed their ideas in novel directions. Characteristic of the followers of Plato in this period is, for example, the declamation by Apuleius, *On the God of Socrates*, which concerns Socrates' claim to possession of a personal divine spirit (*daimonion*). This claim was one of the factors that led to his trial in Athens in 399 BCE.[5] His condemnation and death by hemlock were events to which his pupils had to respond: both Plato and Xenophon wrote *Apologies*, speeches put in the mouth of Socrates at his trial. This type of work, a defence in a judicial setting, continued to be written in our period: for example, Apuleius' *Defence on a Charge of Magic* (below, Ch. 6), or the more or less fictionalized accounts of Christians being tried by the Roman authorities. The trial of Socrates himself had particular resonances for Greek Christians, who sometimes drew analogies between Socrates and the execution of Christ by the Roman authorities (below, Ch. 7).[6]

The book thus discusses not only the extent to which the methods used by religious apologists were similar across traditions, but also the emergence of similar themes in the literature of each group. Thus tradition was central to all religious groups in

[5] Price, *Religions of the Ancient Greeks*, ch. 4.

[6] For discussion of the terminology of *apologia* and *apologetikos*, see below, Chs. 6, 8, and 10.

this period. Greeks and Romans privileged religious tradition as the principal source of religious authority: the attitudes of the two are seen coinciding when Pliny the Younger writes to a Roman friend who is about to go off to be a Commissioner for mainland Greece:

> Remember that you have been sent to the province of Achaia, to the pure and genuine Greece, where civilization, and literature, and agriculture, too, are believed to have originated. . . . Respect the gods, their founders, and the names they bear, respect their ancient glory and their very age, which in man commands our veneration, in cities our reverence. Pay regard to their antiquity, their heroic deeds, and the legends of their past. (*Letters*, 8. 24. 2–3)

The advice is deeply patronizing in tone (the Romans might respect Greece for its cultural heritage, but they were now in charge of the world), but illustrates a common acceptance of the value of antiquity. This sets the standard which other aspirants to mainstream culture (whether Greek or Roman) had to meet.[7] Within Judaism the weight of tradition is exemplified by the practice, which goes back at least to the first century CE, of regular reading and commenting in synagogues on the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. However, outsiders were not universally impressed by Jewish claims to venerable antiquity. It was partly in response to their criticisms that Josephus devoted the twenty books of his *Jewish Antiquities* to an exposition of the history of the Jews from the creation of the world down to the outbreak of the revolt against Rome in 66 CE, and the first book of *Against Apion* specifically to the issue of antiquity (on the latter work, see below, Ch. 3).

Christians, whom we might have expected to have presented themselves simply as carriers of a novel faith, in fact articulated a complex relationship to earlier traditions.[8] It is quite likely that none of the New Testament books was written specifically to convince outsiders of the veracity of the Christian religion or to rebut false interpretations of it. The primary purpose of these writings was to convince those who were already members of the small groups committed to Christ of the plausibility of the step they had taken and to construct a world of thought where they

[7] On this issue, see Price, *Religions of the Ancient Greeks*, ch. 8.
[8] For some texts, see Beard *et al*., *Religions of Rome*, ii. 329–48.

could position themselves and their own beliefs with regard to an older story of the people of God. The attempt to satisfy the doubts of insiders, however, led to writing which has many of the hallmarks of apologetic. This is particularly apparent in a passage like 1 Corinthians 15, where the resurrection of the dead is discussed (a problem which was confronted by second- and third-century apologists: Origen, *Against Celsus*, 2. 55–79).[9] Within the New Testament there are already signs that apologetic elements are beginning to intrude, as writers of texts intended for insiders inevitably have to wrestle with doubts and uncertainties felt by members, simply because they too reflect the values and assumptions of society at large.

One boundary that had to be negotiated was that with Jewish traditions. A major aim of the earliest extant Christian writings is the extent of the continuity between the Jewish Scriptures and the beliefs and practices of Christianity, notwithstanding the differences between them. This has an implicit apologetic concern. A central issue for the first Christians was to take an attitude to the Law of Moses in the light of their conviction that the Messiah had come. Two things united all the Christian groups, at least if the evidence of the New Testament is anything to go by: a common belief in the relevance of Jewish Scriptures, and a consequent need to make sense of their own ideas and practices in the light of them, and the definition of the boundaries of the Christian community. For example, some argued that Christ's teachings were the fulfilment of prophecies found in earlier Jewish writings: Matthew's Gospel claims at the start the descent of Jesus from David and Abraham, states that his birth was foretold by the prophet Isaiah, and makes Jesus himself say, 'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them' (5: 17). Despite such arguments, the relationship between Christians and Jews remained an issue throughout the period. The Greek Christian writer Justin composed a dialogue between a Christian and a Jew in the second century (below, Ch. 4), and later Christians wrote sermons *Against the Jews* (below, Ch. 6).[10]

A second boundary to be defined was that between Christians

[9] Cf. ibid. i, 290.

[10] Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, is a helpful survey of this topic; see also Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos Texte*.

and the religious traditions of their environment, which meant in the first instance those of the Greeks. There were two distinct options: one building on the insights of non-Christians, the other rejecting those 'insights' as fundamentally flawed. The first is expressed in an emblematic fashion in the account in the Acts of the Apostles of Paul's preaching in Athens, chosen as the cultural capital of the eastern empire. Paul, who is said to have been 'revolted at the sight of a city given over to idolatry', engaged in debates in the synagogue and with Greek philosophers in the market-place. The episode seems very confrontational, until Paul delivers a speech to the Athenian Council of the Areopagus:

> Men of Athens, I have seen for myself how extremely scrupulous you are in all religious matters, because I noticed, as I strolled round admiring your sacred monuments, that you had an altar inscribed: To An Unknown God. Well, the god whom I proclaim is in fact the one whom you already worship without knowing it. (17: 22–3; Jerusalem Bible)

In other words, despite the errors in which the Athenians were ensnared, there was an underlying truth, of which they were not conscious, which Paul sought to expound. Embedded in the New Testament there is thus a statement of the possibility of 'natural theology'. People, just by virtue of being human, 'have a certain degree of knowledge of God and awareness of him, or at least a capacity for such an awareness; and this knowledge or awareness exists anterior to the special revelation of God made through Jesus Christ, through the Church, through the Bible'.[11] This type of appeal to natural theology occurs again in some later authors in our period (Lactantius, Constantine), but the dominant position in the second and third centuries was the second, oppositional option. Greek apologists point with glee at the immoralities of the gods in mythology, and (sometimes) with horror at rituals performed in their honour. Tatian's *Address to the Greeks* associates a rejection of Greek culture with a condemnation of Greek religion.

> So, when I saw these things [the stupidity of Greek religion and culture], I also took part in mysteries and tested the rituals performed everywhere by effeminates and androgynes; I found that among the Romans their

[11] The definition is that of Barr, *Biblical Faith*, 1, who analyses Paul's speech at length.

> Zeus [i.e. Jupiter] Latiaris relished human gore and the blood of slaughtered men; while Artemis [i.e. Diana], not far from the great city, was engaged in the same type of actions, and different demons in different places were busy inciting the perpetration of evil.[12]

Among the Latin apologists, Tertullian rejects all three categories of the Roman gods: those of the philosophers, the gods of mythology, and the gods of civic practice. This was not an eirenic position.

Such oppositional tactics sometimes went along with the definition of Christians as a 'third race': alongside and distinct from the first two races of Greeks/Romans and Jews were the Christians.[13] This definition, which emerged both within Christianity and in the mouths of her enemies, was analogous to a Jewish self-definition, and was the product of a particular phase of Christian history, when Christians were a minority, whose members could at any time be executed by the Roman authorities. The question is whether this type of self-definition is paralleled in other contemporary contexts. The normal approach of outsiders was to buy into the dominant culture, whether Greek or Roman, while retaining some sort of local identity—pride in being Lycian, or a citizen of Carthage. But there are also cases in which more of a problem in integrating different identities is visible. For example, the Greek satirist Lucian wrote in impeccable Greek, and totally within a Greek tradition, but he came from Samosata, a city in the province of Syria, which had been capital of an independent kingdom until a generation before his birth. Lucian refers to himself several times as 'Syrian', and even as 'barbarian', which suggests some level of problem; those of his contemporaries who used the Syriac rather than the Greek language may have been expressing a rejection of things Greek. Multiple identities do not always sit easily together.[14] In various parts of the Roman Empire (for example, Syria and Egypt), some elements of the population felt themselves to be a race apart from the dominant classes of Greeks and Romans.[15] The Jewish and Christian positions need to be set in that context.

[12] Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, 29, trans. in Beard *et al*., *Religions of Rome*, ii. 332.

[13] Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, i. 240–51, 266–78; Schneider, commentary on Tertullian, *To the Gentiles*, 1. 8.

[14] Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 298–329, who also shows the difficulty of relating Lucian's adopted Hellenism and Roman culture.

[15] The extent to which this was true of Jews is examined in Goodman (ed.), *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*.

The relation of Jewish and Christian apologetic to the contemporary world needs further examination. Some have cast this issue in terms of the intention of the authors: to persuade the unconverted, to edify the converted, to show the learned world that they could write. We have to ask, then, whether it is an actual intention, an implied intention, or merely a convention that is expressed by Robert Grant, when he begins his useful book on the second-century Greek apologists with the statement that 'Apologetic literature emerges from *minority* groups that are *trying to come to terms* with the larger culture in which they live.'[16] Some apologists lend themselves more readily than others to this dictum: Clement, for example, has been married more than once to an 'Alexandrian Platonism' that would seem to belie the Christian zeal of his own *Protrepticus*.[17] But everyone sees that synthesis is not the stated purpose of Justin or Tertullian, who profess to be exculpating their religion from the charges of superstition or depravity which expose it to the hatred of the Romans. It was Clement and Lactantius who explicitly proposed to themselves the object of devising a Christian scheme of education, to explode and supersede the false instruction of the schools; but this may also have been the intention of some of their predecessors, if they were aiming at the creation of a new system of philosophy, rather than at an intellectual courtship of the world.[18]

This has implications for the chief market of our apologetic texts. Both pagan and Jewish texts were addressed ostensibly to patrons, like other literary works in antiquity. Some of the Christian texts were addressed to Roman emperors or governors, and the form of address may have been important.[19] The Acts of the Apostles can depict Paul making a speech to the Council of the Areopagus, but in reality there was no public place at which Tatian could pronounce his *Address to the Greeks*. Christians before Constantine could not, like pagans, make a career of oratory, and even if the public exhibition of their religion was

[16] Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 9; emphasis added.

[17] Bigg, *Christian Platonists*; Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*.

[18] Daniélou, *History of Christian Doctrine*; Osborn, *Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*.

[19] Millar, *Emperor*, 561–6, stresses the conventionality of their address to the emperor.

less dangerous than they indicate, the matter and style ensured that the apologists would not have been much read outside the Church. Within the Church, on the other hand, their eloquence would be esteemed both for itself and for the piety that it rendered so conspicuous; small wonder, then, that in each new generation of Christians the most astute apologist is also the most voluminous writer on morals, history, biblical exegesis, and dogmatics.[20] Some writers engaged in explicit debate with those outside the faith: Josephus and Apion, Origen and Celsus, Lactantius and Porphyry. In each case the author is responding to attacks mounted from outside. There is little to suggest that the response was in its turn read outside the faith (except for Christian readings of Josephus or Philo), and nothing to show that the arguments deployed by a Minucius Felix affected the terms of reference of philosophers arguing about the nature of God.

These texts, important though they were in their time, subsequently fell into neglect. Josephus and Philo were not influential in the Jewish tradition, and survive only because they were taken up by Christians. In the many stylized discussions between Rabbinic sages and gentile kings, philosophers, matrons, and others recorded in Rabbinic literature, the gentile party was generally set up to draw attention to problems in specific scriptural passages or apparent illogicalities in Rabbinic law, only to be knocked down with suspicious ease.[21] More generally, the extent to which Rabbinic interpretations of the Bible were formulated already during the fourth and fifth centuries, in response to Christian exegesis, is debated. The view has been put forward that the whole agenda of the Jerusalem Talmud in the fourth century, to stress the election of Israel and the Jewish concept of history and the Messiah, was shaped by opposition to Christian claims; but it is not based on any direct evidence at all, and must remain hypothetical.[22] On the other hand, there is no doubt that Christian claims to the heritage of the Hebrew Bible led to the growth of an extensive apologetic, polemical Jewish literature in

[20] T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 211–32, well characterizes Tertullian as a 'Christian sophist'.

[21] e.g. Babylonian Talmud, *Hullin*, 59b; Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, 39a; *Genesis Rabbah*, 17: 7. See the material discussed by Herr, 'Historical Significance'.

[22] Neusner, *Judaism and Christianity*; against this view, see Goodman, 'Palestinian Rabbis'.

medieval Europe, as well as to numerous works aimed at defending the true faith against what were perceived as heresies of various kinds. But none of these developments, nor the apologists for Judaism within an agnostic world after the Enlightenment, owed anything to their predecessors in the time of the Roman Empire.[23]

If the afterlife of Jewish apologetic was very different to that in antiquity, the history of pagan apologetic came to a total end. An efflorescence of defensive literature in the fourth-century Roman Empire, as highly articulate Roman senators and others tried to defend their ancestral cults against a newly intolerant Christian state, culminated in the great plea for tolerance in the defence of the Altar of Victory by Symmachus in 384.[24] In the pagan twilight of the fifth century, scholars and poets sang the praises of the old ways, but their voice was to disappear with the rise of Christendom in Europe, and those who read these works in the Middle Ages and Renaissance did so without perceiving any conflict between these pagan views and Christianity.

The Christian apologies themselves also fell from attention. They have been among the least respected of the early Church writings, offering, as it seems, only bad theology, bad philosophy, or bad history. An intriguing aspect of Christianity is the ambivalence felt by its adherents, from an early stage, about engaging in apologetic. Reasoned explanation seemed at times a pretty hopeless strategy in the face of a world 'which preferred darkness to light'. While there are examples in plenty of appeal to a common humanity, there is, from the first, in the Christian literature a suspicion that human reason itself is inadequate to comprehend the magnitude of the divine revelation. There came a point when reason could no longer prevail. Thus, despite the limited acceptance of natural theology in the early Church, the use of it alongside revealed theology creates a tension in Christian identity which resonates with debates down the centuries, from the apostle Paul to Karl Barth in the twentieth century. There has always existed a deep-seated suspicion of human reason and its ability to offer anything but a partial account of God and the divine purpose in words. Occasionally,

[23] *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. 'Apologetics'.

[24] Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, 203–11. Texts translated in Croke and Harries, *Religious Conflict*, 30–51.

writers might expound a philosophical system as the necessary foundation for the Gospel. Often, however, philosophical systems are mere shadows of the reality now proclaimed in the Gospel, to which the sophisticated arguments of the philosophers can, at best, act only as precursors. The sentiments of Paul in 1 Corinthians 1–3 are much more typical. Human and divine wisdom stand in the starkest possible contrast. This leaves apologists, in both the ancient and the modern world, needing to bridge the gap between the demands of reason and the culture of faith, and, even when they may have seemed successful at so doing, finding that members of their faith communities are deeply suspicious of the apologetic exercise in which they have engaged.

During the Reformation of the sixteenth century and the religious wars of the seventeenth, the interest of the religious controversialist was confined to the choice of sect, and only the most perfunctory defences were bestowed on Christianity itself. From time to time, the early ecclesiastical apologies might testify to the practices or doctrines of a primitive congregation; but even then they were vague and pliable, and the construction of theologies depended on writers of the fourth and fifth centuries who were addressing not outsiders but the existing Church. The philosophy of religion, in the hands of the Cambridge Platonists and the Italian Marsilio Ficino, owed more to the pagan traditions of the philosopher Plotinus and the late antique texts ascribed to Hermes Trismegistos than to any of the church fathers. The later apologists were perhaps more valued than the earlier ones, if only because they furnished a precedent for Christian humanism: Lactantius was extremely attractive to Erasmus, and perhaps also to the English metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century.[25]

In so far as there were Christian apologetics, they had different aims. In the eighteenth century, not only Christianity, but theism itself, became the subject of apology. The philosopher John Locke had espoused a rational faith that led in Bishop

[25] Milton's scornful allusion to Socrates in *Paradise Regained*, iv. 294, drew on Lactantius, *Epitome*, 32 (37). Donne's 'Satire 3' (truth on a hill) appears to be indebted for its opening conceit to *Divine Institutes*, 3. 28; it may have been *Divine Institutes*, 2. 5. 42, that persuaded George Herbert 'That none doth build a stately habitation / Save he that means to dwell therein'.

Berkeley's view to atheism, while David Hume cast doubt both on the veracity of Scripture and on the proofs for the existence of a god. At an earlier date the orthodox responses would have rifled the past for arguments and quotations; but this was not an age when anyone rested on authority, and Berkeley, Joseph Butler, and William Paley all preferred to begin, like Hume, with the interrogation of natural phenomena.[26] When Paley came to examine the historical 'Evidences of Christianity', he found himself embarrassed by the sparsity of references to Christ's miracles in the earlier apologists.[27] This traditional argument was in any case subverted by the irony of the historian Edward Gibbon, who included the transient miracles of the apostolic age among the five material causes which explained the unrepeatable success of the early missions. Gibbon mocked the acerbity, the unskilfulness, and the 'splendid exaggerations' of the apologists.[28] In the nineteenth century none of the eminent champions of religion—such as Coleridge, Maurice, Mansel, Newman, or Gore—made any use of our apologists for this purpose, though Newman might refer to them now and again as illustrations of the 'development of doctrine'.[29] No answer could be found in ancient authors to the difficulties presented by the geological record or the evidence for the origin of species. Ernest Renan was able to appreciate the role of the apologists in shaping a new critique of the worldly powers;[30] but Modernism was leading Catholic scholars back from the origins of Christendom to the origins of Scripture, and indeed to the origins of all religion. Scripture was the battleground in Germany and Britain during the later nineteenth century, and sometimes the apologists could show, against the higher criticism, that a writing was canonical or a reading known before a certain period; but here again the

[26] On Berkeley's contempt for the negative and speculative theology of earlier Christian writers, see his *Alciphron*, 4. 18, in Berman, *George Berkeley: Alciphron in Focus*, 105–6.

[27] Paley, *View of the Evidences*, part 3, ch. 5.

[28] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, i. 457 (on Tertullian), 493 (on exaggeration), 498 (on Justin's unskilfulness).

[29] Newman, *Essay*; see e.g. 412–27 on the sacraments and purgatory.

[30] See Renan, *L'Église chrétienne*, 30–44, 364–90. Renan, while noting that the first apologies were written in an era of toleration, and assuming that they aimed at the conversion of the emperor, does not observe that this denies them a genuinely apologetic character.

evidence was limited, inferior to that of other documents, and not always on the right side.[31]

In the twentieth century the style of the ancient apologists has estranged them further from practical apologetic than their contents did in any previous century.[32] As modern practitioners point out, the evangelist must use the common tongue, and media other than the academic lecture or the book.[33] Some erudite modern scholars, on the other hand, despise the apologists for the smallness of their reading: the earliest ones, at least, appear to have kept only florilegia in their libraries, and to have acquired by their researches rather less knowledge of contemporary philosophy than they might have done by hearing conversations in a portico. The only modern scholars, therefore, to whom the apologists mean anything are those who take a sympathetic interest in the culture and the interplay of religious traditions in the Roman Empire, and only in the late twentieth century has this interest become at all widespread.[34] It is to this interest that the studies in this volume are directed.

[31] See e.g. the use of Justin Martyr against the conservatives in the anonymous *Supernatural Religion* (London, 1875), i. 282–428. The conservative J. B. Lightfoot and his associates made more use of the Apostolic Fathers, as can readily be seen from Neill and Wright, *Interpretation*, 50–60.

[32] For value of their contents relative to their age, see Carrington, *Christian Apologetics*, 138–51; Dulles, *History*, p. xvi: 'No apologist from previous centuries or generations precisely fills the prescriptions that might be written for a present-day apologetic.' The practical treatise by McGrath, *Bridge-Building*, agrees.

[33] None of the early apologists would have cared for C. S. Lewis's excellent observations about the need to use the language of the common man in 'Christian apologetics', reprinted in *Timeless at Heart*, 13–30.

[34] Geffcken's pioneer work of 1907, *Zwei griechische Apologeten*, was written by a scholar with a wide interest in the religious history of late antiquity. It was made both timely and respectable by the discovery of the Syriac Aristides. See also his *Brief an Diognetus*.

2

The Acts of the Apostles as an Apologetic Text

LOVEDAY ALEXANDER

> The author of Acts has a right to . . . be recognised as the first Christian apologist. The great age of Christian apologetic was the second century, but of the three main types of defence represented among the second-century Christian apologists Luke provides first-century prototypes: defence against pagan religion (Christianity is true; paganism is false), defence against Judaism (Christianity is the fulfilment of true Judaism), defence against political accusations (Christianity is innocent of any offence against Roman law).[1]

Of all the books of the New Testament, the one which has most persistently attracted the label 'apologetic' is the Acts of the Apostles. This designation seems to go back at least to 1721, when Heumann suggested that Luke's work was an apologia, written in defence of Christianity to a pagan official named Theophilus.[2] Since then, the label has recurred in a wide variety of guises, many of which, as Bruce observes, prefigure the concerns of the second-century Christian apologists. But the enthusiasm with which the term has been adopted masks a huge area of disagreement as to how exactly the apologetic situation of Acts is to be construed. The book has been described variously as

I am indebted to Todd Klutz and Andy Reimer for their valuable assistance with the bibliographical research for this article, and to the members of the Oxford seminar for helpful discussion. The faults which remain are of course my own.

[1] Bruce, *Acts*, 22.

[2] As cited by Cadbury, 'Purpose', 437: 'The suggestion that Luke's expressed purpose is *apologia* was made two hundred years ago by Heumann in *Bibliotheca Bremensis* [Class. iv., fasc. 3], and no sufficient argument seems to have been brought against it.'

a defence of the church against political charges, as a defence of Christianity against Judaism or Greek religion, as a defence of Paul against rival theological interests within the church, or even as a defence of the Roman Empire to the church.[3] Part of the problem here is the wide range and fuzzy definition of the term 'apologetic' itself, which threatens to undermine its descriptive usefulness altogether: and since this fuzziness constitutes one of our primary difficulties in exploring apologetic within the New Testament, it will be as well to begin by constructing a rough typology of apologetic readings which will make clear just how far the Acts debate does and does not relate to the broader subject-matter of this book.

One essential feature of any attempt at defining a given discourse as apologetic is the question of its implied audience. Even where the implied audience is clearly different from the text's real audience (and this is a problem of which more recent studies have become increasingly aware), most critics seem to expect an apologetic discourse to be one which adopts a particular stance (self-defence) in relation to a particular challenge or charge and before a particular audience. Accordingly, the simplest way to construct a rough working typology is to classify the apologetic options for Acts by audience, in ascending order of remoteness, thus:

Type I: Acts as internal apologetic: apologia as inner-church polemic. This reading focuses on the large amount of inner-church debate embodied within the narrative, a point made forcefully by Barrett:

> [Acts] was not addressed to the Emperor, with the intention of proving the political harmlessness of Christianity in general, and of Paul in particular; a few passages might be construed to serve this purpose, but to suggest that the book as a whole should be taken in this way is absurd. No Roman official would have filtered out so much of what to him would be theological and ecclesiastical rubbish in order to reach so tiny a grain of relevant apology.[4]

On this kind of reading, the book's primary purpose is the defence of Paul against rival theological interests ('the circumcision

[3] Useful surveys of apologetic readings of Acts may be found in Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 205–19, and in Pattison, 'Apologetic Function', 10–35.

[4] Barrett, *Luke the Historian*, 63.

party'), or of apostolic orthodoxy against Gnosticism, and it is addressed not to outsiders but to readers within the church.[5]

Type II: Acts as sectarian apologetic: apologia as self-defence in relation to Judaism. It is not always easy to determine at what point inter-factional polemic within a fragmenting movement becomes inter-sectarian polemic between rival religious communities. In this sense it is not a great step from reading Acts as a defence of Pauline Christianity against Jewish Christianity to reading it as a defence of Christianity *tout court* before the tribunal of the wider Jewish community. This reading rests on the sound literary observation that a large part of Acts deals with the question of the relationships between emergent Christian groups and the parent Jewish community. Jervell points out that Paul's defence speeches (many of which deal with his relationship with his ancestral faith) take up as much time in the narrative as his missionary activity; any subsidiary elements of political apology are 'weak and inconsistent' by comparison with the book's main purpose, which is the defence of Paul as faithful to the Law.[6]

Type III: Acts as an apologetic work addressed to Greeks: apologia as propaganda/evangelism. On this view, Luke, like the second-century apologists who addressed their work 'to the Greeks', is writing for a pagan audience with a philosophical and cultural interest in Eastern religion. Acts on this reading lies in a line of continuous development from the apologetic narratives of Hellenistic Judaism through to the Christian apologists of the second century.[7] The book's argument is not defensive but evangelistic;

[5] For recent examples of the former position, building on and refining the classic view of the Tübingen school that Acts is an 'apology' for Paul, see Sanders, *Jews in Luke–Acts*, 315–17; for the latter, Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics*, 115: 'The purpose of Luke–Acts is anti-Gnostic. Luke–Acts was written to serve as a defense against Gnosticism.'

[6] Pattison, 'Apologetic Function', 30–2, citing Jervell, 'Paul: The Teacher of Israel'.

[7] Cf. Pattison, 'Apologetic Function', 393–4: 'It is better to speak of a stream of tradition running from the Jewish apologists, through Luke, extending to the Christian apologists of the second century, a tradition which at all points interacts intimately with its environment.' Acts, on this view, is a refutation of a series of well-documented pagan charges against the Christians: 'superstition; sorcery; political agitation; misanthropy; atheism; reckless courage; lower-class [status]; love of money; credulity; immorality; new religion; ritual murder'. To counter these, 'Luke . . . chose themes which would be widely accepted as admirable by all noble and objective outsiders, themes which in many cases had already been used for a similar purpose by the Jewish apologetic tradition.'

the success of the church boosts its claim to be the only true religion, as does the frequency of Gentile conversions. Christianity is presented as 'an ancient and honourable monotheism', admired by respectable citizens and 'eminently worthy of their allegiance'.[8] Apologetics and missionary propaganda, on this view, 'functioned like two sides of the same coin'.[9] Droge, indeed, offers a definition which makes it almost impossible to distinguish between the two:

> Apologetic in the New Testament comprises a study of the 'art of persuasion' employed by the early Christians. Such persuasion evolved in a context of Jewish and Hellenistic thought and laid a foundation for the second century apologists. . . . Much of early Christian literature, including the New Testament, was written to promote and defend the Christian movement. As the early Christians attempted to appeal to the inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world at large, use was made of the strategies and methods of hellenistic religious propaganda. The appropriation of such apologetic-propagandistic forms was essential if Christianity was to succeed in the face of competition from other religions.[10]

Type IV: Acts as political apologetic: apologia as self-defence in relation to Rome. By far the commonest reading of Acts as apologetic is the view that the book was written to provide a defence against political charges brought before a Roman tribunal. It has indeed been argued quite specifically that Acts was written as a defence brief for Paul's trial before Nero: hence the narrative's repeated stress on Paul's acquittal by successive governors encountered on his travels, and the favourable view of Roman justice presented in the narrative.[11] More generally, many Acts commentators would see the book as a defence of the political innocence of the Christian movement within the Roman Empire.

[8] O'Neill, *Theology of Acts*, 173.

[9] Fiorenza, 'Miracles, Mission and Apologetics', 2–3: 'Jews as well as Christians appealed to the Greco-Roman world and used the means and methods of Hellenistic religious propaganda . . . The appropriation of such missionary-propagandistic forms was necessary if Judaism as well as Christianity were to succeed in the face of competition from other religions, especially those of Oriental origin, as well as competition from the philosophical movements of the time.' Cf. also p. 19.

[10] Droge, 'Apologetics'. Cf. also his *Homer or Moses?*

[11] e.g. Still, *St Paul on Trial*, 11: 'Of course the defence of Paul involved the defence of Christianity, but the book aims at more in particular. The whole story is seen to be planned, with great care and with consummate skill, for one definite end.'

Both Jesus and Paul are presented as innocent of any charges touching Roman interests; Paul, in addition, is presented as a Roman citizen, moving confidently around the eastern Empire, enjoying the support of the best elements in provincial society, and advocating a politically harmless message with faintly philosophical overtones.[12]

Type V: Acts as apologetic addressed to insiders: apologia as legitimation/self-definition. More recent discussion has effectively created a fifth category with a rather more nuanced perspective on the role of apologetic discourse in creating group identity. Sterling places Acts alongside Manetho, Berossos, and Josephus' *Antiquities* in a tradition which he labels 'apologetic historiography'. Despite the use of such well-known apologetic motifs as the antiquity and political innocence of the movement, the book is addressed to Christians, not to Romans, and offers 'examples and precedents to Christians so that they can make their own apologia. Luke–Acts is like the Hellenistic Jewish historians who addressed their works to Jews in an effort to provide them with identity in the larger world.'[13] Esler gives a sociological twist to this perspective. Acts is addressed to second-generation sectarians, and represents 'a sophisticated attempt to explain and justify Christianity to the members of his own community at a time when they were exposed to social and political pressures which were making their allegiance waver. Luke re-presents traditions . . . in such a way as to erect a symbolic universe, a sacred canopy, beneath which the institutional order of his community is given meaning and justification.'[14] This reading allows Esler to encompass virtually all the insights of earlier scholarship: Luke's downplaying of the Peter–Paul divisions, his stress on continuity with Judaism, and his assurance that faith was not incompatible with loyalty to Rome can all be accommodated under the umbrella of 'legitimation'.

[12] Cf. e.g. Cadbury, *Making of Luke–Acts*, ch. 20, and 'Purpose'. This position is well summarized in Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, ch. 10.

[13] Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 382, 385–6. Cf. Pattison, 'Apologetic Function', 392: 'Although most apologetic is written to bolster the confidence of insiders, it is written using topics which would be persuasive to outsiders.'

[14] Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 222.

APOLOGETIC AS DRAMATIC FICTION

It is evident at the outset that these various readings are operating with widely different understandings of the meaning of 'apologetic'. One thing which they have in common, however, is an underlying assumption that the term presupposes some kind of dramatic situation. Reading a text as apologetic seems to mean, for most people, reading it as some form of self-defence against a charge or charges perceived as coming from a particular quarter. This minimal definition conforms, of course, to the original usage of the Greek word-group from which the modern term is derived: an apologia is a speech in one's own defence (following the ancient Greek forensic practice whereby defendants had to present their own defence in court). The word thus evokes the essentially dramatic situation of the lawcourts: an *apologia* presents a first-person defence of a particular character (the defendant), against a specific charge, and before a specific tribunal—which could vary from the large 500–citizen jury panels of classical Athens to the single examining magistrate more typical of Roman practice. This tribunal, whether a group or an individual, constitutes the primary audience of a defence speech, and is by convention frequently apostrophized. But the forensic scenario also allows for the presence of a wider 'public gallery' of supporters and spectators, to whom the defendant may covertly appeal, and these too may legitimately be considered as part of the dramatic audience presupposed by the apologetic scenario.

Within the conventions of classical Greek rhetoric, this dramatic situation already contains an accepted element of necessary fiction, in that the speech itself might well have been written by a professional *logographos* on the defendant's behalf. Nevertheless, it was delivered by the defendant, and was therefore written in the first person, in the character of the defendant (as opposed to the Roman legal convention in which the advocate speaks in his own person on behalf of the accused). It is not a great step from this forensic fiction to the creation of a literary apologia: that is, a written composition which presents arguments in defence of an individual or group against certain charges (the most famous, in antiquity as today, being the Socratic *Apologies* of Plato and Xenophon). Whether or not the underlying apologetic situation

is a real one (as it was in the case of Socrates), it becomes a dramatic fiction for the purposes of the written apologia, which creates a gap not only between the author and the inscribed speaker (the 'I' of the speech), but also between the actual audience of the written text (the 'readers') and the inscribed audience (tribunal and/or public gallery) to whom the speech is nominally addressed. This kind of dramatic fiction was of course bread and butter to an educated Greek or Roman readership brought up on the multilayered fictions of rhetoric: it provides a useful reminder that the distinctions we draw between implied audience and actual audience were always a *de facto* possibility present to the ancient reader.

The dramatic situation remains a crucial defining factor in the composition of literary apologetic, even though there may be a shift from the defence of an individual to the defence of a group, and from a defence against specific legal charges to a more generalized defence of a religious or philosophical way of life (a shift which is already perceptible in the Socratic *Apologies*). First-person discourse is still the most obvious and appropriate speech mode for apologetic, though it may change from singular to plural; and the necessary dramatic interlocutor can be created in a variety of ways, whether by direct apostrophe or by casting the discourse in the form of a dialogue (as in Minucius Felix). Josephus' *Against Apion* evokes this dramatic fiction quite clearly in the preface, which makes copious use of the language of charge and counter-charge. Apion is inscribed into the text as the fictional *katēgoros* against whom Josephus musters his arguments; its inscribed audience, behind the representative figure of Epaphroditus, is an educated, sympathetic jury of non-Jews. It is in this sense that we may sensibly conceive of apologetic as addressed to 'outsiders': whatever the real audience of the text, it is essential that its dramatic audience, the judges before whom the case is presented, are not members of the community under attack. The texts which most clearly merit the label 'apologetic', in other words, rely on a transparent fiction: they presuppose a dramatic situation whose elements can be readily reconstructed from the text, even though the readers, then and now, will be perfectly well aware that the text's real situation may be quite different.

'Apologetic' readings of Acts almost all conform to this pattern. In positing that Acts is addressed to the Jewish community, to the

Romans, or to the 'Greek' world of educated paganism, they configure the text as a defence (of the Pauline Gospel, or of the church), against certain charges (for example, disturbing the peace of the Empire), before an identifiable dramatic audience who fill the role of tribunal and/or spectators. Those who suggest that the real audience of Acts is actually different from the audience implied by the dramatic situation are simply showing a proper awareness of the essentially fictive nature of the apologetic situation, or (more simply) of the potential in literary apologetic for a gap to open up between the text's inscribed audience and its real readers, a gap well described by Sterling in relation to Artapanus:

> The fragments presume an imaginary audience which consists of outsiders. On the other hand, there is no evidence that Greeks read works written by nationals except for collectors like Polyhistor. The real-world audience of the work is therefore Jews. The Jews who read this would have to deal with the fragments' imaginary audience in the real world.[15]

In this sense we can dispense with the fifth category proposed in our tentative typology. Any kind of literary apologetic may also function as legitimation or self-definition for the group which it sets out to defend: to recognize that some apologetic functions as self-definition is not to identify a distinct 'type' of apologetic, but simply to recognize the always latent disparity between the dramatic audience of apologetic and its real readers.

Most of the apologetic scenarios proposed for Acts configure the dramatic audience as an external one: Greeks or Romans or Jews. This brings the definition into line with the standard modern usage, in which the term 'Apologetics' means 'that branch of theology devoted to the defense of a religious faith and addressed primarily to criticism originating from outside the religious faith; esp. such defense of the Christian faith'.[16] It also allows for a degree of continuity with the standard understanding of the

[15] Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 184.

[16] *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1986), s.v. 'apologetic': '1. a formal apology or justification; 2. the systematic defense and exposition of the Christian faith addressed primarily to non-Christians'. 'Apologetics' yields a fuller, more technical definition: '1. systematic argumentative tactics or discourse in defense; 2. that branch of theology devoted to the defense of a religious faith and addressed primarily to criticism originating from outside the religious faith; esp. such defense of the Christian faith'.

second-century Christian apologists as 'the Christian writers who (*c*.120–220) first addressed themselves to the task of making a reasoned defence and recommendation of their faith to outsiders'.[17] It is of course another question how far it makes sense in the first century to describe the Jewish community as an 'external' audience: nevertheless, there is an undeniable continuity of interest here between the intra-communal tensions explored in Acts and the concerns of much second-century Christian apologetic.

This definition, however, would exclude readings of Acts which see the book primarily as a defence of Paul (and/or his Gospel) before the wider tribunal of catholic Christianity. Here neither the dramatic audience nor the actual audience can be construed as 'outsiders', and it might be simplest to dispense with Type I on the grounds that this is not apologetic but theological polemic.[18] On the other hand, such readings do presuppose an 'apologetic' scenario in the wider, more classical sense of the term, in that they create opportunities for self-defence. The New Testament contains many such opportunities within a context of inner-church polemic: Paul is happy to use the Greek word *apologia* and its cognates in this context—for example, in connection with his 'defence' of his own apostolic status (1 Cor. 9: 3; 2 Cor. 12: 19).[19] The classic *locus* for this apostolic apologia is of course the Epistle to the Galatians (though the term is not used there). Whether or not we choose to call this material 'apologetic' may in the end simply be a matter of personal choice.

ACTS IS NOT AN APOLOGETIC DISCOURSE

This brings us within sight of one of the crucial problems for the whole enterprise of reading Acts as apologetic. There is, as we have seen, abundant testimony to the popularity of the label 'apologetic' among readers of Acts: but equally significant for our purposes is the high level of disagreement as to the precise lineaments of the text's apologetic situation. For literary apologetic to work, the key

[17] *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 87, s.v. 'Apologists'.

[18] As Sanders prefers: *Jews in Luke–Acts*, 305.

[19] Cf. 2 Cor. 7: 11 (of the Corinthians), where the RSV translates 'eagerness to clear yourselves'.

elements of the fictional scenario (audience, charge, defendants) should be easy to pick off the surface of the text, even if its real audience and purpose may be less transparent. Some of the apologetic readings proposed for Acts are complementary (for example, the demonstration that Christianity is a legitimate development of Judaism may serve equally for apologetic addressed to the Jewish community and for apologetic addressed to the Roman authorities). But many of them are mutually contradictory: Walaskay and Cassidy, for example, have identified a number of counter-apologetic elements which appear to undermine the consensus view that Acts is conciliatory towards the Roman authorities.[20] The fact that 200 years of Acts scholarship have failed to produce a consensus on the text's purpose and audience need not, of course, occasion either surprise or concern in these postmodern days; but it is particularly damaging to the attempt to configure the text as apologetic, which must above all make its fictional situation clear. Any apologetic reading which aims to give a reasonably coherent view of the text as a whole must find a way to account for those features which suggest a counter-reading. The fact that so many mutually contradictory viewpoints can be argued from the same text with equal plausibility suggests at the very least that, if Luke's aim was apologetic, he has failed in his task: a defence speech which provides equally convincing arguments for the prosecution is clearly not achieving its purpose.

One reason for this lack of clarity, I would suggest, is that, in the quest to uncover the text's deepest motivations, insufficient attention has been paid to surface matters of genre and discourse mode. This may be because apologetic itself is not an ancient genre description: but the apologetic scenario, as we have described it, belongs squarely within the larger, and very familiar, generic framework of forensic rhetoric. Within this framework the dominant mode of discourse is direct speech, in which the inscribed speaker (the 'I' of the discourse) makes a direct address

[20] Walaskay, *'And So We Came To Rome'*, argues that Luke–Acts contains too many counter-apologetic features to impress a Roman reader (Zealot disciple / 'buy swords' / Kingdom / ambiguous ending of Acts), and therefore proposes a reverse reading of the narrative as an *apologia pro imperio*: it embodies a pro-Roman perspective addressed to 'a church harboring anti-Roman sentiment, anxiously awaiting the Parousia, and pondering the Romans' crushing of the Jewish revolt'. For Cassidy, even this pro-Roman perspective has been exaggerated: Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics and Society*, esp. 145–55; *idem*, 'Luke's Audience'.

to an inscribed audience (the 'you' of the discourse[21]). As we have noted, these elements can be transmuted in a number of ways in literary apologetic (including the occasional transposition to the more overtly dramatic form of dialogue): but the dominant speech mode (as we would expect in this highly rhetorical world) is argumentative speech. Narrative has a part to play in this discourse, as it does in any forensic speech, in the formal statement of the facts of the case (*diēgēsis/narratio*); but the authorial voice of the inscribed speaker will always be there to explain the narrative and drive home the conclusions the audience should draw from it.

This pattern can be seen clearly in Josephus, *Against Apion*, which contains long narrative sections (for example, in the refutation of Manetho), but where the apologetic significance of the narrative is always explained and rammed home by an insistent authorial voice.[22] It is precisely the lack of this authorial voice in Acts which leaves the narrative so open to diverse interpretations. Acts, on the other hand, is uniformly narrative except for the opening half-sentence (Acts 1: 1), which takes the form of a conventional first-person recapitulation of the contents of the first volume.[23] Apart from this, the narrator of Acts never intervenes in the text: Luke simply leaves himself no space to explain how the text's dramatic situation is to be constructed. Sterling notes the difference clearly:

> It is hard not to compare Josephos and Luke–Acts in this regard. Each pleads for respectability and uses precedents in the form of *acta* or trials to argue their case. There is, however, a difference: Josephos made his case *directly* to the Hellenistic world; Luke–Acts makes its case *indirectly* by offering examples and precedents to Christians so that they can make their own *apologia*.[24]

But this difference of surface texture is actually a crucial factor in the determination of literary genre: and it raises the question whether Acts can in any meaningful sense be placed in the same generic category as the second-century apologies.

[21] Athenian speeches also allow for direct address to the prosecutor.

[22] e.g. 1. 227–53; 2. 8–19; and *passim*.

[23] On the preface to Acts, cf. my 'The Preface to Acts', and on the Gospel preface my *Preface to Luke's Gospel*. Where the first person does reappear in Acts, in the famous 'We passages' (e.g. Acts 16: 10–17), it is used (mysteriously) not of the author, but of a character within the narrative: there is no explicit direction to the reader as in Josephus. See on this phenomenon Wehnert, *Die Wir-Passagen*.

[24] Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 386.

Sterling in fact provides one of the few readings of Acts to tackle the genre question directly. He proposes that Acts belongs to a specifically narrative genre which he calls 'apologetic historiography'.[25] This is defined as 'the story of a sub-group of people in an extended prose narrative written by a member of the group who follows the group's own traditions but Hellenizes them in an effort to establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world'.[26] Other examples of the genre are Manetho and Berossus, the lost Hellenistic Jewish historians, Philo of Byblos, and Josephus' *Antiquities*. This generic description is a useful one, and it may well be helpful to place Luke's work in this broader literary context. How far it illuminates the specifically 'apologetic' aspects which concern us here, however, is another question. On the one hand, because these texts are predominantly narrative, the imputation of apologetic intent rests to a large extent on the assumption that any text written in Greek in the eastern Empire around the turn of the eras and describing non-Hellenic cultural or religious traditions was in some sense seeking to 'Hellenize' non-Greek material for a 'larger' (and by implication unitary) cultural world. I have no quarrel with that as a description of the literary activities of Manetho and Berossus: but it does not seem to me self-evident that all such texts had such an 'apologetic' intent. The Greek reading public was far from homogeneous, and it seems to me perfectly conceivable, at least in principle, that some texts were written in Greek for a much smaller cultural world which happened to use Greek (as so many did) as a lingua franca. Clearly such language-users cannot be isolated altogether from the larger cultural networks to which the language gives access: but it is a large assumption that the use of the Greek language necessarily commits a writer to wholesale cultural propaganda. (Using computer software does not necessarily mean becoming a computer buff: even the Internet, a recent newspaper article lamented, is turning out to produce a nexus of small communication groups rather than the 'global' audiences which the propaganda promised.)

[25] Cadbury (*Making of Luke–Acts*, 299–300, 316) notes that the narrative form of Acts may be an objection to reading it as 'a form of defense', but simply retorts, 'one must admit that on such matters of fitness opinions differ. *De gustibus non disputandum*.'

[26] Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 17.

And secondly, the identification of Acts' genre as 'apologetic historiography' raises problems of its own. Oden's study of Philo of Byblos lists five typical features of 'hellenistic historiography . . . composed by those living in lands subjected to the full force of Hellenism'—that is, of 'apologetic historiography'.[27] These are euhemerism; a universal scale, with 'vastly extended' chronological and geographical limits, combined with 'special pleading on behalf of the great and unparalleled antiquity of [the historian's] nation'; 'patriotic cultural history', in which 'each historian claims [humanity's] cultural benefactors as his own nation's ancestors'; 'a belligerent and defensive stance with respect to Greek civilization and particularly Greek mythography', expressed 'without resorting to circumlocution and without searching for subtlety'; and a claim to have access to recently discovered archives of unimpeachable provenance and antiquity. I find it hard to parallel most of this in Acts: if Luke does share some of the aims of this kind of historiography, the narrative strategies he employs to fulfil them are rather more subtle.[28]

I would suggest that if we are to make any progress in understanding the rhetorical strategies of this text, we must begin by paying more serious attention to the details of structure and surface texture. As we have seen, Acts lacks the formal structure of an *apologia*, in that it is not presented as direct rhetorical discourse addressed to an identifiable audience. Luke's work must first of all be taken seriously as a narrative; but it is not in any primary sense an antiquarian account of Judaeo-Christian historical traditions. It is a relatively short description of recent historical events, set in the real world of the eastern Empire in the middle of the first century CE. This narrative construct is much too substantial to be called merely a framework, like the narrative frameworks to the great dialogues of the classical tradition. Nevertheless, it is a narrative which creates a great number of dramatic opportunities for formal speech: and these are the most obvious places to look for apologetic in Acts.

[27] Oden, 'Philo of Byblos'. Sterling would class Philo with 'apologetic historiography', although he does not analyse Philo's work because of its date: *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 11 n. 55.

[28] As Sterling implicitly concedes when he notes that Luke's action of 'writing the Christian story in this genre . . . altered the definition [sc. of the genre] itself': *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 388.

ACTS IS BUILT AROUND A SERIES OF APOLOGETIC SCENARIOS

The language of *apologia,* of charge and counter-charge, is a prominent feature of the textual surface of Acts.[29] This one book contains six out of ten occurrences in the NT of the verb *apologeomai* (two others being in Luke's Gospel), two out of eight NT occurrences of *apologia*, and a high proportion of the NT usages of forensic terms like *katēgoreō*.[30] The more philosophical language of debate and discussion (e.g. *dialegomai*) is also prominent (e.g. Acts 18: 4; 19: 9). And the reason for this is simple: like the Greek novelists, Luke uses narrative to create a whole series of dramatic situations which call for apologetic speech.[31] Public assemblies and trial scenes are significant features of the narrative, and this dramatic presentation allows the author to present his characters in interaction with a succession of audiences and to elaborate various kinds of self-defence (*apologia*) against a variety of charges.[32] In this way, in fact, all the imaginary situations presupposed in the various apologetic readings outlined above are actually embedded in the text as dramatic scenes. Generically speaking, this means that it is the characters, not the narrator, who make these apologetic speeches, and that the narrator never intervenes in his own person to drive home the point to the text's inscribed audience. But this is one reason why the proposed apologetic scenarios all carry some degree of conviction. They are all represented dramatically within the narrative; and this is the obvious place to begin to explore its apologetic agenda.

[29] Ibid. 385; cf. Trites, 'Importance of Legal Scenes', 279: 'There is a wealth of legal terminology in Acts referring literally to actual courts of law and courtroom procedure'.

[30] *ἀπολογέομαι*: Luke 12: 11; 21: 14; Acts 19: 33; 24: 10; 25: 8; 26: 1, 2, 24; *ἀπολογία*: Acts 22: 1; 25: 16; *κατηγορέω*: Acts 22: 30; 24: 2, 8, 13, 19; 25: 5, 11, 16; 28: 19 (there are five further occurrences in Luke's Gospel and ten elsewhere in the NT); *κατηγορός* (Acts 23: 30, 35; 24: 8; 25: 16, 18) is found nowhere else in the NT.

[31] The parallel with the novels is explored at some length in Pervo, *Profit with Delight*, esp. 34–50.

[32] For analysis of the speeches in Acts in terms of forensic rhetoric, cf. Trites, 'Importance of Legal Scenes'; Neyrey, 'Forensic Defense-Speech', and Winter and Clarke, *Book of Acts*, ch. 11 (Winter) and ch. 12 (Satterthwaite). Luke has an intriguing fondness for the formal rhetorical address (even in a Jewish context), which irresistibly recalls the classical orators: cf. Acts 1: 16; 2: 14, 22, 29, 37; 3: 12; 5: 35; 7: 2; 13: 16, 26; 15: 7, 13, 22; 19: 35; 22: 1; 23: 1, 6; 28: 17.

Inner-church debate (Type I apologetic) takes up a relatively small proportion of the narrative as a whole. Luke's brief allusions to ecclesiastical disagreement are on the whole merely tantalizing, giving little hint of the impassioned debates which lie behind Paul's letters. The dispute between 'Hebrews' and 'Hellenists' is depicted only briefly in 6: 1 as a background to the election of Stephen. Traces of conflict with a Christian group identified as 'those of the circumcision' (11: 2) emerge at intervals during the later narrative, especially at 21: 18–22, where they play a crucial role (here carefully distinguished from that of James) in Paul's fateful decision to visit the Temple. But on the whole Luke is at pains to stress the internal unity of the church rather than its dissensions, and there is relatively little direct speech that could be classified as belonging to this apologetic type.

There are, however, two paired formal scenes in the Jerusalem church which create an apologetic scenario right at the centre of the narrative. The 'apostolic decree' of 15: 23–9 is intentionally presented as a formal document, using the well-known language of civic deliberation, issued by a curial body within the church and defining the religious obligations of Gentile converts.[33] This scene forms a closure to one of the pivotal episodes in the book, Peter's encounter with the God-fearing centurion Cornelius (10: 1–48) and his subsequent interrogation by the Jerusalem apostles (11: 1–18). Here we have a charge (eating with Gentiles), a defence speech, and a verdict (v. 18): 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life.' It is interesting (and a testimony to Luke's eirenic purpose) that it is Peter, not Paul, who delivers this key defence of the Pauline position that Gentiles who have received the Spirit are thereby placed on the same footing as Jewish believers. But the substance of Peter's defence is a thousand miles away from the elaborate display of exegetical argument which occupies so much space in the Pauline letters which deal with this issue, Galatians and Romans. Peter's speech in Acts is simply a reiteration of key points from the narrative: first, the divinely inspired vision which sent him to Caesarea (already told twice in great detail[34]), then the meeting with

[33] Cf. the use of *ἔδοξε* (15: 22, 25), *ἐπειδή* (15: 24). Luke is elsewhere curiously silent about this 'apostolic council'.

[34] Cf. Witherup, 'Cornelius'.

Cornelius and the visitation of the Holy Spirit.[35] The speech, in other words, provides essentially an intensification and a more focused theological interpretation of what the narrative has already told us,[36] sharpened by a quotation from 'the word of the Lord' (that is, Jesus: 11: 16) and by Peter's explicit theological conclusion: 'Who was I that I could withstand God?' (11: 17). And the essential force of the argument, revealingly, is the conviction produced in the characters by the supernatural events which the narrative describes. Paul, by contrast, though he does give great weight to his own visionary experience as the foundation for his mission (Gal. 1: 10–17), spends far more time in Galatians and Romans developing a theological and exegetical rationale for his procedures in an extended argument which could with some justice be labelled (in the classical sense) 'apologetic'.[37]

Disputes with the Jewish community (Type II apologetic) take up a much larger proportion of the Acts narrative, with a number of formal trial scenes providing opportunity for apologetic speeches of this type. Chapters 4 and 5 find Peter and John on trial before the Sanhedrin, where they are able to demonstrate their own *parrhēsia* ('right to free speech') and the powerlessness of the authorities to intimidate them. Here the judicial framework is much more elaborate. The first hearing is represented as a judicial inquiry into the apostles' religious credentials: 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' (4: 7). This is not an accusation but a question, and it invites not so much a defence as a theologically charged assertion of the supernatural status of Jesus (4: 8–12), which illustrates how hard it is in practice to maintain a hard and fast distinction between *apologia* and religious propaganda, and between speech and narrative. The claim that Jesus is now an exalted heavenly figure is both a precise answer to the council's question and an essential part of Peter's message. But an indispensable subtext to this assertion is the supernatural event which triggers the whole episode, the miraculous healing of the lame man (4: 9), and it is this event, rather than any skill in speech, which in the end silences the opposition (4: 14, 21–2).

[35] Note that the reception of the Spirit also forms a part (though a less significant one) of Paul's argument in Gal. 3: 2–5.

[36] Cf. Marguérat, 'Dieu'.

[37] For a broader understanding of the role of exegetical argument in early Christian apologetic, cf. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetics*; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*.

This first hearing issues in a warning injunction 'not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus' (4: 18), and it is this injunction—and the apostles' refusal to obey it—which forms the basis for subsequent judicial proceedings (5: 28). Such an affront to free speech provides a classic *locus* for the display of apostolic *parrhēsia* before a council pushed neatly into playing the role of tyrant.[38] In refusing to obey the Sanhedrin, Peter implicitly questions its moral authority and lays claim, as so many philosophers had done from Socrates onward, to a higher allegiance: 'We must obey God rather than men' (5: 29, cf. 4: 19–20). But it is characteristic of Luke's work that, despite its philosophic resonances, the framework of this scene remains resolutely theological, its roots most obviously in the late and post-biblical tradition of bold prophets or martyrs encountering wicked tyrants.[39] Theological commentary on the scene is given, in a nicely ironic touch, to the figure of Gamaliel, who warns the council (in an unusual *in camera* addendum to the more public drama of the trial) that it could be dangerous to interfere with a movement which just might prove to have God on its side (5: 33–9): 'You might even be found to be opposing God!'

These early chapters also illustrate an important subsidiary theme in the apostolic *apologia,* the counter-charge that the tribunal which is examining the apostles was responsible for Jesus' death (4: 10; 5: 28). As in Luke's Gospel, this charge is directed primarily at specific holders of authority in Jerusalem, not at 'the Jews' as an ethnic group. The responsible group is identified particularly with the Temple hierarchy and the high-priestly family,[40] and is implicitly distinguished from 'the people' (*laos*), which is represented as broadly sympathetic (4: 21). Even for the hierarchy, this is not a final condemnation: the Jerusalem crowd has already been challenged with its own responsibility in the events of the previous few weeks (3: 13–15), and has been offered the chance of repentance and blessing (3: 19, 26). Both rulers and people acted 'in ignorance' (3: 17), and the whole event

[38] On Luke's propensity for this kind of role determination, cf. Darr, *On Character-Building*.

[39] Fischel, 'Martyr and Prophet'; Ronconi, 'Exitus illustrium virorum'.

[40] Acts 4: 6; 5: 17, 21—though a broader list (in a church context: 4: 27) includes 'both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel'. Cf. also 13: 27: 'those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers'.

was also part of a greater divine plan.[41] Once again, it is difficult to draw clear distinctions here between *apologia* and religious propaganda: the offensive charge of responsibility for Jesus' death is in fact the obverse of the apostles' defensive response to a challenge to their own religious authority, and the trial narrative effectively dramatizes two irreconcilable theological interpretations of the same key event.[42]

Stephen's encounter with the Sanhedrin (6: 8–7: 60) produces the longest defence speech in the book and the movement's first martyr. This scene is set up to echo the trial of Jesus, with a trial before the religious council and 'false witnesses' who bring a charge of speaking 'blasphemous words against Moses and God' and 'words against this holy place and the law' (6: 11, 13). Stephen's speech in reply (ch. 7) adds another familiar dimension to the apologetic of Acts, the ransacking of biblical history for archetypes and precedents to add weight to the apostolic interpretation of current events. For Stephen, it is the prophets of the biblical tradition who provide the most striking template for the persecuted church (7: 52), and a judicious quotation from Deuteronomy allows him to enrol Moses among their number (7: 37). Paul, when we find him a few chapters later presenting a similar rereading of biblical history in the synagogue at Antioch-in-Pisidia, focuses more on the figure of David (13: 16–40). Significantly, it is not easy in practice to maintain a firm distinction in terms of apologetic content between Stephen's formal defence speech and Paul's synagogue sermon, though the dramatic scenario in the latter case is evangelistic rather than judicial.

The presentation of the Christian case to a 'Greek' audience (Type III apologetic) is much less prominent in the narrative. Despite Acts' interest in the Gentile mission, only two of Paul's reported sermons are addressed to a non-Jewish audience: the short exhortation at Lystra to a Lycaonian-speaking crowd who want to treat Paul and Barnabas as gods (14: 11–18) and the more famous speech on the Areopagus in Athens (17: 16–34). There is a hint of the judicial in this last case, with the Areopagus setting

[41] 3: 18, etc. On the role of this theme in 'apologetic polemic', cf. Squires, *Plan of God*, esp. 190–4.

[42] For an extended treatment of the theme of 'the Jews' in Luke–Acts, cf. Sanders, *Jews in Luke–Acts*, with the response by Dunn, 'Anti-Semitism', esp. 187–95.

which (whatever the actual legal situation in the first century) was popularly associated with the trials of philosophers:[43] it is surely no accident that the Epicureans and Stoics who bring Paul to the Areopagus echo the Socratic accusation of being 'a preacher of strange divinities' (17: 18).[44] But Paul's defence, as much propaganda as apologia, is a fine example of philosophical rather than judicial argument, showing continuity both with the Hellenistic-Jewish tradition of philosophical debate with paganism and with the later Christian apologists.[45] Far from introducing 'foreign' deities, Paul is speaking about a God already worshipped in the city, though hidden under the ascription 'To an unknown God' (17: 23). This conciliatory opening might be dismissed as a preacher's play on words; but the whole tone of the sermon, though uncompromising in its condemnation of the practice of 'idolatry' (17: 29), tends towards the recognition that the Zeus of the Greek poets and philosophers is the same as the creator whom Paul proclaims (17: 24–8). The negative side of this debate surfaces in Ephesus, where the town clerk cheerfully defends Paul and his friends against the charge of being 'sacrilegious and blasphemers of our goddess' (19: 37), despite Paul's reputation as a scourge of idolatry (19: 26).

Finally, Luke's narrative presents numerous opportunities for self-defence before Roman magistrates (Type IV apologetic). These scenes show a well-honed awareness of the complexities of civic life in the Greek East, and especially of the potential advantages (for all concerned) of playing off one set of opponents against another. At Philippi, Paul is accused before the colony's magistrates (16: 19) both of being Jewish and of propagating 'customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to receive or to observe' (16: 20–1). At Thessalonica, it is 'the Jews' and the urban rabble (17: 5) who lay charges before the city authorities[46] (17: 6)

[43] Diogenes Laertius 2. 101, 2. 116, 7. 169.

[44] This is the only place in the NT where the term *daimonion* (whose close association with Paul is never disavowed) does not have the negative connotation 'demon'. For a detailed exploration of the Socratic parallels in this passage and elsewhere in Acts, cf. Sandnes, 'Paul and Socrates'; Alexander, 'Acts and Ancient Intellectual Biography', esp. 57–63.

[45] Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*. Paul's Aratus quotation (17: 28) already appears in a fuller form in Aristobulus, frg. 4 in Eusebius, *Preparation For the Gospel*, 13. 13 (ed. and tr. A. Y. Collins; in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, ii. 841).

[46] On this term, see now Horsley, 'Politarchs'.

that the apostles are 'turning the world upside-down' and 'acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus' (17: 6–7). Corinth sees Paul formally indicted before the tribunal of Gallio (18: 12) on a charge of 'persuading men to worship God contrary to the law' (18: 13). Precisely whose law is being flouted is not stated: Gallio chooses to believe that it is Jewish law, not Roman law, and dismisses the case. The riot at Ephesus is successfully defused by the town clerk (19: 35) without direct recourse to Roman authority, but the potential presence of that authority is felt in his speech both as judicial safety-valve and as threat (19: 38, 40). And it is the Roman judicial system which in the book's dramatic final scenes hears Paul's case in Caesarea (chs. 24–6), allows his appeal to Caesar (25: 11), and dispatches him to Rome for trial (25: 12; 26: 32; 27–8), though in the end we never get to hear whether the case did come before the emperor and what the issue was.

For most readers, this is the most prominent apologetic scenario in the book, and the one which has most claim to determine its overall purpose. Here there is a clear intention to stress the political innocence of the story's protagonists, with Paul finally dispatched to Rome for his own protection, but publicly judged by the Roman authorities to be 'doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment' (26: 31). Yet, as we have seen, there is a distinct ambivalence in Acts' presentation of the Christian case before a Roman tribunal. Paul, certainly, is presented as innocent of the particular charge on which he was tried in Caesarea (which was in fact an offence against Jewish law). But he and his associates have incurred a number of other charges along the way which have never in so many words—that is, in the explicit terms we would expect of apologetic speech—been refuted. Mud has a disturbing tendency to stick, and it is a dangerous strategy for an apologetic writer to bring accusations to the reader's attention without taking the trouble to refute them. At Philippi, for example, the charge is: 'These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practise' (16: 20–1). There is no defence speech: Paul is beaten and imprisoned by the colony's magistrates, and saved only by the (implicitly supernatural) intervention of an earthquake. Paul's tardy claim to be a Roman citizen (16: 37) serves only to embarrass the magistrates, and their plea that he should leave

the city immediately (16: 39) tacitly implies that at least the first part of the charge is true. Despite a minor act of defiance in visiting Lydia before leaving (16: 40), there is to be no more missionary activity in Philippi.[47] Thessalonica produces further accusations (17: 6–7), this time involving the Christian group in the serious charge of 'acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king, Jesus'.[48] Again, there is no defence and no verdict: the charge of trouble making is implicitly admitted, and the missionaries are asked to leave. Neither Paul's irresponsible use of his own citizenship, nor the riots which inevitably accompany his activities, are calculated to impress the reader that the new movement offers potential enhancement of civic life. On the contrary, the overall effect of the whole narrative section from chapter 13 to chapter 19 is to leave the damaging impression that Paul's mission causes trouble wherever he goes (17: 6): prudent magistrates might well conclude that any well-regulated city would be better off without it.

The other noticeable fact about these forensic or semi-forensic encounters on Paul's missionary journeys is that Paul himself gets very little opportunity to speak in his own defence: even when the apologetic opportunity is there, the narrator does not give Paul any apologetic speeches. If there is an apologetic agenda here, then, its strategies are those of dramatic narrative rather than of rhetorical speech. At Philippi and Thessalonica, there is no defence at all. In Ephesus, Paul tries to address the crowd, but his friends beg him not to (19: 30–1). The closest he gets to making his own *apologia* in this section of the narrative is in Corinth, where Gallio interrupts the proceedings just as Paul is 'about to open his mouth' (18: 14). Significantly, however, the proconsul's intervention makes it clear that the real issue is one not of Roman law, but of 'questions about words and names and your own [that is, Jewish] law' (18: 15).

Paul's surprising silence in the journey section is more than compensated, however, by a flood of direct speech on his final visit to Jerusalem, which culminates in his removal to Caesarea and the

[47] RSV 'apologized to them' (16: 39) is more than the Greek says; Johnson better translates 'implored'. The Western text, clearly feeling something lacking in Luke's account, inserts a more robust declaration of innocence by the magistrates. Cf. Johnson, *Acts*, 302.

[48] Cf. Judge, 'Decrees of Caesar'.

two court appearances before Felix and Festus (chs. 21–6). This is the section of the narrative which most clearly depicts the apostle on trial before a Roman tribunal, culminating with the famous 'appeal to Caesar' and the journey to Rome (chs. 27–8). This is the most obviously 'apologetic' section of the book: five of Acts' six occurrences of the verb *apologeomai* and both its occurrences of the noun *apologia* appear in these chapters. Paul is given three substantial speeches (22: 3–21; 24: 10–21; 26: 2–23) and a short but trenchant declaration of his own innocence (25: 8), as well as significant amounts of dialogue with assorted Roman officials. The trial takes place before two named and identifiable Roman magistrates, Felix and his successor Festus, and we even have a formal speech from a rhetor hired to present the case for the prosecution (24: 1–8).

It is easy to forget, however, that although Paul's final speech is made before a Roman tribunal, the bulk of the defence is addressed to a Jewish audience and answers charges which are specifically stated to be concerned with matters of Jewish rather than Roman law. Paul is allotted four defence speeches in these last chapters, all except the second explicitly identified (by noun or verb) as apologia (22: 1; 24: 10; 25: 16; 26: 1–2, 24). The first is not made in a formal trial scene at all, but to the hostile crowd in the Temple (22: 1–21), and the second is before the Sanhedrin (23: 1–10). The formal defence before Felix in Caesarea is clearly presented as an answer to the charges brought by the high priest and his party (24: 1): Felix has been brought in as arbitrator, not as prosecutor. And Paul's final defence before Festus (26: 1–32) is actually addressed to Agrippa, who has expressed an interest in hearing Paul, and is hailed by Paul as one who is 'especially familiar with all customs and controversies of the Jews' (26: 3). The charge is originally described as the serious one of bringing Gentiles into the Temple beyond the permitted limits (21: 28), which would, if proved, have merited the death penalty; the narrator, unusually, makes sure that the readers know that this accusation was unfounded (21: 29). But it is the more general charge of 'speaking everywhere against the people and the law and this place' (21: 28, cf. 21: 21) which sets the tone for the subsequent series of hearings: Paul's defence speeches make no kind of answer to specific charges, but present an extended narrative reprise of his whole career, and especially of the divine

inspiration for the Gentile mission (22: 3–21; 26: 2–23). The Sanhedrin hearing is deliberately hijacked by Paul into a theological debate on the resurrection (23: 6–8). Only in passing, and without allowing his subject the luxury of an extended speech, does the narrator mention that Paul also thought it necessary to defend himself against Roman charges: 'Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended at all' (25: 8).

In the light of all this, it becomes rather hard to maintain the traditional view that it is the Roman tribunal which is the definitive one in determining the rhetorical thrust of the apologetic in Acts. Only one of the final defence speeches is explicitly addressed to a Roman, and in all of them the serious work of *apologia* addresses Jewish, not Roman, issues. Paul's last substantial speech, in chapter 26 (like Peter's in ch. 11) repeats material which the readers have already heard twice, once in the narrative (ch. 9) and once in an earlier speech (ch. 22): again, Luke uses apologetic speech both to break down the generic barriers between speech and narrative and to sharpen the theological focus of the debate. The crucial point at issue in Paul's trial, as it emerges from the speech, is not legal but theological:

> And now I stand here on trial for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? (26: 6–8)

If this is apologia, it has quickly lost any sense of limitation to legal issues, and has become the defence of a religious belief system in the most general possible terms: its arguments rest as much on the supernatural sanction supplied by Paul's vision (26: 12–19) as on the more general testimony of the subject's character (26: 4–11). *Apologia*, in fact, has become testimony based on a personal religious vision backed up by the assertion that its roots lie in the common tradition: 'To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying (*marturoumenos*) both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass' (26: 22). The speech closes with an emotional appeal to Agrippa: it is hardly surprising that Festus' intervention is politely dismissed

as an irrelevance. The closing interchange is a revealing one (26: 24–9):[49]

FESTUS. Paul, you are mad; your great learning is turning you mad.

PAUL. I am not mad, most noble Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely (*parrhēsiazomenos*); for I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.

AGRIPPA. In a short time *[or: almost]* you think to make me a Christian!

PAUL. Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.

This is an appeal addressed specifically and very directly to a leading, highly placed patron of Diaspora Judaism, and its object is not to exonerate Paul but to bring the hearer—any hearer—to share his religious world-view. It is perhaps not too fanciful to suggest that this may be the point at which the dramatic audience of the speech approaches most closely to the real-life audience of the book.

APOLOGETIC IN ACTS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

Is it possible to determine any more precisely how these varied scenarios relate to one another and to the text's overall rhetorical strategy? We might prefer more simply to maximize the variety and richness of the narrative world which Luke has created, stressing the open-endedness of narrative as opposed to the purposive closures of rhetorical discourse. Luke's account of Jesus' ministry begins with the formal synchronism of 3: 1: but the event so portentously introduced is not the coming of Jesus, or even of John the Baptist, but in true prophetic fashion the coming of 'the Word of the Lord' (Luke 3: 2). Arguably it is this divine Word, rather than any of its human propagators, which is the true hero of Acts, and its progress in the world certainly provides one

[49] The dramatic layout highlights a potential parallel with the *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs* (a parallel further explored by Yoon in 'Paul's Citizenship'). Parallels noted include the lively and provocative dialogue, the inclusion of Agrippa and Berenice as characters; and the charge of 'turning the world upside down'.

of the narrative's most prominent agendas (Acts 1: 8). By creating so many dramatic opportunities for speech, we might argue, Luke is simply giving maximum coverage to this Word and its impact on a succession of audiences. This is a record which has a strong exemplary force for a Christian readership: as Cassidy puts it, Acts provides Christian readers with 'perspective and guidance' to inform their own apologetic witness.[50] Luke's Jesus has already predicted (twice) in the Gospel that Christians will find themselves in situations where they will be called upon for an apologia before 'synagogues and rulers and authorities'.[51] Acts simply dramatizes this prospect by providing a whole repertoire of opportunities for the apostles to proclaim the Word with *parrhēsia* in every conceivable situation. Moreover, apologetic speech in this context is more than mere dramatized pathos (an essential difference from the superficially similar narrative construction of the novels, where speech serves largely to dramatize the characters' emotions in any given situation). In Acts, speech is an important event in its own right, transcending the boundaries of narrative to exert persuasive force directly on the readers.[52]

Looked at in this light, the apologetic speeches embedded in Acts tell us a good deal about the apologetic strategies of the New Testament period. They demonstrate how easy is the slide from apologia in the strict sense (self-defence against a specific charge) to propaganda in a much broader sense. This slide (which is particularly clear in the speech before Agrippa in ch. 26) is tacitly endorsed by Paul's own use of the word in the Epistle to the Philippians, where the *apologia* of the imprisoned apostle is effectively interchangeable with 'the confirmation of the Gospel' (Phil. 1: 7), and its expected outcome is the spread of faith (Phil. 1: 12–14). Similarly, when 1 Peter 3: 15 urges its readers, 'Always be prepared to make a defence (*apologia*) to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence . . .', the word belongs quite properly in a context where the believer may be called upon at any time to 'suffer as a Christian' (4: 16): yet there is an underlying assumption that the correct Christian response may serve not so much to

[50] Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, ch. 11 (p. 159).

[51] Luke 12: 11; cf. also 21: 14, which adds 'kings and governors' to the list.

[52] Cameron, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 94–5, notes a similar phenomenon in the apocryphal *Acts*.

deflect persecution as to win over the opposition (2: 12; 3: 1). In this sense the apologetic of Acts, and of the New Testament in general, tends to corroborate Schüssler Fiorenza's observation that apologetic and missionary propaganda 'functioned like two sides of the same coin'.[53]

This is a feature of the apologetic scenario which anticipates the propaganda opportunities seized by Christians (and noted by their opponents) in the later accounts of Christian trials and martyrdoms; but it also draws on the older traditions of Jewish martyrology. The speeches of the Maccabean martyrs[54] provide an opportunity to defend not merely themselves but a whole way of life—a form of *parrhēsia* which also figures in the defiant deathbed speeches of philosophers and of the so-called pagan martyrs of Alexandria.[55] It is against this background, I believe, that we should understand the rather puzzling vagueness which pervades the apologetic scenarios in Acts. Despite their careful dramatic construction and characterization, it is not always easy to tell what the precise charge is and how (if at all) it is rebutted.

The apologetic speeches in Acts also exemplify other important features of early Christian apologetic in the New Testament period. The formal distinction between speech and narrative is largely deconstructed by Luke himself, in that the speeches he gives to his characters constantly refer back to narrative, repeat narrative, and reinforce and interpret narrative. Two pools of narrative resource inform this interpretative activity: stories and characters from the Hebrew Bible and miraculous and charismatic events from the narrative of Acts itself. The former was a hallmark of early Christian apologetic, from the pre-New Testament 'testimonies' to the second-century apologists: in this sense, Luke's narrative dramatizes (and probably over-simplifies) a flurry of exegetical activity which must have occupied quite a lot of somebody's time in the first decades of the church, and which is presupposed by the already developed use of Scripture in the epistles.[56]

[53] Cf. n. 9 above.

[54] 2 Macc. 6: 18–7: 42.

[55] Cf. *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*, ed. Musurillo, Appendices II and III (pp. 236–58).

[56] Lindars, *New Testament Apologetics*, is the classic treatment of this material. Gerhardsson's picture (*Memory and Manuscript*) of the *collegia apostolorum* in Jerusalem busily engaged in exegesis may be over-simplified, but (as Lindars shows) Paul's letters show that there undoubtedly was intensive exegetical activity going on somewhere in the church's first few decades.

The latter, however, takes us out of the study and on to the streets. Time and again, it is the activity of the Spirit (tongues, healings, visions) which is appealed to as the decisive argument in apologetic speech. Gamaliel's warning (5: 39) is picked up by character after character: 'Who was I that I could withstand God?' (11: 17); 'What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?' (23: 8); 'Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision' (26: 19). Two visions above all—Peter's and Paul's (each repeated three times[57])—hold a pivotal place in the book's cumulative argument. This is a type of apologetic which does not really rely on demonstrative argument (even exegetical argument) at all for its persuasive force, at least not in any sense that Galen would have recognized:

> Most people are unable to follow any demonstrative argument consecutively; hence they need parables and benefit from them—and he [Galen] understands by parables tales about the rewards and punishments in a future life—just as now we see the people called Christians drawing their faith from parables [and miracles *alii*] and yet sometimes acting in the same way as those who philosophize.[58]

In its reliance on the demonstrative force of 'signs'—miracles and visions—Acts falls almost entirely on the 'parable' side of this division: and this was a position which later Christians were quite happy to accept.[59] It places Acts' apologetic squarely within the broader context of early Christian missionary activity described by MacMullen, with its heavy dependence on miracle and prophecy.[60] In this sense, the apologetic of Acts must be differentiated from the more philosophical stance of the second-century apologists (and, for that matter, of 4 Maccabees). Despite the Areopagus speech, Luke's interest in Stoic philosophy is minimal (though it is undoubtedly significant that he mentions it at all: Acts 17 in this sense represents the first glimmerings of a philosophical strain in Christian apologetic, which was to become much more important in the second century). But Luke's apologetic strategy belongs firmly on the 'story' side of early Christian

[57] On the significance of the repetition, cf. Witherup, 'Cornelius'; Marguérat, 'Saul's Conversion'.

[58] Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians*, 15, 57.

[59] Cameron, *Rhetoric of Empire*, ch. 2.

[60] MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire*.

discourse.[61] Aratus' philosophical poem proclaimed the universal indwelling of Zeus in all human life: 'Let us begin with God, whom men never leave unspoken: full of God are the streets, and all the marketplaces of humanity, and full the sea and the harbours; and we are all in need of God everywhere. We are all his children . . .'[62] Luke's narrative, by contrast, inscribes his God into the Mediterranean landscape of street and harbour, city and sea, just as Chariton's novel inscribes the power of Aphrodite into the same landscape.[63]

Nevertheless, it is tempting to try to decide which, of all the book's apologetic scenarios, has the most claim to represent the author's real interests: and in purely numerical terms, it is not difficult to see which it should be. Types I and III (inner-church debate and presentation of the Gospel to the Greeks) take up relatively little narrative time. Luke's purpose in the former seems to be eirenic rather than apologetic, showing a reluctant Peter convinced by supernatural means to accept the 'Pauline' position (only Acts does not so identify it) on Gentile converts. Similarly, the theme of preaching to the Greeks has surprisingly little prominence in terms of direct speech: important though the theme is, it would seem a little unbalanced to identify philosophically minded Greeks as the book's primary audience. Of all the reported sermons in Acts, only two are addressed to pagans, and Paul's synagogue discourse to the Jewish community in Antioch-in-Pisidia (13: 16–41) is longer than the two put together. Even more striking is the relative weighting accorded to Types II and IV (self-defence to the Jewish community and self-defence to the Romans). Maddox points out that Luke devotes more narrative time to Paul's arrest and imprisonment than to his missionary journeys: 'when we read Acts as a whole, rather than selectively, it is Paul the prisoner even more than Paul the missionary whom we are meant to remember'.[64] Even more significant for our purposes, however, is the observation that, over both kinds of speech in Acts (sermons and defence speeches), by far the greatest number of verses are addressed to a

[61] Cameron, *Rhetoric of Empire*, ch. 3.

[62] Aratus, *Phaenomena*, 1–9, as cited by Aristobulus: tr. Collins (Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, ii. 841).

[63] For the comparison, see further D. R. Edwards, *Religion and Power*, and my '"In Journeyings Often"'; also my 'Narrative Maps'.

[64] Maddox, *Purpose of Luke–Acts*, 66–7.

Jewish audience.[65] Even where the dramatic audience is Roman (as in the hearings before Felix and Festus), the accusers and the charges are essentially Jewish; and by bringing on Agrippa as an interested observer in the final court scene (ch. 26), Luke effectively turns Paul's last and fullest apologetic speech into a restatement and defence of his whole theological standpoint before a figure who can be identified as a symbolic spokesman for Diaspora Judaism. It is the cynical, worldly-wise Agrippa to whom Paul addresses his most impassioned and direct appeal, and it is arguably this powerful Jewish patron who has the best claim to be identified as the ideal (and doubtless idealized) target audience for the apologetic in Acts.[66] The Romans, on this view (as so often in the first century), are simply brought in as external arbitrators in a dispute which is really (as Gallio declares in 18: 15) 'about words and names and your own law'. The success of the mission among pagan audiences provides divine confirmation of its effectiveness and of Paul's prophetic destiny: but it does not follow that Luke's primary readership is Gentile. Acts is a dramatized narrative of an intra-communal debate, a plea for a fair hearing at the bar of the wider Jewish community in the Diaspora, perhaps especially in Rome. It may be that one of the most significant pointers to the apologetic scenario of the book as a whole is the neutral, uncommitted stance of the community leaders in Rome in the final scene: 'We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brethren coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against' (28: 21–2).

Will this work as a setting for the apologetic of Acts? If so, it must be placed somewhere within the ongoing debate between church and synagogue which went on well into the second century:[67] it would be interesting (though it is beyond the scope of this

[65] A rough hand count of verses gives the following result: Type I = 33 verses; Type II = 84 (defence) + 70 (sermon) = 154 verses; Type III = 12 verses; Type IV = 40 verses, of which 25 are spoken in Festus' presence but addressed to Agrippa.

[66] On Agrippa, cf. 'Excursus: Agrippa II', in Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, i. 470–83; Rajak, 'Friends, Romans, Subjects'. On the role of the Herodian dynasty as mediators and patrons for Diaspora Judaism (especially in Rome), cf. Rajak, 'Roman Charter'; Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 72, 294–5, 302–3, 308–9, 328–9; and Musurillo, *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*, ed. Musurillo, 119, 124–8, 168–72.

[67] P. S. Alexander, '"The Parting of the Ways"'.

essay) to try to pin it down to a more precise date. But any solution must take into account the essential literary observation that the dramatized apologetic of Acts is also embedded within a complex narrative. Generically, Luke's choice of vehicle brings him closer to the world of 'popular'[68] narrative and pamphlet than to the 'higher' forms of rhetorical discourse which were adopted by the later apologists: closer, let us say, to the novels, the martyrologies, the idealized philosophical biographies, or even the *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*, than to *Against Apion*. But narrative imposes its own disciplines, one of which is the need to bring the story to an end. Whatever its ambiguities, the final scene of Acts does appear to place some kind of closure on the appeal to the Jewish community: 'Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen' (28: 29). The 'most chilling prophecy'[69] quoted here from Isaiah 6: 9–10 (28: 26–7) already has a long history in early Christian apologetic, and will continue to figure in the patristic debate.[70] It provides a biblical explanation for Judaism's failure to respond to the Gospel, and a prophetic model for the theological puzzle of a divinely inspired message which fails to convince its target audience.[71] On this view, the ending of Acts, with its puzzling failure to narrate the outcome of Paul's appeal to Caesar, is entirely consistent with the prominence of the Jewish apologetic scenario throughout the narrative:

> Absolutely nothing hinges on the success or failure of Paul's defense before Caesar, for Luke's apologetic has not been concerned primarily with Paul's safety or even the legitimacy of the Christian religion within the empire. What Luke was defending he has successfully concluded: God's fidelity to his people and to his own word.[72]

Whether this conclusion would be acceptable to any readers outside the church is another question: apologetic, as we have seen, often fails to reach the dramatic audience to whom it is ostensibly addressed. That does not make it any the less apologetic.

[68] I use the word in full awareness of its pitfalls, on which see Cameron, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 107–13.

[69] Johnson, *Acts*, 476.

[70] Lindars, *New Testament Apologetics*, 159–67.

[71] Though the use of these verses does not necessarily imply a final rejection on either side: even Paul treats the 'hardening' as a temporary precursor to the ultimate salvation of Israel in Romans 11: 25–32. Cf. Dunn, 'Anti-Semitism', 191–2.

[72] Johnson, *Acts*, 476.

3
Josephus' Treatise *Against Apion*

MARTIN GOODMAN

The work in two books preserved in Greek (in part only in Latin) in the manuscripts of Josephus' writings and commonly known by the title *Against Apion* contains much explicit apologetic, and the author's numerous references to his own aims and techniques make this 'skilfully planned, well-written and clever'[1] treatise a fine test case of the techniques which could be used in defence of a religious tradition.

The original title of the work is unknown: the text deals only in the first half of book 2 with the eponymous Apion, and the present title is first attested by Jerome (*On Famous Men*, 13) only in the fourth century. Before Jerome, the pagan philosopher Porphyry (*On Abstinence*, 4. 11) described the work as 'Against the Greeks', and Origen referred to it as 'On the Antiquity of the Jews' (*Against Celsus*, 1. 16; 4. 11), which accurately reflects Josephus' claims about its contents (cf. *Against Apion*, 1. 3, 160, 217; 2. 1) and may have been the original title.[2] The apologetic genre of the work thus has to be derived from internal comments. So Josephus states that he is required to prove the antiquity of the Jews because others have produced lies to the contrary (1. 2–5), that he is tackling particular issues because of the absurd calumnies of other writers (1. 59), or that he would prefer to avoid polemic against other nations, but is forced to indulge in it in order to answer accusations (2. 237–8). At one point (2. 4) he makes explicit reference to the lawcourt style of such accusations when they come from the pen of the last opponent whose views he contradicts, Apion; and elsewhere he is at pains to stress that his

[1] The phrase comes from Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, i. 55.

[2] On the title, see L. Troiani, *Commento Storico*, 25–6. Schreckenberg, 'Text', suggests that Josephus may have entitled his work 'Concerning the Jewish People', or something similar.

brief account (2. 145) of the constitution of the Jews is not encomium (2. 147), indulged in for its own sake, but simply what is required to answer the assertions of others. Any doubts about the careful structure of the treatise should be dispelled by Josephus' claim at the end of book 2 (2. 288) to have 'fulfilled the promise' of the work made at the outset: it is clear that the author intended the two books to be read as a whole.

Modern studies which have treated Josephus' work on its own terms have been surprisingly rare, although there has been a marked increase in interest in recent years.[3] *Against Apion* has generally been viewed in the past as a type of a wider genre of Jewish apologetic, of which it is sometimes seen as the sole full survivor. Thus the section on Jewish apologetic in Schürer's *History of the Jewish People* describes the genre essentially by paraphrasing *Against Apion*; *Against Apion* itself, by implication, simply followed fixed conventions.[4] Such arguments are difficult to avoid, despite their unfortunate circularity, because most other extant Jewish texts from antiquity which *may* have had apologetic intent survive only in very fragmentary form. Commentaries on the work have concentrated less on the literary technique of the author than on the sources quoted by him[5] and on the political struggle between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria, taken (correctly) to lie behind the anti-Jewish polemic of Apion, but less obviously responsible for the shape, tone, and structure of Josephus' response.[6] My intention in this study is to analyse the work in its own terms and to try to understand the reasons for its composition not only as regards the sources available to the author but, more significantly perhaps, in terms of the pressures on Josephus as a fringe member of imperial court circles in late-first-century Rome.[7]

The treatise has a clear structure: any convolutions (and there are some, as will be seen) seem to have had a specific purpose.[8]

[3] Note especially among recent publications Feldman and Levison, *Josephus' Contra Apionem*; Gerber, *Ein Bild des Judentums*.

[4] Cf. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, iii. 609–16.

[5] Especially Müller, *Das Flavius Josephus Schrift*.

[6] Cf. both Troiani, *Commento Storico*, 7, and Kasher, *Josephus Flavius*, *Against Apion*.

[7] See also Keeble, *Critical Study*.

[8] See analysis by Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, and, in greater detail, by J. R. Levison and J. R. Wagner in Feldman and Levison, *Josephus' Contra Apionem*, 2–5.

The introduction (1. 1–5) lays out the general theme of the two books: the defence of Judaism against unwarranted attacks. The first section (1. 6–8) deals in some detail with a single issue, the lack of reference to Jews in Greek literature; within this section, a passage in praise of non-Greek histories (1. 28–46) leads by way of defence of Josephus as a historian to a defence of his career (1. 47–56), and then to a second introduction (1. 57–9) to return the treatise to its major subject, the reasons for Greek unfamiliarity with Jews (1. 60–8). The second main section (1. 69–160) quotes oriental testimonies about Jews, while the third quotes ancient Greek testimonies (1. 161–218). Then commences a series of refutations of attacks made on Jews by specific authors (1. 219–2. 144), each author being quoted and refuted at length and in turn. At 2. 145–219, Josephus takes a new tack (clearly signalled by the author), and describes the Mosaic code and the constitution of the Jews, which leads to a quite systematic contrast between Judaism and Greek culture (2. 220–86) and the triumphant conclusion (2. 287–96) that all attacks on Judaism have now been successfully refuted. Despite some uncertain readings, and the fact that part of book 2 is known only from the translation by Cassiodorus in the sixth century, there is no reason to doubt that the surviving work represents fairly closely what Josephus wrote.[9]

From where did Josephus derive the literary form of his apologia? It has been common for scholars to assume that his source lay in the writings of earlier Jewish apologists[10]—a surprising assumption in some ways, because the non-Jewish genres used by Josephus for his other works are widely recognized.[11] The origins of the assumption seem to lie in the view that any literature composed by Jews in Greek must have had a non-Jewish audience at least partly in mind. Thus the great histories of Jewish apologetics by Friedländer and Dalbert included consideration of the works of Demetrius the Chronographer, Philo the Elder, Eupolemus, Artapanus, Ezekiel the Tragedian, Pseudo-Hecataeus, Pseudo-Aristeas, Aristobulus, and even the Sibylline Oracles and the Wisdom of Solomon. Since a justly celebrated article published by Tcherikover in 1956, few scholars would argue that

[9] On the textual tradition, see Schreckenberg, 'Text'.
[10] Cf. Holscher, 'Josephus', col. 1996.
[11] Cf. Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, 67.

many of these writings were primarily aimed at a Gentile readership,[12] although the themes taken up by these authors were sometimes provoked by the hostile views expressed by outsiders: it is hard otherwise to explain the curious assertions of an author like the Egyptian Jew Artapanus, who claimed, probably at some date in the second century BCE, that the Egyptians owed all their knowledge and institutions to the Jews, and especially to Moses, the hero whom the Greeks called Musaeus (Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 9. 27). A similar claim is found in the writings of Aristobulus, an Alexandrian Jew of the mid-second century BCE, who tried to show that the ideas found in the Greek poets and in the philosophy of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato were anticipated by Moses in the Torah (ibid. 7. 32; 8. 10; 13. 12); the argument relied on allegorical interpretation of biblical anthropomorphisms and on the quotation of alleged verses (actually forged) from Greek poets, and according to one fragment (ibid. 8. 10. 1–2) was directly addressed to the king of Egypt, Ptolemy VI Philometor.

Some of the themes from these earlier Jewish writers certainly resurface in Josephus' *Against Apion*. Thus, for instance, Josephus too asserted that Moses was the father of Greek philosophy and culture (*Against Apion*, 2. 168), even though this claim rested uneasily with his attack on the inadequacies of Greek culture in 2. 220–86. But the adoption of motifs is to be distinguished from the adoption of form, and none of the earlier Jewish writings mentioned so far took a form as close to that of a formal apologetic work as did *Against Apion*.

Hence the argument proposed for much of this century has been that similarities between *Against Apion* and various works by Philo were the result of their common use of an established genre of specifically *Alexandrian* Jewish apologetic.[13] A work entitled 'Apologia for the Jews' by Philo is known only through a fragment about the Essenes quoted in the early fourth century by Eusebius (*Preparation*, 8. 11; the title is given by Eusebius at 8. 10. 19 *fin.*); it is impossible to tell from the excerpt what accusation was being countered in the work. The existence of Philo's treatise *On the*

[12] Tcherikover, 'Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered'. See also Friedländer, *Geschichte der jüdischen Apologetik*, and Dalbert, *Die Theologie der Hellenistisch-Jüdischen Missionsliteratur*.

[13] See e.g. Schwartz, *Josephus and Judaean Politics*, 23.

Jews is known only from a reference to the title in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, 2. 18. 6; again, it is unknown whether this was an apologetic work in the same sense as *Against Apion*. The best claim to similarity can thus be made only for Philo's *Hypothetica*, which is known only from fragments preserved in Eusebius (*Preparation*, 8. 6–7). The meaning of the title of the book is uncertain, but Eusebius (ibid. 8. 5. 11 *fin.*) described the *Hypothetica* as a work in which Philo 'made the argument on behalf of Jews, as if against their accusers'. However, the extant fragments make no reference to any specific accusers, and it is perfectly possible that the description of the work as apologetic was invented by Eusebius as a description which would make sense to his Christian readers in the fourth century; apologetic *elements* are certainly visible in the passages which contrast lax Gentile laws to the excellence, humanity, and moral strictness of the Jewish law (7. 1–9), and Philo does make claims for the value of specific Jewish customs, such as the sabbath and the sabbatical year (7. 10–20); but, although nothing can be said for certain about Philo's intended audience, such material may have been meant to strengthen Jewish readers in their faith rather than as apologetic for Gentiles. The almost verbal identity between some passages in the *Hypothetica* and passages in *Against Apion* make almost certain the hypothesis that the two authors used a common source;[14] but nothing requires that common source to have been apologetic in genre or form.

In sum, the argument that Josephus made use in *Against Apion* of a whole literature of Alexandrian Jewish apologetic is possible but unproved. But it is rendered less likely by the following observations. The order in which Gentile authors are refuted in *Against Apion* shows no particular bias towards *Alexandrian* (as opposed to Egyptian) opponents of the Jews: despite his Greek culture, Manetho (1. 219–87) was an Egyptian priest, who as such would have been looked at askance by Alexandrian Greeks, who saw themselves, socially and politically, as superior to Egyptians. Chaeremon, refuted along with Lysimachus in *Against Apion*, 1. 288–319, is also said to have been an Egyptian priest; the attack on Apion, from first-century CE Alexandria, takes up the section 2. 2–144. More significantly, *Against Apion* has very little on the

[14] Belkin, *Alexandrian Halakah*.

main issues which divided Jews and Greeks in Alexandria in the mid-first century CE, such as citizenship, *isopoliteia*, and the poll tax; the exception is *Against Apion*, 2. 33–78, which deals explicitly with the attacks by Apion.[15] In any case, by the time of Apion, who was a contemporary of Philo and one of the delegates sent to Rome by the Alexandrian Greeks to present their case against the Jews (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18. 257–60), relations between the two communities seem to have deteriorated beyond the point at which literary responses would serve any purpose in deflecting hostility. Certainly, if Josephus did use such earlier apologetic as his source, he reworked it considerably, since the present form of his text is homogeneous in diction and shows no sign of having been sewn together from earlier works, in contrast to the variegated style of his *Antiquities*.[16]

Many aspects of *Against Apion* can be understood without recourse to Alexandria at all, simply in the context of Rome in the Nineties CE, when the work was written (see below). Josephus had been in Rome from the early Seventies (*Life*, 422–3), and, so far as is known, wrote all his books there. *Against Apion*, his final book, was composed after the publication of the *Antiquities* in 93 CE (cf. 1. 1 f.; 1. 127; 2. 287). There is no clear indication of the latest date for its publication, which would be as plausible in 96–7 CE under Nerva, or even later under Trajan, as in the last years of Domitian. The contrast at 2. 158–9 between the wisdom of Moses and the actions of lawless despots might fit best with the rhetoric about Domitian's reign after his death, and the description of the Jerusalem Temple as the central element in Judaism (2. 193) might have been thought more appropriate at a time when the rebuilding of the Temple was a real possibility after the demise of the Flavian dynasty;[17] but certainty about the date is impossible.[18]

More definite is the audience at which the work was aimed. Josephus' other works may have in part expected a Jewish as well as a Gentile readership; at any rate, some Jews evidently read his account of the revolt against Rome, since at least one, Justus of Tiberias, complained about his alleged inaccuracies

[15] On these issues, see A. Kasher, *Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*.
[16] See Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, 121. See also van der Horst, 'Distinctive Vocabulary'.
[17] Goodman, 'Diaspora Reactions'.
[18] On the date of composition, see Troiani, *Commento Storico*, 26–9.

(*Life*, 336–56). *Against Apion*, by contrast, must surely have been written with a Gentile audience in mind, since the summary of Judaism at *Against Apion*, 2. 180–219 was far too crude for Jews. It is notorious that the praise of the extraordinary unanimity of Jews in theology and religious practice at 2. 179–81 appears directly to contradict the more complex picture of the varieties of Judaism given by Josephus in the *War*, 2. 119–61, and *Antiquities*, 18. 11–21.

The rhetorical techniques used by Josephus are sufficiently varied to be worth enumerating individually. They may in theory have been learned from predecessors or from handbooks, but all are sufficiently practical for Josephus simply to have invented them for his own purposes.[19]

The structure of the treatise was clearly deliberate, with occasional signposts for the reader—for instance, he specifically designated one passage as a digression (1. 57), and he frequently summarized the argument (e.g. 1. 217–19). The division into two books occurs in the middle of the refutation of Gentile authors, and seems to have been forced on Josephus by the size of the scrolls—hence his statement at 1. 320 that 'this book has already reached a suitable size, so I shall start a second'—but here too Josephus guided the reader at the beginning of book 2 with a short résumé of book 1 and a programmatic description of the second book. The impression of a carefully planned work is confirmed by the summary of the whole work given at the end (2. 288–90). The literary case to which Josephus was opposed is paraphrased and cited at some length, to the extent that much anti-Semitic literature is known only through Josephus' quotations, even though the citations are sometimes rather convoluted (e.g. Manetho, cited at 1. 237–50). It is tempting to speculate that the impression of having taken the other side's point of view properly into consideration is deliberately misleading, since readers may not in fact always have ploughed through all the turgid extracts which Josephus included. This technique made it easier to appear to be responding to the quoted extracts point by point while actually picking on one weak point in the argument of the opposition, often with a rhetorical question (e.g. 1. 313: 'When Lysimachus speaks

[19] See discussions in Hay, 'What is Proof?'; Cohen, 'History and Historiography'; Hall, 'Josephus' *Contra Apionem* and Historical Enquiry'.

of lepers, does he suggest that only Jews were lepers?'), or abuse (e.g. 2. 85: Apion has 'the mind of an ass and the impudence of a dog'), or an attempt to expose contradictions (e.g. 1. 303: 'It will be foolish to spend time refuting authors who refute each other').[20]

Josephus made only a minimal attempt to respond to most of the issues which had in fact been raised by anti-Jewish pagan authors at and before his time,[21] such as the sabbath, circumcision, food laws, alleged drunkenness, and lechery: he made a few remarks at the end of the section devoted to refuting Apion (2. 137), and he stressed the emphasis of Jews on marriage (2. 199) and the sobriety of their sacrifices (2. 195); but his only real answer is that Jewish laws are respected by Jews for good reason (for example, 'not from sloth', cf. 2. 228, 291) and that Jewish habits are 'not peculiar to us'.

The loss of much anti-Jewish literature from antiquity prevents certainty about a suspicion that some of the accusations to which Josephus *did* respond were in fact artificial, straw arguments set up by him simply to be knocked down. Most important, if this is really Josephus' technique, it will have been the whole topic which dominates the first half of book 1: namely, the accusation that Jews were not mentioned by Greek authors because they lacked antiquity. This charge is anonymous in *Against Apion* (1. 2). It was hardly an obvious one to bring against the Jews, and it is not actually included in the libels cited by Josephus in the works of the various authors whom he takes to task, since the latter were more concerned about the alleged *Egyptian* origin of the Jews; the closest slur is Apion's dating of the Exodus to the seventh Olympiad (752–749 BCE). Josephus' own younger contemporary, Tacitus, who had imbibed much anti-Jewish rhetoric, none the less transmitted a number of traditions (not all of them complimentary) which presupposed the antiquity of the Jews (*Histories*, 5. 2–3; cf. 5. 5. 1: 'these rites are defended by their antiquity'). The accusation that Jewish antiquity was spurious apparently did form part of the polemic of Celsus in the later second century (Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4. 33–6), so it is possible that the claim had been made before; but it is odd, to say the least, that Josephus does not state in his own apologetic precisely against whom he is

[20] For a general characterization of Josephus' techniques, see Kasher, 'Polemic and Apologetic Methods'.

[21] See topics cited in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*.

arguing in this case. What he says is much more vague (*Against Apion*, 1. 2–3): 'Since, however, I observe that a considerable number of persons, influenced by the malicious calumnies of certain individuals, discredit the statements in my history concerning our antiquity . . . I consider it my duty to devote a brief treatise to all these points, in order at once to convict our detractors of malignity and deliberate falsehood.' It is of course possible that all these individuals made their comments orally rather than in writing, but that would not in itself explain Josephus' reluctance to name them.

The suspicion that readers are being manipulated grows stronger when Josephus is found claiming two Jewish Greek authors, the elder Philo and Eupolemus, as Gentile witnesses to the truth of the Jewish tradition (1. 218): it seems almost impossible that this was a genuine error on his part. Thus his claim (2. 237) to have been forced into unwilling polemic against Greeks and Greek polytheism (2. 238–54) may be taken as another attempt to manipulate: the polemic against specifically Greek culture is indeed rare in extant Jewish literature, which tended to assert more positively that Greeks derived their culture from Jews (thus also Josephus himself at 2. 168, 279–86); but it is hard to see what *compelled* Josephus as author to take his more aggressive stance rather than confine himself to countering the criticisms of those who compared Judaism unfavourably with Greek culture (cf. 2. 150, 238)—although I shall suggest an *explanation* at the end of this essay for Josephus' decision to tackle the issue in this fashion.

The spurious claim to be under compulsion to write in a certain way is an element in the lawcourt style which permeates the whole work. Josephus calls witnesses both from literature (e.g. Manetho (1. 74)) and from everyday life: at 2. 124, 282 ff., he claims that the slander that Jews are unsociable can be refuted by the testimony of ordinary people. He pretends not to have time to bring out all the arguments he can use, urging his readers that they can 'read Hecataeus' own books' if they want to do so (1. 205), and asserting, when he wishes to, that he needs to be brief (1. 251); quite why the work must be short he does not state, and his assertion sits uneasily with his extensive quotation of irrelevant material from other authors.

Similarly legal in origin are his personal defence of his own

integrity as a historian and his vehement attack on the personality of Apion.[22] It was characteristic of ancient trials that the parties attempted to discredit the personality of their opponents. Thus Josephus made barbed comments about Apion's deceit regarding his own status as a Greek (2. 29), and revelled in his painful death (2. 143–4), while he deliberately mingled the defence of himself as veracious historian with the defence of the antiquity of the Jews: at 1. 57, his argument in 1. 44–7—that Greek histories are inaccurate, including those about the Jewish War, unlike Josephus' own history of the war which was scrupulous—is admitted to have been a digression. In other ways, his self-defence is more sly: according to 1. 29, in Jewish society, priests are the best historians, and at 1. 54 Josephus emphasized that he himself was a priest; but for some reason he made no attempt to bring the two facts together. The defence of his historiographical technique is based essentially on his personal experience of the events described in the *War* and his use of documents (1. 53–6) for earlier history, rather than an appeal to his character and career, such as is to be found in his earlier self-defence in the *Life*.

I have left almost to the end Josephus' encomium of Judaism in book 2—identifiable as an encomium precisely by the author's claim that it was not such (2. 147).[23] Most striking here is the unashamed exaggeration. According to the magnificently idealized account, priests control everything in Jewish society (2. 188), Jews are 'admirably harmonious' in both theology and religious practice (2. 179–81), and 'the mere intention of doing wrong to one's parents is followed by instant death' (2. 217).

It would be wrong to give the impression that this whole exercise was fraudulent. Occasionally Josephus made what appears to be an authentic response to an accusation which he genuinely found in his opponents' writings. Thus he replied directly to the charge that Jews do not worship the emperor by stating that they pray on his behalf (2. 76–7), and to the claim that Jews isolate themselves from others by alleging that others go further in their self-segregation (2. 255–75). The widespread stories about Jewish ass worship seem to have caused him genuine puzzlement, and his counter-argument was simply that they were

[22] See van Henten and Abusch, 'Depiction of the Jews as Typhonians', 306–7.

[23] See also Balch, 'Two Apologetic Encomia'; Vermes, 'Summary of the Law'. See now especially Gerber, *Ein Bild des Judentums*.

ludicrous (2. 79–120): it has been suggested that he failed to grasp the significance that the ass, as a symbol of Typhon, held for the Egyptians among whom the calumny first arose.[24]

What was Josephus' purpose in writing *Against Apion*? If, as seems likely (see above), he had a Gentile audience in mind, this was by definition not a tract intended to confirm Jews in their faith, unlike much Jewish Greek literature.[25] Some scholars have suggested that it might have been a missionary tract designed to win converts to Judaism;[26] but despite Josephus' apparent openness about Jewish acceptance of converts (cf. 2. 123, 209–10, 261, 282–6), the argument is too indirect for such a missionary purpose: Josephus simply fails to state, let alone urge, what, on this hypothesis, should be his main message, that non-Jews should become Jews. Josephus' purpose in these passages seems to be only to deny stories of Jewish hostility to Gentiles: acceptance of proselytes demonstrates the philanthropy and magnanimity of the Jews (2. 261).

I suggest that Josephus' reason for composing *Against Apion* was the need to counter the great weight of anti-Jewish propaganda produced by and for the Flavian dynasty after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. Roman soldiers had destroyed the Temple at the end of an intensive siege. The destruction was a mistake, according to Josephus (*War*, 6. 256–66); but, if so, it was fatal. Vespasian and Titus used their victory over the Jews as the main element in the claim of their new dynasty to legitimacy as rulers of the Empire, advertising widely their achievement, on coins, arches, and inscriptions.[27] Since they had undeniably destroyed the Temple, they either had to apologize for the fact, since annoying a powerful divinity was not a good omen for the new emperor, or revel in it as a good deed. They chose the latter course: the destruction was celebrated in Titus' triumph, in which the utensils looted from the sanctuary were paraded (Josephus, *War*, 7. 148–9), and the quasi-illegitimacy of Judaism in the Empire was symbolized by the imposition of a new tax on Jews, the *fiscus Judaicus*.

[24] So van Henten and Abusch, 'Depiction of the Jews as Typhonians'. See also Bar-Kochva, 'An Ass in the Jerusalem Temple'.

[25] Tcherikover, 'Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered'.

[26] So Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, 118–20, and Mason, 'The *Contra Apionem* in Social and Literary Context'.

[27] Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea*, 236.

The propaganda against the Jews did not come to an end in 70 CE. On the contrary, the whole centre of the city of Rome was altered during the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, to emphasize the importance of the victory: one triumphal arch, now only recorded on an inscription set up in 80 CE, dominated the great public space of the Circus Maximus, while the extant Arch of Titus, erected in the time of Domitian, still crowns the route of the sacred way as it heads down from the Palatine hill to the forum. The severity with which Domitian exacted the Jewish tax (Suetonius, *Domitian*, 12. 2), and the public reaction to it reflected in the claim advertised on the coins of Nerva in 96 CE to have alleviated complaints,[28] demonstrate the continuing political significance in Rome of the Judaean campaign of 70 CE in the thirty years after the Jews had been defeated. It is plausible to argue that the hostile tone of the comments about Jews in such Latin writers as Tacitus and Suetonius, both of whom came to maturity in the Flavian period, owes much to the insidious effects of such propaganda.

Josephus himself enjoyed the patronage of all three Flavian emperors and of Domitia, the wife of Domitian (*Life*, 428–9), and he referred with pride to the fact that they had received his books (*Against Apion*, 1. 50). He must be envisaged as one of many such literary figures from the provinces on the edge of the imperial court. So it is all the more remarkable to consider his response to this blaze of propaganda. In many ways he showed extraordinary bravery.[29] His twenty books of *Jewish Antiquities*—a huge literary task which took many years—were designed precisely to stress to Gentiles the impressive origins of the Jews: Josephus could quite easily have forgotten his Jewishness altogether, like his elder contemporary Tiberius Julius Alexander, or he could have opted for a quiet life, either living off the proceeds of his lands in Judaea (*Life*, 425), or, if he was intent on a literary career, composing in a less controversial genre, but, despite the unpleasantly competitive atmosphere, described by Martial and Statius, of the literary circles around the emperor, Josephus chose to champion the cause of the Jews against a pervasive attitude of hostility. The genre of the *Jewish Antiquities* is not strictly

[28] Cf. Goodman, 'Nerva, the *fiscus Judaicus* and Jewish Identity'.
[29] Cf. Goodman, 'Josephus as Roman Citizen'.

apologetic, but in the circumstances of composition their apologetic aim was undeniable.[30]

Against Apion thus continued Josephus' efforts of the previous fifteen years or so, only more explicitly. Josephus wished to counter Flavian claims that Judaism was somehow incompatible with Roman society. The impetus for the work may have been the demise of the Flavian dynasty—after the death of Domitian in 96 CE, the new emperors Nerva and Trajan had no propaganda stake in hostility to Judaism, and Jews might reasonably hope for permission to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem (cf. 2. 193–8)—but, as we have seen, the date of composition of the treatise is uncertain.

In any case, the apologetic in *Against Apion* was well designed to appeal to popular opinion among the literate classes in the city of Rome. The qualities in Judaism stressed by Josephus were the same qualities as Latin authors claimed for ancient Roman morality, and it seems likely that this coincidence will have struck the ancient as well as the modern reader. Jews, like Romans, claimed to oppose innovation (2. 182–3), to value sobriety (2. 204), to value the community above the individual (2. 196), to oppose homosexuality (2. 206), to control their women (2. 201), to honour their priests (2. 206), to stand by their friends (2. 207), to love justice, hard work, and courage (2. 291–2), to avoid extravagance (2. 291–2), to value practical above theoretical wisdom (2. 173–7), and to be prepared to die for their laws (2. 271–2). It is true that Josephus never made explicit the compatibility of Jewish and Roman attitudes, but it is striking that his contrast of the Jewish constitution to others made unflattering comparisons with many other nations (different Greek cities, Carthage, and so on), but not Rome, and that the attack he made on Greek culture will have been familiar to his Roman audience from similar polemic against fickle, drunken, selfish, homosexual, corrupt, idle, cowardly, extravagant, unserious Greeks by contemporary Latin authors such as Juvenal.[31]

All this is to suggest that *Against Apion* was not a literary conceit or an antiquarian study of political issues which had erupted some fifty years before in Alexandria, but rather an

[30] See Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*.
[31] Petrochilos, *Roman Attitudes to Greeks*.

impassioned rhetorical plea: for Josephus, a Roman citizen and a defender of the right of Rome to domination (a theme which permeates the *War*), but also a committed, enthusiastic Jew, the success of his apologetic would have immense consequences. It is therefore sad to report that his implicit appeal for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, which he describes as the only place where Jews could properly worship (2. 193–8), fell on deaf ears.

If *Against Apion* was a response by one author to particular pressures at a specific time, as I have suggested, it will not do to treat it simply as a specimen of a whole genre of pre-existing, but now lost, Jewish literature. The only pagan author known to have cited the work was Porphyry (*On Abstinence*, 4. 14); but the impact on Christians may have been much greater.[32] The first person known almost certainly to have used *Against Apion* was Theophilus of Antioch, in the second half of the second century CE: there are many parallels to *Against Apion* in the third book of his apologetic work *To Autolycus*. No Christian author is attested as citing this writing by Josephus directly until Origen (*c*.180–253 CE) (cf. Origen, *Against Celsus*, 1. 16), and Origen did not refer to it as a work of apologetic; but it is reasonable to speculate about how much the methods and techniques used by Josephus in this work were used by Christian apologists as they developed their own genre on the basis of the apologetic writings in the New Testament in the century after Josephus wrote.

[32] Cf. Reinach and Blum, *Contra Apionem*, p. xvii; Schaublin, 'Josephus und die Griechen'; Schreckenberg, 'The Works of Josephus and the Early Christian Church'. See now Hardwick, '*Contra Apionem* and Christian Apologetics'.

4

Talking at Trypho: Christian Apologetic as Anti-Judaism in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*

TESSA RAJAK

It is not easy to define a work which evokes at its opening the honeyed charm of the first pages of Plato's *Republic*, on which it is loosely modelled, or perhaps of a Ciceronian dialogue; but which, by its sixteenth chapter, is hurling a fully-formed charge of deicide at Trypho, the author's partner in the dialogue, and at his people, the Jews. Justin opens thus:

> As I was walking about one morning in the porticoes of the covered colonnade, a certain man, who was together with some others, met me, and said 'hail philosopher'. And, saying this, he turned round, and came with me.

The very first word of the whole dialogue, *peripatounti*, describes more than the physical action—it is walking and discussing, the way philosophers do (and not just peripatetics). The setting is again appropriate—the covered colonnades of a *xystos*, a context for philosophical discussion chosen, this time, not so much by Greek authors, as by Cicero.[1] This *xystos* is located at Ephesus by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, 4. 18. 6), who is usually followed;[2] but from the text we might infer the setting to have been Greece, where Trypho is said to have been spending a lot of time (3).

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[1] For *xystus* settings, see Cicero, *Brutus*, 3; *Academica*, 2. 3. 9. In classical Greece, they are usually the place for gymnastics.

[2] Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 90–1, suggests that Eusebius' source may have been the work's lost prologue.

In the second paragraph, Justin goes on to insist upon the respect due to those who parade themselves in the philosopher's cloak: the form of dress symbolizes the interaction of such people, typified by a teacher–pupil relationship in which both are part of a civilized exchange and from which both sides can learn.

Yet the largest part of the dialogue is better characterized by the very different spirit of a passage which appears not much later, whose outright offensiveness is such that courtesy or lack of it is scarcely at issue:

> These things have happened to you properly and with justice, for you killed the just one, and before him his prophets; and now you reject and dishonour as far as you can those who hope in him and in Him who sent him, God the creator and maker of all things. (16)

It is fair to say that the spirit of the main section of the dialogue is determined by the second extract, not the first. At this very early stage in the history of anti-Jewish polemic, the battleground has been laid out.[3] It is also fair to say that readers have been remarkably unwilling to acknowledge the sheer vituperative dimension of the dialogue.[4]

Justin's writings mark a major step forward in the history of Christian apologetic literature, even if there are various precedents. Justin was a convert to Christianity, from the city of Flavia Neapolis (formerly Shechem; *First Apology*, 1. 1), who was martyred at Rome in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. He speaks of himself as a Gentile (29), but of the Samaritans as his people (*genos*: 120). It is interesting that the corpus which goes under the name of Justin contains works which run the gamut of the various types of apologetic: apart from the subject of this essay, there are the two books which were actually composed (certainly by the author) under the name of *Apologies*, in which Christianity's merits are ostensibly defended in front of emperors and the senate;[5] and also the possibly spurious *Exhortation to the Greeks*,[6] in which worship

[3] Taylor, *Anti-Judaism*, ascribes modern underestimation of the anti-Judaism of such Christian polemic to overestimation of Jewish missionary activity, which would render the Christian stance a necessary defensive response.

[4] See now Lieu's acknowledgement, *Image and Reality*, 145–8; but she finds more respect for the Jewish answer which Justin allows Trypho than the bare text seems to warrant.

[5] On the relation between the 'two' *Apologies*, see Young in this volume, p. 82.

[6] Included, however, among the writings of Justin in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* edn. See now the edition by Riedweg.

of the pagan gods is unfavourably compared to belief in the one God. All of these explore new literary frameworks for justifying and promoting Christianity. But the *Trypho*, which refers back to the *First Apology*, and is possibly Justin's last work, is the only one devoted to defence (by attack) against Judaism. For such an approach there may have been a precedent in the lost anonymous dialogue between Jason and Papiscus, which probably preceded Justin and was apparently between a Jew and a converted Jew;[7] while arguments about the abolition of the divine covenant with the Jews and the validation of Old Testament prophecies in Jesus are anticipated in the Epistle of Barnabas.[8] To muster the arguments from the Bible, Justin, like Barnabas, probably drew upon collections of proof texts.[9] None the less, the *Dialogue with Trypho* remains a path-breaking work.[10]

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the polemical element—what we might in crude terms call 'doing down the other side'—is intrinsic to defending one's own side in apologetic literature. This is already very clear in the prototype Jewish apology, Josephus' *Against Apion*, cast as it is as a vehement refutation of the slanderers and critics of Judaism.[11] Establishing a polarity, drawing attention to an enemy, and making the most of a conflict are valuable techniques of advocacy. The effect is more memorable, and therefore more persuasive, than merely stating a case. The other side may be a real opponent or a paper tiger; it may emerge as an immediately threatening competitor or as an ideological challenge. And the process may acquire permanence: the enemy may become an intrinsic part of a group's self-definition: one understands oneself in terms of the 'other', by insisting upon what one is not. But polemic figures in differing proportions and degrees in various instances of our somewhat nebulous genre. In the *Trypho*, the polemic is both sustained and intense, even if punctuated by moments of genuine interaction.

[7] On the *testimonia* for *Jason and Papiscus*, see Williams's translation of *Trypho*, pp. xxi–xxii and 28–30; Krauss, *Jewish–Christian Controversy*, 29–30. Origen, who had read it, did not have a high opinion of it, but such quotations as survive are found in a seventh-century author. The information about the disputants comes from Celsus Africanus, and the work is commonly ascribed to Aristo of Pella.

[8] On Barnabas and supersessionism, see Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 127–42.

[9] Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*. See also Chadwick, 'Justin Martyr's Defence of Christianity', 282–3.

[10] On apologetic in dialogue form, as directed against Jews, see Horbury, 'Old Testament Interpretation', 740–2.

[11] See Goodman in this volume, Ch. 3.

The intensity is hardly surprising. When the protagonists are Christianity and Judaism, we have adversaries whose very roots are deeply and disturbingly intertwined. There is a strong emotional charge. The *Trypho* goes to the heart of the problem: its core, as we shall see, is the vindication of what today we would call supersessionism, the Christian claim to have inherited Israel's legacy and supplanted its original recipient. This is a struggle on both the intellectual and the emotional plane; its practical consequences, in his own time or later, may not have concerned Justin in the least.

The justification of Christianity rested in the promises of the Old Testament, correctly interpreted; but these interpretations were always open to Jewish challenge, striking at the essence of Christian identity. It is not surprising that such a challenge was productive of a defensive–aggressive response as extreme as that which is visible in Justin. What for us must remain shrouded in obscurity are the routes by which that threat was channelled. Thus, the shortage of external evidence makes it hard to judge how much trust should be put in Justin's accusations of organized Jewish opposition to Christianity.[12] It is no easier to assess the strength of the synagogue's attraction over developing Christian communities in the world of the second-century Greek East. Most obscure of all is the possible influence on the situation of the various forms of Jewish Christianity which we know by name alone. The *Dialogue with Trypho* is ostensibly concerned with friendly discourse between the two sides. Yet its militant supersessionism undoubtedly contributed to the construction of the fence between Judaism and Christianity. We cannot say what it was that Justin saw over that fence.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL CHAPTERS

Justin writes in Greek, and positions himself within the world of Greek thought, even when he criticizes it. The introduction to the *Trypho*, with its depiction of a city setting and of a quite friendly debating relationship, creates a framework for the tract. It also introduces a complicating third party into the comparison: Greek

[12] See below, pp. 73–5.

culture, and, in particular, philosophy. It is clear from the start that the 'barbarian' subject-matter—for Jews were, after all, barbarians from a Greek vantage-point, and the Bible a barbarian text, while there were even Christian writers who happily embraced the designation[13]—is made more palatable by writing about it in a format borrowed from Greek literature. Justin's dialogue announces this with his carefully crafted, deliberately relaxed opening. He signals that his presentation is borrowed from Plato. In the rest of his dialogue, a surface similarity continues: the balance between expositor, Justin, and interlocutor, Trypho, in which the latter mixes objections, questions, shifts of ground, expostulations, and admissions of defeat, is based upon the Platonic model.[14] Even the final outcome bears some resemblance to the way in which Socrates' adversaries are reduced to silence, but it is considerably more extreme. Lukyn Williams's assessment is that Tryphon was 'not very ready in repartee' (trans. of *Trypho*, p. xxv)!

The six introductory chapters seem to stand apart from the rest of the work, in terms of both form and content.[15] We have therefore to avoid the trap of allowing these chapters to define the whole work for us. The characters, as I have said, are introduced with circumstantial detail of a literary kind, such as Plato provides for many of his dialogues. The Jew Trypho lives appropriately enough in Greece; and this may surely be taken as a metaphor for the cultural tradition still evoked by the place, given that we have no reason to suppose Trypho as other than a largely invented character. He is there, he says, to elude Bar Kokhba's war: again, one may suggest that the war stands, by contrast, for all that is unacceptable in Judaism in Justin's eyes and for what would discredit the Jews in the eyes of 'civilized' people—intemperate rebellion, misplaced Messianism (yet another demonstration that the Jews had got this one wrong). Comment was not

[13] See especially Tatian, *To the Greeks*, 1. 1 and 29. For the complexities of Christian versions of the barbarian–Greek divide, see Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 166–7. See also Young in this volume on Aristides, p. 102 and n. 35.

[14] See Hoffmann, *Dialog*, 16–17, and especially n. 4 on echoes of *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, and (above all) *Protagoras*. Voss, *Dialog*, 26–8, invokes the pseudo-Platonic dialogues *Antiochus* and *Eryxias* as well as *Protagoras*.

[15] I put the division here, rather than after chapter 7 or chapter 9, because by the beginning of chapter 7 the spirit is markedly different. On the disjunction between the two parts, see Hoffmann, *Dialog*, 15–16; Voss, *Dialog*, 36–7.

required: the two allusions to the war in the *Trypho*, together with reference to it in the *First Apology* (31. 6), make it clear that Justin's readers, whoever they were, were informed about it. The allusion, then, establishes a sort of civilized consensus, as well as hinting at a theological point.

Trypho the Jew, like Justin himself, is hanging around town with a group of friends—a quite plausible scenario for a comfortably-off, Greek-speaking Jew in the second century; but that is not the point. The narrative has to be set up in such a way as to pull the participants into the ambit of philosophy. The Jew is attracted by Justin's garb, and thus Trypho too is temporarily constructed as 'one of us'. The atmosphere is friendly, because this is appropriate to the philosophical section. This friendliness will be briefly—and unconvincingly—recaptured in the final chapter of the work. Eusebius claims to know Trypho's identity, asserting that he was the most prominent Jew of his generation. I take this to be an ill-founded guess. What would such a man be doing in Corinth (or Ephesus)?[16] There has been, from Eusebius on, a long tradition of treating this dialogue as a straight historical report. But there is nothing in the text to support such a view. A certain amount of circumstantial detail was required by Justin's chosen form.[17]

Trypho is privileged to hear the first-person story of Justin's search for an acceptable philosophy, followed by the manner of his conversion to Christianity. Behind this section, perhaps, lies a hint of the *Apology* of Socrates, where, one might suggest, the motif of the personal search for the truth has its origins. By this period the search had become a *topos*, in which an individual tried out

[16] The identification with Rabbi Tarfon, which goes back to Schürer, has little to recommend it except the closeness in names, and is no longer much favoured. See the detailed arguments in Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 91–5, and Hyldahl, 'Tryphon und Tarphon'.

[17] On the conventional character of the material in the introduction, as an argument against historicity, see Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 58–61; Hyldahl, *Philosophie und Christentum*; Skarsaune, 'Conversion of Justin Martyr'. But see Williams's translation of *Trypho*, p. xxiv: 'The details of the meeting of Justin and Trypho, and of the emotions with which from time to time both they and Trypho's friends are moved, are related too naturally to be fictitious.' Chadwick, 'Justin Martyr's Defence of Christianity', 280, also prefers to take the dialogue as historical, as does Krauss, *Jewish–Christian Controversy*, 30. Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 104, seeks a middle course: Trypho has too much flesh and blood to be a straw man; Justin must have known and debated with Jews; but the details are 'far from a careful record' of the two-day session.

different schools in order to find the best philosophy by which to live. Among its exponents is Josephus in his *Life*. How conventional the theme had become is shown by Lucian's mockery of it in the humorous dialogue, *Philosophies for Sale*.

Why is the world of philosophy so elaborately introduced into a debate between Christian and Jew? In part, we may explain this in terms of Justin's literary personality, of which some picture is obtainable, in spite of the lack of biographical data and our imperfect knowledge of his output.[18] To judge by Eusebius' résumé of Justin's career in the *Ecclesiastical History*, Justin moved, at least at times, among philosophers; and it was an important purpose, perhaps the major purpose, of his writing career to locate Christianity in relation to philosophy, so as to establish the former's superiority. In doing this, he had the advantage, according to Eusebius, of an educated understanding—*pepaideumenēs dianoias* (*Ecclesiastical History*, 4. 18)—which we may take to mean that Justin could meet the philosophers on their own ground. The ability to handle this kind of discourse was the main mark of education at the time. Again, in reporting Justin's disputes with the Cynic Crescens, Eusebius takes pains to show how Justin was the truer philosopher: *ho tais aletheiais philosophos* (literally, 'in relation to true things'). We learn that Crescens, by contrast, for all his pretensions, should be judged no philosopher at all, because he spoke of what he didn't know (ibid. 4. 16). These assaults, as it were from the inside, on Crescens and through him on philosophers as a breed, are offered by Eusebius as the cause of Justin's martyrdom.

If we examine the writings, we see that Justin could manage quite effectively a kind of *elenchos*, a cross-examination of the type practised by the Platonic Socrates in the early dialogues; perhaps he even relished its cut and thrust. But it is worth pointing out that Justin's use of the term *logos*, the word, as an active ruling force in the *Trypho* is in the Philonic or Johannine tradition, the word of God, and not Platonic.[19] The extent of Justin's education in philosophy, for all that Eusebius says, remains an open

[18] There is general agreement on the exclusion of numerous works attributed to Justin from the corpus. For a list of these, as well as of lost works, see Wartelle's edition of *Apologies*, 24–8.

[19] For references and interpretation of Justin's complex uses of *logos*, see M. J. Edwards, 'Justin's Logos'. Earlier, Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 139–75.

question;[20] and an even more debatable point is the content which should be supplied for his later description of himself as a Christian philosopher. Some would see his development in terms of disjunction, others of synthesis.[21] It is a reasonable surmise that Justin continued through life to wear two hats, though given a character of such extremism and intensity (we can see in the dialogue the stuff of which martyrs are made), it is dubious whether the balance was perfectly maintained.

Our concern, in any event, is merely with the author's self-presentation in the *Trypho*, where we may well feel that he pleads too much. He has himself referred to by the old Christian as a *philologos*, a type contrasted with the man of action, and also as a sophist, which amounts to much the same thing (3). Clearly, establishing the persona is important to the literary strategy. But how much does this have to do with the book's argument?

The establishment of Christianity as the best system flows from the *topos* about choice of philosophies. In the *Second Apology* (ch. 12), Justin presents himself as a former Platonist, who has been won over by the spectacle of Christian tenacity in the face of slander, and by the quality of Christian life. Here we note that Justin is converted by an old man whom he meets on the beach. This old man is outside and beyond the other competitors—he looks different, and the interaction is of a different quality,[22] even if he too is marked as a member of the upper classes when he is said to be seeking lost slaves. As for Judaism, not only does the Jewish way of life fail to figure as one of the philosophies; it is not presented as remotely an option for Justin. The structural asymmetry in the role of the three Greek systems, on the one hand, and the Jewish one, on the other, nicely exposes the disjunction between the introductory section and the rest of the *Trypho*.

Moreover, we should not forget that even those first chapters are set up not to embrace but to dismiss philosophy, just as Justin is said to have dismissed Crescens. What better *locus standi* from which to do this than that of philosophy itself? Platonism is given

[20] M. J. Edwards, 'On the Platonic Schooling', makes a case for knowledge of Plato both at first hand and through Numenius of Apamea.

[21] See ibid. for a nuanced reading; Hyldahl, *Philosophie und Christentum*, finds no continuity. Cf. de Vogel, 'Problems concerning Justin Martyr'.

[22] He has even been identified as Christ: Hoffmann, *Dialog*, 12.

the most space in Justin's account of his personal quest, but that is partly because its pretensions were greatest at this period, socially, intellectually, and spiritually, and there was the most interest in it. It was also, on the whole, the closest of the late Greek schools to Christian doctrine, and perhaps Justin really had spent some time with it. So Platonic philosophy is momentarily elevated; but only to lend force to the exposure of its pretensions. 'In my stupidity', says Justin, 'I expected [at the end of his studies] to look on God, since that is the goal of Plato's philosophy' (2). We see here how monotheism emerges firmly as the premiss behind the whole enquiry. Philosophies could be interesting if they forwarded the search for God.

There are other early indications of what is to come, hints that things aren't what they seem. That solitary old man on the sea-shore, dignified but gentle, who brings about Justin's conversion, has the air of a figure of parable. He proceeds to engage in a rather plausible, extended Platonic discussion with Justin, raising issues of the soul's knowledge and of memory, but bringing the agenda very skilfully round to sin and punishment, the question of a created world and God's management of souls. By this point, Platonism has been entirely undermined.

Like Justin, this tract walks in philosopher's garb. And, in spite of its unsophisticated and unappealing use of the Greek language, it has walked effectively. Readers have hastened to snap up as reality the author's literary persona.[23] We can lay the fault at the door of the seductive first six chapters, and their afterglow. One has only to read the general patrological handbooks and the standard Church histories to see that Justin continues to seduce by means of his philosophical posture—so much more pleasing, for almost all, than a sermon, an anthology of passages from the prophets, a triumphant justification of the true religion, or a vitriolic denunciation of the false one. The lead-in may have appealed to sophisticated Christians, or even to Greek-speaking Jews, as much as to Greeks of the pagan variety.[24] One might add a further consideration: since the bulk of the dialogue is to lie within the realm of intricate, theologically orientated exegesis, its designation as a philosophical debate is

[23] See e.g. Wartelle's edition of *Apologies*, 14–21.

[24] Though we may wish to exclude the possibility of a Jewish readership for other reasons, see below, pp. 77–9.

not wholly inappropriate. It is hard to think of a better description, in a world where Christian literary forms were as yet undeveloped.

FROM DIALOGUE TO DENUNCIATION

For all its charming introduction, to ascribe good humour, friendliness, even kindness, to the dialogue as a whole is to read highly selectively.[25] One is tempted to think that portions of this highly inflated work escape attention. One interpreter goes so far as to call it the last 'nice' dialogue between Christians and Jews.[26] That the later *adversus Judaeos* literature is more intemperate should not lead us to exaggerate the moderation of the *Trypho*.[27] Moreover, a modern reader's preference for Trypho's quietness over Justin's assertiveness[28] is hardly likely to have been shared by the ancient audience, with all the fondness of the period for vigorous—and long-winded—rhetoric. And it is undoubtedly illegitimate to take the mere fact of Trypho's centrality in the dialogue as a compliment to the Jews or to conclude any more from it than that Judaism was still central to the forging of Christian thought.[29]

In chapter 7, the old man's discourse introduces us to the prophets, men beloved of God who are deemed more ancient than the philosophers: they alone can help us move on to understanding. This is an important moment. These are henceforward to be our company, and, although we are still in the conversational section, a new atmosphere reigns. The prophets are not going to be at all like philosophers, so much is clear, though their subject-matter is said to be the same. We are now in the realm of revealed truth, and of proof by miracle, a realm shared by Jews and Christians. We have visited the sphere of philosophy only to show how we might leave it. The prayer at the end of the chapter,

[25] Rokeah, *Pagans, Jews and Christians*; Sanders, *Schismatics*.

[26] Rokeah, *Pagans, Jews and Christians*; cf. Sanders, *Schismatics*, 51, and Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 111.

[27] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 257–60, regards the 'reasoned argument', the tone, which he describes as 'civilised' (p. 283), and the 'discernible voice' allowed to the Jew as distinguishing the dialogue from all later Jewish–Christian controversy.

[28] Ibid. 260–1.

[29] As Trakatellis, 'Justin Martyr's Trypho', seeks to do.

'that the gates of light may be opened to you', exposes the new mode.[30] Only God and Christ offer the understanding required for true vision. Justin's conversion to Christianity will not be long delayed.

Trypho dismisses the old man's Messianic fervour, and this induces Justin to elicit from Trypho further criticisms of Christianity which were supposedly current among Jews. These are structurally important exchanges, for through them it emerges that Justin has to deal not with the charges of cannibalism and promiscuity familiar from the Greek and Roman side,[31] but with more serious matters. Furthermore, Trypho is presented as an interested party who has actually read the Christian Gospel (10), and who seems, in spite of some noisy behaviour from his friends, potentially sympathetic. And so the stage is set for the dialogue with the Jew. Our sense of the subject's growing gravity, and of the significance of the relationship between the two parties, is accentuated by the use of the authorial first person: there is complete coincidence between author and Christian protagonist. At the same time, by this means the illusion is produced of the author having no responsibility for the personality he has created. It is therefore unnecessary here to adopt any device for distinguishing Justin the author from 'Justin' the protagonist. But we might ask whether this explains the insistence of generations of readers on finding verisimilitude in so artificial and erratic a construct.

After chapter 8, the tables are rapidly turned. One indication of how far we have moved formally away from philosophical dialogue is the fact that the second section, running to chapter 35, contains virtually no conversation between the two parties. Trypho will return; but we are introduced first to a completely different mode of thought, by way of long biblical citations. These include some of the angriest of prophetic utterances in the Bible, equipped with exegesis designed to spell out the sins of the Jews, the justice of their suffering, and their rejection by God. The

[30] For serious attempts to define Justin as a 'true philosopher', in the Christian mode, see Skarsaune, 'Conversion of Justin Martyr'; van Winden, *Early Christian Philosopher*.

[31] To which defences appear elsewhere in Justin (see *Second Apology*, 12) and regularly in Christian defences against Greeks and Romans. For interpretation, see Rives, 'Human Sacrifice', esp. 74–5.

prophecies from Isaiah declare the new order. Powerful influences are brought to bear on the reader.

At chapter 38, Trypho asserts that his Jewish teachers may well have been right in forbidding discussion with Christians, on account of their blasphemous doctrines. For the next ten chapters, where Judaism is at the centre of the discussion, the Jew asks a number of questions; these are designed by the author to expose his loss of ground and his increasing anxiety about the possibility of Justin being right. At one moment, Trypho tells Justin that he must be out of his mind (39. 3); but this confidence that his territory is the territory of reason does not survive.

At chapter 45, Trypho makes an urgent enquiry concerning the expectations at the resurrection of those who lived according to the law of Moses. This leads quite rapidly to an exposition of Christian eschatology, and thence into Christology. The dense discussion of Christ's divinity and attendant issues, conducted largely, again, from biblical proof texts, occupies the central portion of the dialogue. It is punctuated by quiet objections from Trypho, which merely unleash, each time, a new stream of exposition.

There is a certain variation, indeed an inconsistency, in the spirit of Trypho's questions. But the general picture is that, by the time the second day of debate has been reached (85), the courtesies are wearing thin. Before long, even the debating style of the Jew comes under fire, in terms which extend the applicability of the slander far beyond this one individual:

> For like flies you swarm and alight on wounds, and if someone speaks ten thousand words well, but some tiny thing were to displease you . . . you latch onto the small utterance and rush to construe it as an impious offence. (115)

There is, in the end, only one way out. Trypho and his companions should reject their teachers (137, 142), so that they can take advantage of the possibility of repentance (141). Matters remain in the air; but, as the sun sets on the second day of the meeting (an echo of the atmosphere at the opening, we may fancy), Trypho, astonishingly, expresses his party's gratitude and appreciation. Future meetings are impossible because Justin is about to sail, but the Jews will continue to search the Scriptures. One can scarcely imagine a more implausible conclusion than his final declaration

of friendship: 'remember us as friends'. In Plato's early Socratic dialogues, Socrates' worsted opponents, it is true, are also passive in defeat; but in no Platonic instance have they been the recipients of such invective.

We have here, then, a hybrid work, which at least pays its respects to several intellectual traditions. But the difficult question is how we interpret the form and content of the bulk of the work, now that we have detached the introduction. In general terms, we might sum up the *Trypho* as a defence of the Christian religion organized around an extended engagement with Judaism, an engagement which takes the dual and inevitable forms of appropriation and assault.

THE TRUE ISRAEL

We see how the engagement with Judaism is fundamental to Christian self-definition (in a different way from any engagement with heresy) as early as chapters 11–12 of the *Trypho*, where the Christian claim to share the God of Israel is coupled with the assertion that the old law for Israel has been abrogated.[32] This is expressed in terms as resounding and unequivocal as any in which it has ever been uttered:

> For the law given on Horeb is already old, and is yours alone, but this law is for all universally . . . and as an eternal and final law, Christ was given, and the covenant is sure, after which there is no law, no ordinance, no commandment. (11. 2)

The supersessionist claim is made explicitly: 'we are the true Israel of the spirit and the race of Judah' (11. 4). And in the discussion which follows, about Abraham in his uncircumcised state, we are also forewarned that circumcision, the principal and controversial mark distinguishing Jews and Christians, will be an important theme for Justin. This passage anticipates the extended discussion of the patriarch's circumcision at chapters 19 and 46, as well as further comment elsewhere (chs. 92 and 113, on Joshua). That Adam, Abel, Enoch, and Abraham himself could please God

[32] Cf. Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 181–2: 'while continuity may mark the relationship between Jews and Christians and the prophecies possessed by the Jews, radical discontinuity or even opposition had to mark that between Jews and Christians.'

while still uncircumcised is an argument which Justin relishes: 'to you therefore alone was this circumcision necessary' (19. 5).

The doctrine of supersession makes further appearances in the earlier part of the work, figuring also as passing remark and even as taunt: 'Do you know these things, Trypho? They are contained in your scriptures; or rather, not yours but ours' (29). These claims to the Scriptures prepare the way for a more elaborate and even more assertive demonstration that, since the prophecies of the later prophets apply to Jesus, it is only the Christians who could possibly be identified with 'Israel, his inheritance'. This climactic point, when it is reached, is evolved out of an elaborate mesh of citations punctuated by exegetical comment and intermingled with dreadful warnings. We might compare the strong language deployed in that distinctive form of contemporizing interpretation known as *pesher*, which is characteristic of Qumran literature:

> 'Therefore, behold, I will again remove this people, saith the Lord' (Isaiah 29: 14) . . . Deservedly, too, for you are neither wise nor understanding, but crafty and unscrupulous; wise only to do evil, but utterly unable to know the hidden plan of God, or the faithful covenant of the Lord, or to find out the everlasting paths. (123)

Trypho, it should be noted, has only once been angered—showing the displeasure on his face, as Justin tells us (79).[33] But now Trypho's response is merely a plea for clarification. Justin reminds Trypho, *de haut en bas*, that he has already assented to all the proofs, but since Trypho's friends may need help, he offers a ringing declaration from the lips of third Isaiah, a declaration which carries all the solemnity of the great promissory passages of the Hebrew Bible: 'Jacob is my servant, I will help him; Israel is my chosen, I will set my spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any hear his voice in the broad places' (123; Isa. 42: 1). Those magnificent assurances were indeed worth fighting over.

Towards the end of the dialogue, it emerges that not one of Trypho's group of friends, directly addressed by Justin, is able, or at any rate willing, to answer his question as to what the name

[33] This is the opening of a chapter, which some have thought misplaced. See Williams's translation of *Trypho*, *ad loc*.

'Israel' signifies (125). There could be no more graphic demonstration that they lack any claim to the title.

Sadly, there is no quarter for the defeated. This is a contest for the very essence of the opponent's being, its object to strip him of his identity and his future:

> Some of the children of your race will be found to be children of Abraham, and found in the portion of Christ; but . . . there are others who are indeed children of Abraham, but who are like the sand on the seashore, which is barren and fruitless, copious and without number, bearing no fruit whatsoever, and only drinking the water of the sea. And a large number within your race are convicted of being of this kind, imbibing doctrines of bitterness and atheism, and spurning the word of God. (120)

The contest, as depicted, is almost entirely one-sided. It is true that Trypho excludes the Christians from salvation, and dismisses Jesus' status, when he first meets Justin and learns of his conversion from Platonism, but with an impact wholly different from Justin's. There, we are still within reach of the civilized, Platonizing reaches of the dialogue, and Trypho's utterance is cast in terms which are matter of fact and moderate in tone; there are no slights on character or conduct. The case in his view is one of plain error:

> For while you remained in that mode of philosophy and lived a blameless life, a hope was left to you of a better fate. But having forsaken God, and placed your hope on a man, what kind of salvation remains for you? . . . You people, by accepting a worthless rumour, shape a kind of Messiah for yourselves, and for his sake are obliviously perishing. (8)

Within the overarching demonstration that Israel is the church and the Jewish prophecies are of Christ, specific battle areas are staked out and revisited. These are areas of head-on collision, and two of them are particularly important. The first is the claim to possession of the correct (Greek) biblical text (137), and to the correct understanding of it (e.g. 131). Occasional points of agreement in interpretation are acknowledged. A striking case is that of the millennium, where both parties agree about the expectation of a future rebuilding of Jerusalem (80): but in this case, one is tempted to suggest that agreement with the Jew is facilitated by this matter being a point of controversy with Christian heretics, whom Justin forthwith turns to attack.

Secondly, the Jews are charged with twisting (84) the text,

tampering with it, and cutting out passages. Thus Justin claims that from the words in Psalm 95 (96), 'the Lord reigned from the tree', the 'leaders of the people' had cut out 'from the tree' (73); the words are not in the Septuagint Greek. This is no light offence:

> It seems incredible. For it is more awful than the making of the golden calf, which they made in the wilderness when they were filled with manna on the earth, or than sacrificing children to demons, or than slaying the prophets themselves.[34]

All this is rather far from a disagreement between scholars as to the correct reading of a text. It is interesting that Justin's versions, which diverge for the most part from known Septuagint readings, have been taken by some scholars as representing a consistent pattern of serious textual variants. The reality is that even the use on any scale of divergent authoritative translations by the two groups cannot be safely inferred from the disparities noted in this dialogue, which seem, rather, to reveal a startling freedom with the words on the part of *ad hoc* interpreters of selected key passages.[35]

Another battleground is the repeated allegation that Jews are dedicated to persecuting Christians and their faith: that they have long been sending out delegations to vilify them (17), that they spread shameful stories about them (108), that they abuse them and curse them in the synagogue (16, 47; cf. 38, on non-communication with Christians). In fact, consistent Jewish attacks on Christians are alluded to, and Justin ascribes great importance to them. What Horbury has called 'the corporate Jewish rejection of Christianity' is a central support of Justin's denunciation of Judaism.[36] The supposed cursing and exclusion from the synagogue of *minim*, heretics, 'after the prayer', has already figured at chapter 38. These allegations are particularly

[34] On Jews sacrificing their children to demons, cf. ch. 131.

[35] Upon these divergent readings rests what is still a basic tenet of scholarship: that the Jews abandoned the Septuagint (and any other Old Greek versions), and withdrew into extreme literalism, accepting only their own new translation by Aquila. This is followed e.g. by Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 271 and n. 44. But see Rajak, Grinfield Lectures 1994–6, forthcoming.

[36] Horbury, 'Jewish–Christian Relations', accepts as essentially accurate the dossier of such attacks. But see Taylor, *Anti-Judaism*, 91–7, on the paucity of references to specific contemporary activity by Jews in early patristic literature.

hard to assess, since some of them are unspecific, while for the appearance of a curse in the *Amidah* prayer at this period Justin constitutes our only direct evidence.[37] Again, many scholars simply take the statements at face value.[38]

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

For Justin's *Apologies*, a pagan audience was indicated in the body of the text, even if a Christian one is also to be envisaged.[39] In the case of the *Trypho*, nothing is said. A variety of possibilities has been entertained, but nearly all carry with them serious difficulties.

1. Certain commentators have held that Justin was writing to win over pagan Gentiles. Various arguments support this view, but there are also strong counter-arguments.

(a) Since Justin's *Apologies* are ostensibly directed at pagan recipients, and their author appears concerned to set out various Christian principles and to explain them, we might expect Justin's other writings to follow suit. However, even in the case of the *Apologies*, the imperial and senatorial audience is not to be taken wholly seriously.[40]

(b) Here some of the content is quite beyond the grasp of those with no knowledge of Judaism or Christianity. It is hard to believe that the discussions of proof texts which make up the bulk of the book could be other than profoundly bewildering, if not wholly unintelligible, to those with an exclusively Greek, or Graeco-Roman education. We should take into consideration too the patchy and harsh quality of the Greek style in which the arguments are couched.

(c) Greeks, in any sense, are by no means at the centre of the stage in the *Trypho*, even if the introduction, with the detailed

[37] Kimelman, '*Birkat Ha-Minim*'; Horbury, 'Benediction'; Van der Horst, 'Birkat ha-Minim'.

[38] But see the excellent discussion of the various uncertainties and doubts in Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 132–6 and 143.

[39] On the audience for these and other Christian texts, see Young in this volume, pp. 82–92.

[40] See Millar, *Emperor*, 562–3, on the problem of assessing whether the *First Apology* was genuinely intended for Antoninus Pius; cf. the remarks of M. J. Edwards, 'Justin's Logos', 279–80.

account of Justin's conversion from paganism, is rendered of interest to them.

(d) The repentance and conversion of the Gentiles is envisaged and welcomed (28, 131). By contrast, Justin asserts that, for the hard-hearted Jews, persistent traducers of Christ, only prayer is possible. None the less, there is no immediate message for pagan readers, since even Gentile conversion is a long-term prospect: we are told that it is something foreordained, and the prophecy in Micah 4, 'And many nations shall go and say, come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob', is also taken to refer to this event (119).

(e) Greek religion is criticized in chapters 69 and 70. But even here there is no direct address to pagans, since the criticism is embedded in a specific context, that of distinguishing absurd pagan stories in which human beings such as Bacchus and Hercules can become gods from the Christian story, and, again, the so-called mysteries of Mithras in their cave from the prophecies of Daniel about cutting a stone without hands out of a great mountain. There is not enough here to rattle, let alone disillusion, pagans.

(f) A dedicatee, Marcus Pompeius, is once named (141. 5) and once addressed without name (8. 3), if the manuscripts are to be relied upon. The assumption that, whoever he was, he is unlikely to have been a Jew, is a reasonable one.[41] It is not clear, however, why the possibility of his being a Christian has been excluded.

(g) There seems little advantage to envisaging an audience of pagans who were Jewish sympathizers, or god-fearers, and there is nothing in the dialogue to support this position. The proposal of god-fearers involves questionable presuppositions about the religious and cultural distinctiveness implied by the term, as well as about the centrality of god-fearers in the spread of Christianity. However we choose to understand the label, it is hard to justify making it the name of a definable constituency, its membership defined by its integration of Graeco-Roman cultural values with monotheistic religious instincts.[42]

[41] Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 97–9, together with a discussion of the possibility of a lost prologue.

[42] Cf. the similar argument of Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 107.

2. A more common idea is that the dialogue was directed at Jews. Here there is a somewhat stronger case. Some aspects of the book do indeed point in this direction. But there are still some difficulties.

(a) Jews, or some of them, would know the biblical texts, and might relish quotation and discussion of them. To outsiders, these texts were barbarous.

(b) The methodology of the discourse may be regarded as deriving from Jewish exegetical tradition, of which Justin seems to have some knowledge. Its procedure of progressing by extracting significance from a loosely related series of texts has been described as essentially midrashic.[43]

(c) The Jewish view of Israel's history is incorporated. Notably, in chapter 131, Justin evokes at length the redemption from Egypt, a saga which Jews will have recalled at each and every Passover, one of the corner-stones of their continuation as a people.

(d) No New Testament citations are deployed as proof texts by Justin, even though he speaks of a Gospel. He seems to have known Matthew, Luke, and Corinthians, though not Acts, and it has been argued that he incorporated sayings of Jesus from extra-canonical texts into his own prose.[44] The focus on the Old Testament would satisfy Jews. But it is hard to make much of this, for such a focus in any case arises naturally out of the subject-matter.

(e) Justin is engaged at times in a violent counter-offensive, as we have seen, against Jewish attacks on Christians. We might wish to see this as having a practical purpose, to hit back. On the other hand, such allegations can be adequately explained as serving a useful internal function in sharpening Christian hostility to Judaism.

(f) The work may have been designed as an instrument for the conversion of the Jews, even if, as we have seen, Justin goes out of his way to declare Gentiles better potential Christians. There are explicit references to such a possibility, and the call

[43] On Jewish exegesis generally in *Trypho*, see Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 108–9, and the literature, covering over a century, cited in n. 18 thereof. On midrashic patterns, see Horbury, 'Old Testament Interpretation'.

[44] See Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, on Justin's knowledge. For sayings of Jesus, see Bellinzoni, *Sayings of Jesus*.

is at moments quite urgent: 'so short a time is left to you in which to become proselytes' (28). It also figures in a more muffled form (30, 137). One can, however, scarcely speak of tempting invitations; in the last occurrence, the call is entangled with the repetition of the hostile allegations about institutionalized synagogal execration of Christ, which we are now given to understand as a practice dictated by the synagogue chiefs, described as *archisynagōgoi*.[45] When, finally, the sun is setting on the second day, and the discussion has to end, nothing firm has been accomplished. There is still, we learn, a long way to go. Thus the whole thrust has been to expose the obstinacy and hard-heartedness, *sklērokardia*, less of Trypho and his little band than of the Jewish people as a whole, whose presence lurks behind the individuals. We witness how the prospect of shifting them depends on being able and willing tirelessly to go over the texts again and again, repeatedly to extract their message. In the course of the dialogue, the Jews are given a chance, they are shown the right way. But the point is that they listen, and they do not learn. Conversion, then, can be spoken of as the ultimate aim only on the most abstract theological level. Justin's accomplishment is supposedly to have left the door open, to have persuaded Trypho and his friends to search the Scriptures. But these are the very same Jews whose reading of the Bible he had earlier compared to the swarming of flies. If any serious expectation of a conversion of the Jews could survive this, then, it could only be a millennial one—even more millennial, if that be possible, than the anticipated conversion of the Gentiles.

(g) Whatever the case, for some readers, all the positive arguments above fall away in the face of one simple question. Is it conceivable that Jews would choose to read this repeatedly offensive tract?[46] Subtle as is the appeal to a philosophically minded Greek at the opening, the treatment of the Jews is no less lacking in subtlety. Nothing is changed by the device whereby, at the end of it all, the puppets of the dialogue

[45] See above, n. 29. On Christian distortions of the role of these officials, see Rajak and Noy, 'Archisynagogoi', 78–81.

[46] Asked by Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 99, but by few others. Cf. Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law*.

declare themselves keen to be Justin's friends, and readily pray for his welfare, as he does for their eventual conversion.[47] The author might, it is true, be viewed as insensitive, unaware, and ineffectual. But such an attempt to save the hypothesis of a Jewish readership accords ill with the understanding of Judaism generally ascribed to the author by the exponents of the hypothesis.

3. That a work of this kind would arouse interest among the faithful and the converted is to be expected, and scarcely needs discussion. But there are considerations which justify our going further, to suppose that a Christian readership of this kind was Justin's principal conscious target.

(a) A Christian, or at least a Jewish-Christian audience, must be expected for the attacks on false Christians and various heresies which crop up, for example in chapter 35, on Marcionites, Valentinians, Basilidians, Saturnilians, as a response to an interjection of Trypho's, that many so-called Christians are said to eat meat offered to idols, without harm coming to them.
(b) It is evident that the struggle to define Christianity through the opposition with Judaism is of benefit primarily to Christians themselves. They were, as we know, asking urgent questions about their relationship to the Old Testament and especially about the application of its promises.
(c) It has been considered appropriate to invoke in this context such outside evidence as exists to show that it was felt necessary to wean new Christians from Judaism and to inoculate them against its continuing attractions. However, it should be noted that the most explicit evidence comes from considerably later, principally the sermons of John Chrysostom, which belong to the second half of the fourth century.[48]

Although conclusive demonstration is impossible, it emerges that the case for a principally Christian readership is the most acceptable, or at any rate the least difficult to sustain. The arguments in support of the other possibilities come up against

[47] I do not find this as satisfactory as does Stanton, 'Early Christian–Jewish Polemic and Apologetic', 389.

[48] Much is made of these attractions by Simon, *Versus Israel*: see esp. ch. 11. For a vigorous challenge, see Taylor, *Anti-Judaism*, 26–40.

serious objections. In general, the *Dialogue with Trypho*, though looking outwards in two directions, is aptly described as a contribution to Christian thought, as apologetic often is. Considerable theological exertion has gone into this text. It is not just the adaptation of an extant collection of proof texts. It is a work written from within a religious system, in spite of the apparent openness of its early chapters. It engages immensely seriously, on its own terms, with the prophetic texts. In its homiletic endeavours there was probably substantial innovation. It represents a conscious contribution to a new Christian literature, serving to educate, to offer intellectual fodder, to consolidate, for both new and old members, the experience of belonging—as in some sense all literature does, and apologetic literature in an even stronger sense. That is why the old literary frameworks were inadequate. It is perhaps not wholly far-fetched to suggest that the *Dialogue with Trypho*, though presented as an apologetic dialogue, is less a discussion than a Christian *pesher* on Isaiah and the other prophets.

As with the Qumran sectaries, the group solidarity of the Christians depended upon establishing that there was only one true way,[49] and thus on the evocation of a host of adversaries and besetting dangers. Sharing the heritage of the Jews with its owners was not an option which fitted the bill for the majority in the evolving church. John's Gospel took one route, boldly identifying Judaism with the works of the Devil. Justin's apologetic technique was equally exclusionary, and equally damning. He brought a relentless sense of the presence of the enemy into the heart of an ostensibly friendly dialogue and into the exegetical process itself. Dialogue, in such hands, acquired a new meaning. Apologetic became a battle of the books, and also a battle for souls.

[49] Justin, on consideration, does allow that Christians who adhered to some Jewish practices might still be admitted.

5

Greek Apologists of the Second Century

FRANCES YOUNG

For the second-century Greek apologists the key issues, it seems to me, lay with ancestral customs and literary canons. Their primary motive was justification, justification of their unpopular—indeed, potentially dangerous—decision to turn their backs on the classical literature inherited from antiquity and the customs of their forefathers, thus abandoning the comfortable ethos of the Graeco-Roman synthesis into which they had been born, nurtured, and educated.[1] What these people had done was somewhat analogous to the Westerner today who converts to Islam: they had taken leave of their senses by adopting what was regarded by most people, ignorant as they were of its high moral and philosophical tone, as a suspiciously alien culture. In order to mount this justification, this apologia for conversion, the apologists borrowed many genres, many traditions, many well-worn arguments, from the very culture they challenged, manipulating them for a new, unexpected purpose.

To substantiate this view of the matter, I shall first discuss the question of genre, then the rejection of one literary canon in favour of another, together with the exploitation both of arguments about the history of culture and of the philosophical critique of religion, then their attempts to cope with being neither Jew nor Greek. These features will prove to be the best clues to what is going on in these apologetic writings.

[1] The argument of this essay depends upon acceptance of the fact that the Hellenization of the eastern Mediterranean had prepared the way for Roman rule, which then both patronized this common culture in the East and itself assimilated much of Greek culture in Latinized form. This created a 'synthesis' of culture against which Jews and Christians would define themselves. That Christians could accept the tag 'third race' clearly indicates that they differentiated themselves as a people over and against Jews, on the one hand, and the rest, often designated 'Greeks', on the other (see below, pp. 102–4 and n. 35). That 'Hellene' in Byzantine Greek means 'pagan' is the ultimate outcome of this. Compare and contrast in this volume ch. 1, p. 7, Price, pp. 108–9, and Edwards, pp. 206–10.

GENRE

It has been suggested[2] that 'apologetic' can barely be distinguished as a genre prior to the activity of the second-century Christian apologists; but even at this point it is difficult to mount a generic description of any tightness. Not only do we find that the authors known as 'apologists' are in fact credited, from the time of Eusebius, with a range of different works which are certainly not all of an apologetic character, but the 'surface-genre' of texts which purport to defend Christianity is variable. Some take the form of 'orations' or written pleas delivered to the emperor; others are stylized addresses directed to a 'companion', or to the 'Greeks' in general; others are in dialogue or letter form.

We begin, then, with a brief introductory survey of easily accessible works commonly bracketed together as apologetic. There is no attempt to be comprehensive; but the selection of works to be described would appear to be sufficiently representative of the types of writing to which the designation 'apologetic' is usually given to provide a reasonable sample. Our discussion will focus on the following:

The Works of Justin Martyr: First and Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho

First and Second Apology[3] There is some debate about whether these are discrete works. They are addressed to the same persons, and in the second, smaller work, there are references to the first. Schwartz blamed Eusebius for inventing a second apology.[4] It is now commonly thought that the second was an appendix to the first, perhaps prompted by the events in Rome under Urbicus mentioned in its opening paragraphs: three Christians had been condemned.

At the start of the larger work, Justin, presumably writing in Rome, whither he had migrated from his native Samaria and set up as a philosopher, addresses the emperor Antoninus Pius and his son Verissimus (that is, Marcus Aurelius), together with the

[2] Introduction to this volume, Ch. 1.

[3] Discussions of date and purpose will be found in the edition of Marcovich, 8–11, and the introduction to Falls's translation.

[4] See further Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 54–5.

Roman Senate and people. Notionally, much of the work takes the form of a defence speech, picking up charges made against the Christians. However, there can hardly have been an actual trial or an actual occasion for the delivery of this oration. The only charge noted in the case of the three condemned is that they were Christians, and this would cohere with the legal position set out in Trajan's letter to Pliny on the subject—the name was enough, if accompanied by obstinate refusal to recant. The charge of atheism which is the main issue that Justin addresses recalls the charge against Socrates, whom Justin is anxious to claim as a proto-Christian; this is hardly a serious legal issue.

It is noticeable that Justin appeals to the piety of Pius and calls Verissimus a philosopher. His initial claim is that those who are truly pious and philosophers honour and love only the truth, even at the cost of their lives. He demands a fair hearing, and offers to dispel ignorance by providing an explanation of the Christian way of life and teachings. A recent editor comments: '[H]is train of thought is disorganized, repetitious and occasionally rambling . . . in his *Apologies* Justin is building a mosaic consisting of countless particolored pieces of different origin.'[5] Justin tries to challenge the justice of condemning Christians just for being Christian by confronting misconceptions and rumours on the one hand, while setting out their doctrines and ethics as philosophical and true on the other.

Justin calls his work *prosphōnēsis*, *enteuxis*, and *exēgēsis*. The first of these

> is described by the rhetorician Menander as 'a speech of praise to rulers spoken by an individual', with special emphasis on such virtues as justice, and including 'humanity to subjects, gentleness of character and approachability, integrity and incorruptibility in matters of justice, freedom from partiality and from prejudice in giving judicial decisions'.[6]

That is the basis of Justin's appeal, in the sense that he characterizes the emperors as philosopher-kings who will respond because of those qualities. The second description, *enteuxis*, means a plea or petition and particularly seems to characterize the *Second Apology*, inspired as it is by recent martyrdoms. The two works might have formed a petitionary dossier. The third word, *exēgēsis*, draws attention to the explanatory character of

[5] Marcovich, edition of Justin, p. vii. [6] Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 54.

much of Justin's text: his justification rests on the fact that Christianity is true, and any really committed philosopher would see this.

Dialogue with Trypho This work is given substantial treatment elsewhere in this volume (see Ch. 4), and for its general characterization, reference should be made to that chapter. Suffice it to say here that the adoption of the form of a Platonic dialogue[7] and the focus on issues between Jews and Christians does not necessarily mean that an audience is envisaged other than that to which the *Apologies* are ultimately addressed. I would agree that the chances of this being a historical report of Jewish–Christian dialogue are remote, and that in practice the most likely audience was a Christian one. But I would want to take the genre of philosophical dialogue more seriously as a clue to the purpose of the work.

The argument from prophecy is fundamental to Justin's explanation in the *Apologies*. There Justin is already justifying the abandonment of pagan classics for barbarian scriptures whose truth has been proved by fulfilment. He regards the fulfilment of prophecy as more convincing than any miracle (*First Apology*, 30), confirming as it does the validity of the prophecies, as well as the truth of the fulfilment claim. We should not forget that the Sibylline books were consulted by the Roman government—oracles had a powerful role in the culture. But this argument was bound to be undermined by the evident fact that Jews failed to endorse the claims for fulfilment of their own oracles.

I want to argue, then, that the *Dialogue with Trypho* is an essential development within Justin's apologetic enterprise, and that the Platonic dialogue form is a clue to the fact that he wishes to address people like himself, people aspiring to live the philosophical life.[8] He may have intended that outsiders should find his

[7] It is not agreed whether the whole should be called Platonic, or merely the first nine chapters, as implied, for example, in Van Winden, *An Early Christian Philosopher*.

[8] See Osborn, *Beginnings of Christian Philosophy*, for the claim that Christians offered a new philosophical system. Previous estimates have treated these authors as eclectic and unoriginal, like most of their contemporaries. That they sought to be philosophers as currently understood is without contention. Apart from the cases discussed here, the title of Aristides' work in the Syriac is given as 'The apology which Aristides the philosopher made before Hadrian the king concerning the worship of God' (*Apology of Aristides*, trans. Rendell Harris).

explanations convincing and his arguments attractive, at least to the point of realizing that Christianity should be tolerated rather than persecuted. He may have hoped to convince wavering enquirers. But in this he was probably self-deceived, not only in the case of the *Dialogue*, but also with respect to the *Apologies*. It was the Christian community which welcomed the reasoned justification of its socially awkward position.

Tatian, Oration to the Greeks

Tatian[9] was a pupil of Justin Martyr. Like Justin, he came from the East, but was Hellenized in terms of his education. All roads led to Rome; but once there, Tatian, it seems, far from advancing in the world, was impressed by this somewhat unorthodox philosopher, Justin, who would eventually follow Socrates in dying for his commitment to truth.

Tatian's speech does not purport to be in any sense a legal defence or a petition to the emperor. The opening vocative identifies the audience as *andres Hellēnes*—'men of the Greeks'. Clearly he is reacting strongly against the dominant Greek culture into which he himself had been educated (see note 1 above), and the artificiality of such a generalized address is evident—this can never have been literally an oration to a specific audience. As regards readership, one must surely draw conclusions similar to those already reached with respect to the works of Justin.

The content develops one small aspect of Justin's plea: the attack on idolatry. It is a sustained challenge to the superiority of Hellenic culture—its mythology, astrology, philosophy, medicine, sorcery, oracles, theatres, gladiatorial shows, and all—culminating in a proof that everything good about it was derived from Moses, who preceded Homer. Tatian presents aspects of Christianity by contrast with what he opposes. If Justin in the *Dialogue* develops a supersessionary argument with respect to Judaism, Tatian does so here in relation to Hellenism.

Athenagoras, Embassy

Unlike the works of Justin, which were, of course, not only influential, but attracted an ever growing corpus wrongly attrib-

[9] For other information about the life and writings of Tatian, see the introductions to the editions of Whittaker and Marcovich.

uted to his authority,[10] the *Embassy* seems to have disappeared from sight until the tenth century.[11] Like Justin's apologies, however, this is a plea addressed to the emperors, now Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Aurelius Commodus. They are again addressed as philosophers (1. 1) and appealed to as philosophers (2. 3); indeed, Athenagoras describes himself as making a defence (*apologoumenon*) before philosopher-kings (11. 3). The principal charge is again atheism, and the bulk of the work answers this charge, showing that it is wide of the mark, arguing for monotheism, and ridiculing the gods and myths, while claiming that Christian teaching is anticipated in the poets and philosophers, as well as the prophets.

However, the form of the speech seems much more designed to respond to charges than Justin's *Apologies*; they are set out early as atheism, Thyestean banquets, and Oedipodal unions (3), and the last two are eventually dealt with (31) after the long treatment of the first. 'Exposition of Christian teaching occurs only to rebut false charges.'[12] From the beginning, the issue of the legal position of Christians is addressed. The final words reinforce the sense of a defence speech:

> . . . you, who by nature and learning are in every way good, moderate, humane, and worthy of your royal office, nod your royal heads in assent now that I have destroyed the accusations advanced and have shown that we are godly, mild, and chastened in soul. Who ought more justly to receive what they request than men like ourselves, who pray for your reign that the succession to the kingdom may proceed from father to son, as is most just, and that your reign may grow and increase as all men become subject to you? This is also to our advantage that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life and at the same time may willingly do all that is commanded.[13]

It is perhaps not surprising that some scholars have argued that this was actually presented to the emperor as a plea.[14]

[10] These include *Exhortation to the Greeks* and *On Monarchy*, works which appear translated with Justin's agreed authentic writings in *FC* 6; but also *Exposition of the True Faith* and *Questions* and *Responses to the Orthodox,* both now considered to be works of the fifth-century writer Theodoret of Cyrus, as well as others whose provenance is contested, but whose preservation was guaranteed by association with Justin's name.

[11] Schoedel's bilingual edition also includes the work *On the Resurrection*, attributed to Athenagoras. In view of its dubious authorship and date, it has not seemed necessary to deal with that work here.

[12] Athenagoras, *Embassy*, ed. and trans. Schoedel, p. xiii.

[13] Ibid. 37.

[14] See particularly T. D. Barnes, 'Embassy of Athenagoras'. Already the view which dismissed the cases where Athenagoras appeared to be speaking directly to

The argument is to some extent reinforced by the notion that other, now largely lost, apologies were also delivered on approximately the same occasion. There was an imperial tour in 175–6, attested by coins and other evidence. To this journey Grant[15] attributes the apologies of Apollinaris of Hierapolis and Melito of Sardis, mentioned by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, 4. 25, 4. 26, and 5. 5. 4), as well as Athenagoras' plea. Referring to Menander Rhetor, he notes that praying for the emperor was a rhetorical topic at the time, as was the succession. Furthermore, Menander describes the *logos presbeutikos*, commenting that such an address should stress the emperor's clemency; and Athenagoras calls his work a *presbeia* (embassy) asking the emperors for a rescript ordering judges to investigate the truth about Christians and not to pay attention to rumour and false charges. His loyalist statements are comparable to those of the second-century rhetorician Aelius Aristides.

The likelihood that this address was actually presented is not necessarily undermined by the thesis of Malherbe[16] that the structure follows that of the summary of Plato's philosophy in the *Didascalicus*, given the studied characterization of the emperor as a philosopher. But it does illustrate the point that these works seem to have had a variety of different literary antecedents.

The Epistle to Diognetus

This work was also unknown for centuries.[17] It turned up in Constantinople in 1435, and the single manuscript was lost in the Strasbourg fire of 1870.[18] Dubbed an epistle, though actually a treatise, and placed among the *Apostolic Fathers* because of a misapprehension, it is generally regarded as an apologetic work. It was transmitted among spurious works of Justin Martyr. It has been linked with Alexandria, and many would place it in the late

the emperor (esp. ch. 11) as stylistic devices for the sake of verisimilitude had been contested by e.g. Barnard, *Athenagoras*.

[15] Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 80–5, 92–5, 100–2.

[16] Malherbe, 'The Structure of Athenagoras, ''Supplicatio'''. Malherbe, in common with most scholars then, accepted the attribution of the *Didascalicus* to Albinus, though more recently the MS attribution to Alcinous has prevailed. See Whittaker, 'Platonism'.

[17] A full discussion of date and provenance is found in the introduction to Marrou's edition.

[18] See introduction in Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, rev. Louth, 139–41.

second century.[19] Others have noticed connections with the work of Aristides, an early apologist mentioned by Eusebius whose work has been found in Syriac and traced in other fragments.[20]

Diognetus is addressed as a serious enquirer, wanting to understand why Christians reject 'the deities revered by the Greeks no less than they disclaim the superstitions professed by the Jews', and why they 'set so little store by the world' and even 'make light of death itself'. Diognetus is also curious about their brotherly love, and puzzled by the fact that this manner of life is a recent novelty. This introduction provides the plan of the work: the follies of paganism and Judaism are sketched; then an account is given of Christianity, which explains that Christians are 'resident aliens' in the world, misunderstood and persecuted, yet in reality the equivalent of the soul in the body. They have the revelation of the one true God which came through the incarnation of God's Son.

So far from being framed as a defence, it presents itself as an explanation which becomes increasingly an exhortation to joyful acceptance of these truths. A gap in the manuscript is followed by material which is distinctly homiletic; it looks, then, as if the work is composite.

Theophilus, To Autolycus

Three books are addressed to a private individual, Autolycus, by Theophilus, bishop of Antioch.[21] They date from after the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 CE. They were well known to Tertullian, Eusebius, and others, so form part of the conscious literary tradition of early Christianity.

The three books are rather different, though clearly interrelated. Grant takes the ending of the first as a clue to its form

[19] Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 178–9; he regards as 'possible' the attribution to Pantaenus suggested by Marrou, *À Diognète*.

[20] Harris, *Apology of Aristides*, and Geffcken, *Zwei griechische Apologeten*. For summary accounts, see Altaner, *Patrology*, 118–19; Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 36–7. Like the *Epistle to Diognetus*, this work contrasts the gods of the Chaldaeans, Greeks, and Egyptians with the true God of Jews and Christians; then, after exposing the Jews for denying Christ, praises Christians for their high morality. Some have ascribed the *Epistle to Diognetus* to Aristides on the basis of the similarities. I have chosen to focus on the latter work as being more easily accessible to the general reader.

[21] On the composition and unity of the three books, see the introduction to Grant's bilingual edition.

and intention: 'Since you made this request, my friend, ''Show me your God'', this is my God. I advise (*symbouleuō*) you to fear him and believe him' (1. 14).[22] Grant suggests that this refers to the *symbouleutikon genos* of oratory: that is, it is deliberative. However, dismissing the pretensions of rhetoric, Theophilus introduced his first book as a counterblast to Autolycus' proud boasting of his gods and his attack on the name of Christian, and then expounded a transcendent deity by compounding philosophical common-places with biblical material, attacking idolatry and emperor worship in a rather chaotically ordered work which inserts discussions of resurrection in odd places. He refers back to this essay in book 2, chapter 1, as a *homilia*, presenting it as his contribution to a discussion in which he gave an account of the nature of his religion at Autolycus' request, after which the two had parted rather more friendly than when they had met. I would be inclined to accept Theophilus' retrospective description as a clue to the genre, rather than follow Grant's deduction.

The second book is introduced as a *syngramma*: that is, a more careful composition with sharper demonstration than was offered in the first. It begins with a classic attack on the absurdities of idols made with hands and the myths of the gods presented in Homer and the poets, into which is inserted a brief critique of philosophers like Plato and the Stoics, who may have got some things right, but others badly wrong. The core issue concerns creation and generation. Prophets are then presented as being altogether nearer the truth—the prophets among the Hebrews, as well as the Sibyl among the Greeks. There follows a lengthy exposition of Genesis, the characteristics of which will concern us later. The prophets and the Sibyl are then elevated above the wise men, poets, and historiographers of the Greek tradition, though the latter will turn out in the end also to have adumbrated the truth of monotheism and of judgement and an afterlife. Autolycus is urged, as a lover of learning, to meet often so as to learn accurately what is true. Not for nothing is this material sometimes called catechetical.[23]

The third book was unknown to Eusebius. This takes the form of a letter, but is a collection of notes. It defends the Scriptures, and attacks Greek literature. It exploits contradictions between

[22] Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 144.

[23] Grant, introduction to Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, p. x.

philosophers and poets, presents the Ten Commandments as the teaching of the One Creator God, and shows how Christian teaching on justice and chastity, repentance, humility, and love is consistent. It culminates in a detailed comparative treatise on chronology, which argues that Moses, rather than Greek, Egyptian, Phoenician, or Roman chronographers, had got it right. The importance of this was that it proved the antiquity of Christianity, an issue raised by the distrust of an apparent novelty, already observed in Diognetus.

That these three works of Theophilus belong to a definable genre would be hard to sustain, though their content can certainly be loosely described as apologetic. To the question of genre we must now return.

Clearly the works surveyed present us with a variety of literary forms: speeches of various kinds, real or artificial; letters; a dialogue and a 'homily' or talk presented as part of a conversation; together with a *presbeia* or 'embassy'. If we were to add Clement's *Protrepticus*,[24] which covers much the same ground as many of the works we have considered, there would be another: an exhortation to the philosophic life with precedents in the work of Aristotle and Cicero. If genre is narrowly defined in terms of literary types, then a common genre seems out of the question, though we would appear to have largely common intent and a good deal of overlap in content. But we need to consider this issue further.

It is worth remembering that literature in the ancient world was closely tied to the spoken word. Writing was a way of recording speech; letters were thought of as ways to make an absent person present; and texts were realized only by being 'performed'—that is, read aloud or recited. Rhetoric was therefore fundamental to all prose composition, and it is in the context of analysing rhetorical types that the word *apologia* is at home: according to Anaximenes' *Art of Rhetoric*, once ascribed to Aristotle (1. 3. 3), there are three types of rhetoric—deliberative, forensic, and epideictic—and forensic oratory may take the form of *katēgoria* (accusation) or

[24] Clement's text (see Bibliography for edition and translation) is the earliest extant specimen of the genre whose most distinguished representative is the *Protrepticus* of Iamblichus (late third century). The latter is the main source for our knowledge of Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, which was more religious in character than the majority of his surviving works. Cicero's *Hortensius* is also lost, despite its influence on Augustine.

apologia (defence). It could be said, therefore, that 'apology' is not a genre, but properly the end or purpose of a speech, particularly a speech for the defence in court, and then more loosely a defence or excuse offered in a less precise context or genre. Demetrius' catalogue of letter types[25] includes the apologetic letter: 'The apologetic type is that which adduces, with proof, arguments that contradict charges that are being made.' This confirms the conclusion: the genre is 'letter', the content 'defence', following the model of the lawcourt speech. A letter of Demosthenes presenting his case for return from exile, whether authentic or a school exercise, confirms the point.[26]

Justin's own usage follows this: speaking of a woman requesting delay in making her defence in court, he uses the verb form (*Second Apology*, 2. 8), and the noun appears only twice, where he is pre-empting an excuse or 'defence' offered by objectors (*First Apology*, 42. 2; *Second Apology*, 12. 5). He does not present his own work as an *apologia*. This is telling, given the fact that he is interested in Socrates, offers a defence against the same charge as that brought against Socrates—namely, atheism—and might have seen his own work as in some remote sense modelled on Plato's *Apology*. Indeed, one would like to know how far back the title, *Apologia*, was given to Justin's works, or indeed to any others. It is clearly not the title of the other works just surveyed.

Eusebius does not use the word *apologia* to describe the works of Theophilus (*Ecclesiastical History*, 4. 24) or Tatian (ibid. 4. 29), though he does for those of Quadratus, Aristides, Justin, Melito, and Tertullian (ibid. 4. 3; 2. 13, 4. 11–12, 4. 16; 4. 13; 3. 33, 5. 5). Eusebius would appear to treat Quadratus and Aristides as the first Christian authors to address a discourse to the emperor (in this case Hadrian) in defence of the faith, and to treat the other works for which he uses the designation 'apology' as following in this tradition. These works are not strictly defence speeches offered in court for prosecuted individuals; nor is the word simply used in a generalized sense. So Eusebius perhaps points to a specific extension in the use of *apologia* in Christian circles, to designate a discourse addressed to an emperor pleading for fair treatment under the law. That would not include all the works treated as 'apologetic' in the looser sense, but does suggest the

[25] See Malherbe, 'Ancient Epistolary Theorists'; cf. Stowers, *Letter-Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*.
[26] See letter in Clavaud, *Démosthène*.

recognition of a genre with certain specific characteristics at least by the fourth century.

The work that Eusebius did not know, that of Athenagoras, presents itself as a *presbeia*. That usage suggests comparison with a work like Philo's *Embassy to Gaius*:[27] here an account is given of the circumstances that led to an envoy attempting to present to the emperor Caligula the case for the Jewish people after an outbreak of rioting in Alexandria, and the eventual outcome. What is increasingly clear in the works we have collected under this head of 'apologetic' is that a group that regards itself as a people is fighting for social and political recognition. Lack of recognition means that its members are suffering under what they regard as unjust laws. This literature is intended to explain their position, often pleading for justice, with the courts very much in the background, and specifically addressed to the emperor. Such would seem to be what Eusebius recognized as an 'apology'. But works covering much the same ground were also addressed to outsiders or enquirers, and all of them provided justifications and reasons for loyal endurance for those who would prove to be the principal readers—namely, the insiders. It is this common self-justificatory content that links the second-century Greek apologists, rather than a sharply defined common literary form.

This self-justificatory character accounts for the dominance in this literature of the topics signalled in introducing this discussion: namely, the rejection of one literary canon in favour of another, and the exploitation both of arguments about the history of culture and of the philosophical critique of religion. To these we will now turn.

HOMER OR MOSES?

Fundamental to the argument of the apologists was the claim that the Scriptures of the Jews in their Greek version were truer, more authoritative, and more ancient than the revered literature of antiquity on which the culture around them based its whole system of education. Novelty was not prized in Graeco-Roman

[27] The date of this embassy is about 40 CE, Gaius or Caligula being emperor from 37 to 41. He was notorious for his insane brutality.

society; for something to be true, it had to be ancient. Increasingly it would be recognized that the 'foolishness' of Christian converts lay in their substitution for the classics of this 'barbarian' set of writings, inevitably crude in style because of their translator's jargon, and alien to what we might call the native tradition of these converts. This may not have been the first charge brought against them, but because it became the basis of their response, it soon became a key criticism of their position, as is evident in Celsus' attack on Christianity. There was a battle of literatures to be fought.[28]

The argument had a number of different sides to it: there was the positive proof that these alien scriptures were both truer and more ancient, and there was the attack on the poets for their portrayal of false and unworthy gods, an attack which had precedents in the philosophical critique of Xenophanes, Plato, and others,[29] but was also confirmed by the opposition to idolatry in the prophets and other Jewish Scriptures. We will endeavour to distinguish these positive and negative arguments.

Though in rather different ways, Justin and Tatian advance the positive case for the Jewish Scriptures. As already noted, for Justin the argument from prophecy is fundamental. Miracle merely establishes magic, but 'we will offer proof . . . necessarily persuaded by those who prophesied before the events happened, for with our own eyes we have seen things have happened or are happening just as it was predicted' (*First Apology*, 30). This leads him to offer an 'introduction' to these prophecies, attributing them to 'certain men among the Jews' through whom 'the prophetic spirit heralded in advance' what was going to happen. These were enshrined in books in their own Hebrew language, and then translated at the request of Ptolemy, when he attempted to assemble a universal library. Justin states that Jews all over the world use these books, admitting that they do not understand them as Christians do—indeed, are hostile to Christians, and, like the persecutors he is addressing, punish those who refuse to deny Christ. But a substantial portion of his *First Apology* is now devoted to demonstrating how these prophetic writings told in

28 See further my *Biblical Exegesis*.

29 Much of our knowledge of such critiques comes from Christian material, including the works of Clement of Alexandria and Pseudo-Justin's *On Monarchy* and *Exhortation to the Greeks*.

advance the story of Jesus Christ. This, as I have suggested, provides the clue to his intent in the *Dialogue with Trypho*.

In the second century we are of course dealing with a situation prior to the development of an authoritative collection of Christian writings as such, and it is significant that Justin contrives to tell the story of Jesus through collages of passages from Moses and the prophets. In passing (*First Apology*, 44), he mentions that Plato got ideas from Moses, who is more ancient than all Greek writers—indeed, whenever philosophers or poets uttered truths about the immortality of the soul, or judgement after death, or contemplation of heavenly things, or other such doctrines, they had actually got these ideas from the prophets.

This is the argument that Tatian takes up. The climax of his *Oration to the Greeks* consists of an elaborate set of chronological comparisons, interspersed with digressions, but drawing on Chaldaean, Egyptian, and Phoenician witnesses, to show that even if Homer was contemporaneous with the Trojan War he described, Moses antedated him by 400 years. Indeed, he claims that Moses is even older than writers earlier than Homer, citing Orpheus and the Sibyl as examples. This he introduces by saying:

> Our philosophy is older than Greek practices. Moses and Homer we will set as our limits. Because each of them is very ancient and one of them is the oldest of poets and historians and the other the author of all barbarian wisdom, let us also accept them now for comparison. For we shall find that our history is not only earlier than Greek culture, but even the invention of writing. (*Oration*, 29)

In fact, Tatian opened his entire work (*Oration*, 1) with the suggestion that Greeks had got their culture from barbarians: a few of the examples he offered were astronomy from the Babylonians, magic from the Persians, geometry from the Egyptians, the alphabet from the Phoenicians. The fact that this was a common *topos* will be considered later. For the moment we note that his basic thesis is that true wisdom and philosophy are to be found in the Bible, and the Greeks got it right only when they borrowed from the older literature of the Hebrews. Though hardly using the Scriptures in practice, he claims, like Justin, that he was converted by reading certain barbarian writings (*Oration*, 29).

Of our specimen group of second-century apologists, however, it is Theophilus who makes the battle of literatures most explicit.

In the opening address of his letter to Autolycus (book 3), he speaks of Autolycus' literary labours, and of how he still fancies that 'our scriptures are new and modern'. Theophilus expresses his intention to show 'the antiquity of our writings'. This he does in the second half of the letter, discussing first the chronology of the Flood—known of course in Greek mythology as well as from the Bible; then the dating of Moses and the Exodus in relation to Manetho's chronology of Egyptian kings—Manetho got a lot wrong, but enough right to show that Moses antedated the Trojan War by 900 if not 1,000 years; then the dating of Solomon's Temple according to Phoenician records. He then offers the true chronology, basing his account of world history on Moses and the biblical histories. He suggests that 'it is obvious how our sacred writings are proved to be more ancient and more true than the writings of Greeks and Egyptians or any other historiographers' (3. 26).

After further calculation he reckons up the whole time from the creation of the world:

from creation to deluge	2242
from the deluge to Abraham	1036
from Isaac to Moses	660
from Joshua to David	498
from Solomon to the Exile	518 + 6 months + 10 days
from Cyrus to Marcus Aurelius (d.)	741

So, Theophilus concludes:

> the antiquity of the prophetic writings and the divine nature of our message are obvious. This message is not recent in origin, nor are our writings, as some suppose, mythical and false. They are actually more ancient and trustworthy. 3.29

Theophilus is interested in more than the argument from prophecy: the Scriptures are about morality and truth. After a critique of philosophers and poets (in other words, Greek literature), he presents the teaching enshrined in the Ten Commandments, indicating that Moses was the one who delivered this divine law to all the world, and especially the Hebrews. He uses the prophets to demonstrate the consistency of Christian teaching on repentance, justice, chastity, and love. In the previous books, he had exploited Genesis and other Scriptures to present an

account of God and creation, including an account of the development of human culture. To the significance of that we will return.

Meanwhile, however, we must consider properly the negative side of the argument: the attack on Greek literature which has hovered in the background. Again, it is Theophilus who clarifies what is at stake, but his predecessors begin the argument: Justin attacks idolatry and false worship, accusing the daemons of deceiving people; the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* reduces the gods to blocks of wood and stone, as had the Book of Isaiah long before; Tatian ridicules Greek myths about the gods. Athenagoras goes somewhat further, exploiting literature to show the absurdity of the impious nonsense found in the works of the poets.

Athenagoras admits that some of the poets and philosophers anticipated the truth (*Embassy*, 5–6; cf. 23)—indeed, in making his critique both of the gods and of the myths recounted about them by the poets, he is in fact indebted to the pre-Socratics, Plato, and others. But the point of his admission is that philosophers were not on the whole condemned for their atheism, and they only reached their views reluctantly and by guesswork (*Embassy*, 7); it is the prophets who confirm the truth about the One Immaterial God (*Embassy*, 7 and 9). Following Plato, he treats the poets as deceitful. Explicitly, the content of his argument is directed to the absurdity of the theology they set out: gods are generated, depicted in images, confused with matter, treated as passionate, full of anger and lust, simply deified kings or heroes, absurdly characterized in myths, and so on (*Embassy*, 14, 17–21). The classical literature is quoted to be dismissed, and the rationalizing defence of Empedocles and the Stoics is discounted (*Embassy*, 22). So the conclusion is reached:

> either the popular myths about the gods recounted by poets are untrustworthy and the piety shown the gods useless (for they do not exist if the stories about them are false), or if these births, loves, murders, thefts, castrations, and thunderbolts are true, then they no longer exist . . . What reason is there to believe some stories and not to believe others? (*Embassy*, 30)

Attack on the gods is moving to attack on the literature that fosters belief in them.

That attack is clear in Theophilus' third book *To Autolycus*, as we have seen. In book 1, there is a brief standard attack on idolatry and polytheism. In book 2, the absurdities of idolatry and mythology open an argument with philosophers and poets, who are shown to be inconsistent, and to have failed to understand providence, or how God was the creator of all. The rest of the book provides an exegesis of Genesis as the truth about origins. This prepares us for the explicit substitution of the Bible for Greek literature in book 3: Homer, Hesiod, and Orpheus led many astray, while Euripides and Sophocles, Menander and Aristophanes, Herodotus and Thucydides, Pythagoras and Diogenes, fail to speak the truth. Even Plato is coupled with those who teach useless and godless notions (3. 2). Poets and philosophers are charged with inconsistency, and in particular with atheism, promiscuity, and cannibalism. The tables are turned by quoting words taken from their own texts (3. 3–8).

But it is not just the explicit statements of book 3 that are of interest. The way in which Theophilus uses Genesis is even more instructive. Droge[30] has convincingly shown that in book 2, especially chapters 29–32, Theophilus 'managed to construct a general outline of the history of culture based on selected passages of Genesis', and that this 'is informed by a general knowledge of contemporary Greek theories'. His argument begins (pp. 2–8) by showing the extent to which *archaiologia*, or scholarship concerning antiquities and origins, was well established. Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* belongs alongside the 'archaeology of Rome' by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Varro's *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum*, and the *Historical Library* of Diodorus Siculus. Other easterners presented claims to greater antiquity than the Greeks: Berossus for the Babylonians, Manetho for the Egyptians, Philo of Byblos for the Phoenicians; and the Greeks from Herodotus on had acknowledged some of the facts. We have already seen Tatian adopting the argument that the Greeks were plagiarists, and the core of Droge's argument concerns these rival claims with their associated chronologies. In the case of Theophilus' account of Genesis, he develops other aspects of the history of culture.

Droge takes Hesiod to be the classical account of origins, and

[30] Droge, *Homer or Moses?*, 102–23.

therefore Theophilus' principal target, though not the only one. Prior to the section of Theophilus' work which mainly concerns us, he finds differentiation from Hesiod in giving an account of creation (2. 5–6, 12–13), and, conversely, Hesiod's unacknowledged influence in the depiction of Adam and Eve (2. 18 ff.). Contemporary discussions about the origins of language, Droge argues, have been reflected in Theophilus' retelling of Adam's naming and his etymologizing. Theophilus shares current views to the effect that tame animals were to produce food or provide labour, while wild animals were to be hunted, but explains that this was the result of the Fall; he believes, as others did, that primitive humanity had been vegetarian. Now, in 2. 29, more items appear which were standard in accounts of cultural history.

First, the story of Cain and Abel becomes an account of the invention of shepherding and the discovery of agriculture. Then Genesis 4: 17 is taken to be the foundation of the first city, and Theophilus inserts a comment (2. 30), for which there is no warrant in the Genesis text but plenty in Greek discussions, about the beginnings of polygamy and of music. The domestication of animals and the invention of metallurgy, along with the discovery of music and musical instruments, are related to Lamech's three sons. After the Flood he introduces 'a new beginning of cities and kings' (2. 31), in which three more cultural history topics feature: the origin of different languages, the beginning of warfare, and the institution of priesthood. The climax is the settlement of the world (2. 32).

Droge's argument is that Theophilus has deliberately selected from Genesis, and phrased his narration and exegesis in the way he did, to provide an alternative account of origins. It is not insignificant that the next paragraph (2. 33) makes explicit the fact that Greek writers lived long after these events, introduced a multitude of gods, got events before the Flood wrong, were not inspired, and that only the Christians have the truth. They have the truth because they are instructed by the Holy Spirit, who spoke in the holy prophets. They possess the right literature. The standard classical literature is rubbish, even though there are occasions when the Sibyl and the poets agree with the prophets (2. 36–8).

The educated person, raised on the Greek or Latin classics in the schools of rhetoric and perhaps philosophy, might be prepared

to acknowledge the contribution of other cultures to the Graeco-Roman synthesis—many of them would in any case have been of non-Greek ethnic origin, though Hellenized in culture, as perhaps Justin and certainly Tatian was; but to such a person the declared preference for a body of crude barbarian literature would have been incomprehensible, as the second-century critic of Christianity, Celsus, demonstrates. The argument may not have been all one-sided, for Plato had already attacked the poets; the trouble was that more than a substitute literature was at stake. Social non-conformity exposed more than the educated converts to hostility.[31] It was because rival literatures were embedded in rival ethnic and religious cultures that the debate about literary authority mattered.

ANCESTRAL CUSTOMS

The modern reader is likely to be somewhat stunned by the fact that the early Christians were charged with atheism; yet, as we have seen, that was the principal objection to which the so-called apologists reply. What the charge really amounted to was an expression of dismay and distaste over the fact that people were abandoning conventional ritual practices on conscientious grounds. To appreciate the 'scandal' of abandoning traditional religion, one has only to read Cicero's work *On the Nature of the Gods*.[32]

Cicero adopts the dialogue form in order to present a reasoned debate on religion between the leading intellectual positions of educated Romans some 200 years earlier. It would seem from later evidence, such as that provided by Augustine, that the reasoned stance *vis-à-vis* religion which is implied in this work was simply reinforced in what would become the ever-deepening conflict between Christianity and the traditional way of life. Roughly contemporary with our apologists, Celsus[33] provides insight into

[31] Cf. Rives, 'Human Sacrifice'.

[32] Parts of this work could be described as apologetic. For text and translation, see Bibliography. It was the model for David Hume's equivocal *Dialogues Concerning Natural Theology*.

[33] Origen's third-century reply to Celsus enables some reconstruction of this work against the Christians, which was roughly contemporary with the second-century apologists; though see in this volume Frede, Ch. 7.

somewhat the same traditionalist position, though without Cicero's own tendency to intellectual scepticism alongside a defence of conservative practice. In other words, despite the time gap, Cicero's work is not irrelevant to understanding the apologists.

Cicero has three characters: Cotta the Academic, Velleius the Epicurean, and Balbus the Stoic. The latter two are 'types', while Gaius Aurelius Cotta was a well-known figure belonging to a generation prior to Cicero himself, one who had been consul and *pontifex maximus*. It is *his* position which is of interest. He exposes the weaknesses of Stoic and Epicurean views from the perspective of one whose life was devoted to upholding civic society. *Religio* meant the binding ties of duty to the gods, the state, and the family, expressed in the virtue of *pietas*. It was therefore the cement of society and the foundation of justice. Even if rationality led to scepticism about the nature of traditional gods, the ancient customs should be maintained. The dialogue surveys the long discussions in the Greek philosophical tradition, ultimately to argue that in practice religion is vital for the maintenance of morality.

The first book disposes of Epicureanism, a discussion which is of interest here only because the Epicureans too were accused of atheism. It is significant that these 'atheists' did not question the existence of the gods. Rather, they liberated people from religion by suggesting that the blessed immortals were not the slightest bit interested in what goes on among human beings, providing a scientific explanation of events which excluded ideas of fate, providence, punishment, reward, and other such common religious ideas. That being the case, traditional prayers and sacrifices were clearly irrelevant and unnecessary. The Graeco-Roman world generally disapproved of this philosophical position,[34] but tolerated anyone's beliefs as long as they conformed to social convention. The Epicureans were not unreasonable, unlike the stubborn Christians with their conscientious objections. Needless

[34] Examples of other texts that provide evidence of this dislike include Cicero's *Against Piso*, where Piso's Epicurean associations provide a stick for mockery; Plutarch's two works against Epicureans preserved among the *Moralia*, *The Impossibility of a Pleasant Life on Epicurean Principles* and *Against Colotes*; Lucian's satire *Alexander the False Prophet*, in which atheists, Epicureans, and Christians are linked more than once, and 'Epicurean' is taken to be a term of abuse (25, 38, 46–7); and Plotinus' *Enneads*, 2. 9. 15.

to say, Christians, like everyone else, contested the atheistic position of Epicureanism.

Cicero's second book expounds Stoic views. By contrast, providence lay at the heart of Stoic doctrine, and whatever their 'theology' in theory, Stoics were prepared to go along with traditional practices, providing through allegory a rational account of what the various gods stood for. Sceptical arguments are rather lamely brought to bear on their position as we move into book 3, and the work ends abruptly with the Epicurean thinking that Cotta's critique has had the best of the argument, while 'it seemed to me [i.e. the author, Cicero] that the reasoning of Balbus brought us nearer to an image of the truth'.

There has been much debate about what conclusion Cicero really meant his readers to draw. But for our purposes the dialogue provides a significant perspective. Philosophers had long questioned the nature of the gods as presupposed in traditional practices and presented in the myths of classical literature. The apologists would exploit these arguments against the gods, and show that Christian truth was a fulfilment of the philosophers' quest. On the other hand, no philosopher, except Socrates, had died for challenging the age-old practices. That was a risk virtually unprecedented. The world of traditional rituals was too sacrosanct for philosophical scepticism to dismantle it, and increasingly, reason would justify it, especially as the threat of Christianity grew.

The charge of atheism against Christians focused on their refusal after conversion to continue to participate in traditional religious customs. New superstitions were suspect, but in the case of Christianity the conscientious objection to old practices was the more damning. Religion, embedded in ethnic cultures, was a matter not of belief but of loyalty. On the whole, Jews were permitted to follow the laws and practices they had inherited from antiquity, and their taboos on images and on syncretic accommodation with other cults were respected; Philo's *Embassy* is an instructive account of what happened when this was not so. The problem for Christians was that they were not assimilated into the Jewish *ethnos*, while apparently abandoning their own ethnic cultures and adopting Jewish exclusivity. Thus they were neither Jew nor Gentile.

The *Epistle to Diognetus*, like the early work of Aristides, shows

that this was at the heart of the problem, and confirms the now classic insight of Harnack that the hostile tag 'third race' (*tertium genus*, first attested in Tertullian) was one Christians would acknowledge and defend.[35] Diognetus had apparently enquired what God Christians believe in, what sort of cult they practise, and how this enables them to set so little store by the world, and even make light of death—'since they reject the deities revered by the Greeks no less than they disclaim the superstitions professed by the Jews' (*Epistle to Diognetus*, 1). There follows an explanation of this double rejection, consisting of a standard critique of idolatry and the gods of the Greeks, then a parallel attack on Jews, who know the true God, but then worship with irrational sacrifices just like the Greeks, when they should know that God cannot be in need of material offerings, and follow irrational practices such as their dietary laws, sabbath keeping, circumcision, and festivals. The presentation of the Christians which follows is most instructive.

> The difference between Christians and the rest of humankind is not a matter of nationality, or language, or customs. Christians do not live apart in separate cities of their own, speak any special dialect, nor practise any eccentric way of life . . . Nevertheless, the organization of their community does exhibit some features which are remarkable, and even surprising. For instance, though they are residents at home in their own countries, their behaviour there is more like that of transients; they take their full part as citizens, but they also submit to anything and everything as if they were aliens. For them, any foreign country is a motherland, and any motherland is a foreign country. (Ibid. 5)

Having characterized Christians in various ways as being 'in the world' but 'not of the world', and so subject to persecution from both Greeks and Jews, the Epistle suggests that 'the relation of Christians to the world is that of a soul to the body' (ibid. 6). The implication of the whole passage is that Christians have a 'heavenly citizenship' and are 'resident aliens' in the world,

[35] Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, i. 266–78. The Syriac and Greek texts of Aristides differ slightly: the Syriac version introduces four races: barbarians and Greeks, Jews and Christians; the Greek version refers to 'those who worship those called gods by you' alongside Jews and Christians, and then subdivides the first category into three: Chaldaeans, Greeks, and Egyptians. The latter corresponds more closely with the subsequent discussion in both versions of the text. Cf. Price, this volume, Ch. 6.

terminology anticipated in some New Testament writings. Christians wish to claim that they are an *ethnos*, a people, despite the evident fact that they have no common ethnic roots, and the arguments of some of the other apologists make it clear why: everybody else is allowed to practise their traditional religion, so why cannot Christians be allowed to do so also? They claim 'ancestral customs' too, and they do it, as we have seen, through the argument that the ancient prophecies of the Jews have been fulfilled, and so the truth revealed.

To legitimize their position, Christians claimed to be a people or a race, alongside others to whom rights were given. This argument is clear in Athenagoras.

> The inhabitants of your empire, greatest of kings, follow many different customs and laws, and none of them is prevented by law or fear of punishment from cherishing his ancestral ways . . . All these both you and the laws permit, since you regard it as impious and irreligious to have no belief at all in a god and think it necessary for all men to venerate as gods those whom they wish, that through fear of the divine they may refrain from evil . . . To us, however, who are called Christians, you have not given the same consideration. (*Embassy*, 1. 1–3)

Athenagoras' *Embassy* presupposes a situation analogous to that of Philo when he pleaded on behalf of the Jews of Alexandria. Here is a distinct people with its own *politeia*, which deserves the same rights as other peoples. Thus, in explaining their anomalous position, Christians asserted, as Jews like Philo had done before, that they prayed for the emperor to the god of the whole universe, and their non-conformity with respect to religious practices did not mean atheism. Tatian may have indulged in sustained invective against poets and philosophers, but Athenagoras as well as Theophilus brought forward a battery of poets and philosophers to substantiate their claims that they were merely taking philosophy to its logical conclusion. In so doing, they initiated the trend that would eventually turn religion into a belief system rather than traditional ethnic customs. Meanwhile, they did not fit into the assumptions of society around them, and paid the penalty for that.

These explorations confirm the statement made at the beginning. Literary genre is not the best way of characterizing what the

second-century Greek apologists have in common. They write in various genres, and their object was not simply defending themselves against charges. Their common intent is justification of an anomalous social position, whether in the eyes of others or themselves, whether in real live courtroom situations or more informally. The audacity with which they exploited both classical and biblical traditions to challenge the literary and religious cultures of Greek as well as Jew is remarkable, though some may judge that it boded ill for the future when power relations were reversed and Christianity itself was turned into an ethnic tradition.

6

Latin Christian Apologetics: Minucius Felix, Tertullian, and Cyprian

SIMON PRICE

Some thoughts about the definition of 'apologetics' are essential at the outset. There is a certain amount of confusion around in the handbooks that we need to scotch. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines one of the meanings of apologetic as 'the defensive method of argument, often specifically the argumentative defence of Christianity'. Obviously Christian apologetics deal with the relations between Christianity and other faiths or practices; it concerns the creation and maintenance of boundaries. However, I would stress that not all texts relating to boundaries should be counted as apologetic: it depends whether the text is addressed internally to those already members of the faith, or externally to outsiders. As Martin Goodman shows (Ch. 3), Josephus' *Against Apion* is a work of apologetic, addressed to a non-Jew, which aimed to persuade Gentiles of the falsity of certain charges against the Jews. On the other hand, the Mishnaic treatise *Aboda Zara*, stating what pagan practices Jews must avoid, is aimed at Jews, and is for internal consumption.

The same distinction applies to Christian texts. Some treatises by Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Cyprian are exoteric, addressing outsiders. I stress the formal addressee of the works: apologies are necessarily a response of some sort to criticism. The actual readership of the works is of course unknowable, but perhaps not crucial. Even if existing Christians constituted the main readership, as is assumed in one of Tertullian's treatises,[1] the exoteric form of the treatises ensured that Christians could easily make use of their arguments. Their own faith might be strengthened, but in addition they had ready-made arguments to use in

[1] *On the Evidence of the Soul*, 1. 4.

discussions with non-Christians. As Tertullian says, Christians were very much a part of all aspects of the contemporary world, and they would often need such arguments. Other treatises, sometimes called apologetic, are in fact esoteric, addressing existing Christians. I think here of Tertullian's *On Shows* and *On Idolatry*, Cyprian's *To Donatus*, *To Fortunatus*, and *That Idols are not Gods*;[2] Novatian's *On Shows*; and Commodianus' *Instructions*. These important texts seek to define a boundary between Christianity and paganism, but they have a strictly internal audience. They should ideally be compared with sermons, which were a regular feature of Christian services in this period, but scarcely any Latin ones survive before the fourth century.[3] All the treatises just mentioned set out to persuade those who already call themselves Christians to adopt the proper position. For example, Tertullian's *On Idolatry* is addressed both to simple believers, who are unaware of the dangers that the pagan world poses to a truly Christian life, and also to sophisticated Christians, who shut their eyes to such dangers (2). Similarly, on one aspect of this issue about the dangers of the pagan world the treatise *On Gamblers* asserts that Christians were not to engage in gambling, partly because gambling often involved sacrifices.[4] On a more pressing issue, Cyprian's *To Fortunatus*, arguing that the idols are not gods, is actually an exhortation to martyrdom. Some of the arguments do overlap between the exoteric and the esoteric treatises: for example, Cyprian's case in *To Fortunatus* about idols not being gods is the same as a key argument in Tertullian's *Apologeticus*. Overall, however, the esoteric treatises are very different in form and function, and fall outside the scope of this chapter.

To turn to apologetics proper, one might distinguish between polemic and apologetic: polemics attack rivals without necessarily advancing any positive views of their own; apologetics address outsiders, and must deal with the views of their own group and others' misconceptions of them. However, the alleged distinction

[2] The last treatise is dated to the fourth century by Sallmann, *Literatur*, 583–4.

[3] One exception is *Against the Jews*, wrongly ascribed to Cyprian, which was perhaps written in Rome in the later second century: see edn. by Van Damme (1969) and Sallmann, *Literatur*, 581–2. On the boundary between Christianity and Judaism, see Tessa Rajak, above, Ch. 4.

[4] The treatise, ascribed to Cyprian, may have been written by a fourth-century Catholic bishop in Africa.

does not seem to apply in practice. Admittedly, Josephus claims that he would have preferred not to engage in polemic against the customs and gods of other nations (*Against Apion*, 2. 237–8), but he goes on to do just that, and Christian authors had no such hesitation. In Minucius Felix' *Octavius* the dialogue between the pagan and the Christian is triggered by a Christian criticizing another Christian for allowing his pagan friend to venerate a statue of Serapis (2. 4–4. 4). And Tertullian regularly, and without embarrassment, turns pagan charges back against pagans. For example, in *To the Gentiles* he counters a pagan charge of Christian infanticide by referring to the practice of exposure of babies, and the charge of incest by referring to a notorious recent case (1. 15–16). The Christian apologists saw no need to apologize for polemic. In heated arguments the 'tu quoque' move, even if below the belt, may be very effective.

THE TEXTS

Having given some definition of apologetics, and having said what texts I am not talking about, I need to turn to Latin apologies proper: those by Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Cyprian. (On Arnobius and Lactantius, see below, Ch. 9.) The texts with which I am concerned are the five treatises of Tertullian, *To the Gentiles*, *Apology*, *On the Evidence of the Soul*, *On the Philosopher's Cloak*, and *To Scapula*; Minucius Felix' *Octavius*; and Cyprian's *To Demetrianus*[5] (details of the texts are given in the Bibliography). From the extensive bibliography on Latin apologetic, the best starting-points are the books by Barnes and Daniélou; that by Rives is excellent on the pagan background and on Christian authority (though silent on the Christian works dealing with the boundary between Christians and pagans).[6]

Let us start with Tertullian, who wrote in Carthage at the turn of the second and third centuries. The first two treatises are very closely related, both in date and in argument, so much so that some have seen *To the Gentiles* as a primitive draft of the *Apology*.

[5] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 5. 4. 3, links two of these works, Tertullian's *Apology* and Cyprian's *To Demetrianus*. For the form of the *Apology*, see below, pp. 109–10.

[6] T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian*; Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity*; Rives, *Religion and Authority*. Cf. Sallmann, *Literatur*, 443–57, 556–8, 628–37.

The case is complicated by the fact that the text we have of *To the Gentiles* may be missing a page at the start, and is fragmentary at the end. It is also complicated by the existence of two quite different manuscript traditions of the *Apology*: one manuscript, the long-lost Codex Fuldensis, has readings and passages not present in the rest of the manuscripts. Citations of the work in late antiquity cite both the majority tradition and that represented for us by the Codex Fuldensis; they also offer one authentic reading that is corrupt in all our extant manuscripts.[7] It seems clear that the work went through at least one rewrite by the author, and that at least two versions entered the public domain. But it does not follow that the two works are drafts of each other: similar points do reappear in the two works, but the overall focus is quite different; they seek to refute an overlapping, but largely discrete, set of charges.

The differences between these two works become clearer if one looks at the addressees of each work. The title of *To the Gentiles* (*Ad nationes*) is reasonably secure, despite the loss of the manuscript title-page. Though Jerome gives the title as *Contra gentes* (*Letter 70*, 5), *Ad nationes* is used in the manuscript comments and table of contents, and the treatise regularly uses the word *nationes*, and not *gentes*. In looking out to a non-Christian audience, Tertullian had to invent an appropriate Latin term. Unlike his Greek predecessors, Tertullian could not address 'Greeks' to cover the culture shared with the Eastern world, because the term had such a strong association with competence in the Greek language. Nor could he address 'Romans', which would have been far too oppositional. 'Romans' designated only Roman citizens, and at the time that Tertullian was writing, it excluded much of the provincial population. It also implied a contrast that he did not want between 'Roman' and 'Greek'. *Nationes*, on the other hand, was a conveniently neutral (apolitical) term.[8] For the treatise is directed at non-Christians in general, except in the opening chapters on trials of Christians, which invoke Roman governors (1. 2. 2, 3. 1).[9] The first paragraph (1. 1) talks about how 'day

[7] T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 19–21, 239–41.

[8] *Gentes*, which carried a similar meaning, was preferred by his successors (hence Jerome's usage).

[9] Structure: 1. 1–19, condemnation of injustice of laws and trials and defence against string of defamations (infanticide and incest; 'third race'; cause of

after day indeed you groan over the increasing number of Christians. Your constant cry is that the state is beset by us.' Similarly, the first book ends by saying, 'How long therefore, O most unjust pagans, will you refuse to acknowledge us, and to execrate your own [gods]?', and invites the pagans to amend the error of their ways and embrace Christianity (1. 20). This general address accords with the nature of the arguments that Tertullian seeks to refute. Though there is reference to the injustice of trials of Christians (1. 2) and to the iniquitous nature of the laws (1. 6), the treatise attacks non-legal targets. The first book runs through a sequence of popular calumnies against the Christians: they are guilty of infanticide and incest; they are a 'third race' in the state and the cause of calamities; they worship the head of an ass or a cross; and they are disloyal to the emperor. The second book offers a critique of Varro's views on religion, and of the nature of the cults that have spread through the empire under Roman rule. The text is firmly rooted in the popular and intellectual world of his own society.

The *Apology*, on the other hand, is addressed explicitly to those in authority in the Roman Empire: *Romani imperii antistites* in the first line (1. 1) and *boni praesides* on the final page (50. 12; cf. 30. 7).[10] These phrases refer specifically to Roman governors, and not, as has been suggested, also to local, civic magistrates, who at this date were involved merely in arresting, not trying, Christians. The governors are distinguished more than once from the populace allegedly baying for Christian blood: 'how many, think you, of these persons standing round and panting for Christian blood—how many of

calamities; worship of ass's head; worship of cross; 'Sun'; 'Oenocoetes'; disloyalty because of not worshipping emperor; despise death); 1. 20, call to discover Christianity; 2. 1–8, critique of Varro's threefold distinction of gods; 2. 9–17, Roman spread of this tradition, though their gods only human, and sometimes immoral; Roman power dependent not on their gods but ours.

[10] Structure: 1–3, injustice of general hatred; 4–6, injustice of laws; 7–9, innocence of charges of cannibalism and incest; 10–45, two major charges, sacrilege and treason (10–28. 1, innocent of sacrilege, as your gods not gods; 28. 2–45, innocent of treason, we too need empire and pray to our god); 46. 1, case now made out; 46. 2–49, if you call Christianity just another philosophy, treat us as philosophers, especially as our mysteries are older than philosophy; 50, glory of martyrdom. Sider, 'On Symmetrical Composition', argues for a circular rhetorical structure in this work, but underplays its argumentative structure.

you, most just governors (*praesides*) and most severe upon us, how many should I touch in their consciences for killing their own children, born to them?' (9. 6). Or again, 'How often do you wreak your fury on the Christians, in part obeying your own instincts, in part the laws? How often, too, without regard to you, does the unfriendly mob on its own account assail us with stones and fire?' (37. 2). Again, the addressee concurs neatly with the focus of the treatise. The treatise includes a refutation of popular charges of cannibalism and incest, but mainly deals with the injustice of the laws and the two specific charges of sacrilege and treason, each of which would be of particular concern to a Roman magistrate.[11] Though *To the Gentiles* is sometimes seen as an inferior first draft of the *Apology*, in fact the two works are quite different, both in their addressees and their overall arguments.[12]

On the Evidence of the Soul differs from both these works, though it develops an idea floated in *Apology*, 17. 4–5, and refers back (5. 6) to arguments already advanced in the *Apology* (19. 1–10).[13] The opening has no explicit addressee, but does raise the general problem of how to convince the rivals and persecutors of Christianity from their own authorities that they are untrue to themselves and unjust to the Christians. The treatise rejects the two standard tactics of (a) defending Christianity by finding pagan precursors and (b) attacking pagan differences from Christianity. Instead, it summons as a witness the human soul, as a neutral figure, neither pagan nor Christian, which might give weight to the Christian case. By the final chapter (6) the addressee is explicitly a pagan who fears to become a Christian. The work deals not with pagan criticisms of Christianity, but with what common ground there might be between the two sides that could lead to conversion of the pagan.

On the Philosopher's Cloak develops the idea of conversion of

[11] T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 109–10, suggests that the treatise moves out to educated pagans in general.

[12] Heinze, 'Tertullians *Apologeticum*', suggests that the two works derived from two distinct traditions of Greek apologetic writing (*Logos pros Hellenas*, *apologia*), but the Greek tradition does not divide so neatly, nor indeed do Tertullian's works. See Schneider edn. of *Ad nationes*, 1. 31 n. 2.

[13] Structure: 1 rejects (a) finding pagan precursors of Christianity, (b) attacking pagan differences, calls soul to witness, as non-Christian being; 2, ordinary usage of one god; 3, demons; 4, soul expects Judgement Day; 5, original knowledge of soul; 6, address to non-Christians.

pagans.[14] It opens with an address to 'people of Carthage, the leaders of Africa, who are both noble and fortunate', and argues that they ought to wear not the Roman toga but the *pallium*, which was both their own ancestral dress and something worn by practitioners of the liberal arts. The twist right at the end of this clever (and difficult) text is to suggest that the *pallium* is now further ennobled by being the garment of Christians.

The final apologetic work by Tertullian—indeed, possibly his final work—reverts to the form of the *Apology*. *To Scapula* addresses not Roman governors in general, but the actual Roman proconsul of Africa of 212 CE.[15] Tertullian explains at the beginning that he does not fear Scapula's rage, and has sent the tract to him 'in no alarm about ourselves, but in much concern for you and for all our enemies, to say nothing about our friends' (1). The treatise does not repeat at length the main arguments of the *Apology*, simply stating briefly that it is the non-Christians who are guilty of sacrilege and treason. Instead, it comments on God's anger at the shedding of Christian blood (drought and fires), and claims belated repentance by some other persecuting governors (3). In conclusion, the treatise seeks to head off the mooted intention of Scapula to persecute Christians, which had given rise to threats and blackmail against Christians from Roman soldiers and private enemies of the Christians (5). This occasional tract turns the general and much longer arguments of the *Apology* to an immediate, practical purpose.

We shall turn now to Minucius Felix' *Octavius*.[16] This work

[14] Structure: 1, clothing changes over time; 2–3, change is universal, even among animals; 4, change is admittedly not necessarily for the better; 5–6, the merits of the *pallium*.

[15] Structure: 1, Christian concern for our enemies; 2, one god, wrong to compel sacrifice, your people are sacrilegious and treasonous; 3, wrath of God for killing of Christians, drought, fire, repentance of persecuting governors; 4, many governors have helped to acquit Christians; 5, devastating consequences if all Christians sought death.

[16] Structure: 1–4, introduction; 5–13, Caecilius' case (6–7, value of Roman religion; 8–11, attack on Christian rites, morals, and beliefs; 12, wretched life of Christians; 13, virtue of sceptical attitude); 14–15, interlude, dangers of clever talk; 16–38, Octavius' reply (17–19, on God; 20–1, pagan gods once kings; 22–4, absurdities of Roman mythology and rituals; 25, Roman greatness due to unpunished impiety; 26–7, demons cause of any truth in paganism; 28–31, persecution unjust, as slanders (cannibalism, incest) apply to pagans; 32, invisible and omniscient God; 33, Jews abandoned God (cf. Josephus); 34–5, end of world and resurrection; 36–8, Christians benefit from tribulations and right to reject libations and sacrificial meat; 39–40, epilogue, conversion of Caecilius.

has no specific addressee, and is only by implication an exoteric treatise. The opening chapter dwells on the memory of Octavius and what seems to be his death, and focuses on one particular conversation of his. 'It was by this conversation that he had converted to the true religion Caecilius, who was at that time still clinging to superstitious folly' (1. 5). The ensuing debate between Octavius and Caecilius is set very firmly and even vividly at Rome, or rather just outside Rome on the sea-shore at Ostia. The (anonymous) narrator had, like Octavius himself, originally been a pagan, but had long since converted to Christianity (1. 4; 5. 1), and explicitly rejoices both in the success of Octavius' case and in the conversion of Caecilius (40. 3). There are numerous parallels both of language and of material between Tertullian and Minucius Felix, which has encouraged scholars to attempt to determine who wrote first.[17] The problem with attempts to date the works on purely internal grounds is that the two treatises have such different arguments that 'parallels' cannot establish the priority of either author. External evidence offers better grounds for dating Minucius Felix. A second-century date for him seems likely if the passage of Fronto to which Minucius Felix refers was an incidental reference to Christians, rather than a speech specifically against the Christians:[18] Felix' reference is much more likely if the text of Fronto was recent and topical. In addition, Minucius Felix seems to be responding to another second-century text, by Aulus Gellius (18. 1), a dialogue on happiness between Stoic and Peripatetic philosophers which is actually set at Ostia. Incidentally, Minucius Felix' lack of interest in persecution is no argument in favour of a third- rather than a second-century date: even in the second century persecution was quite haphazard in its impact, and Christian writers could quite rationally discuss matters other than persecution.

[17] Parallels listed in Krause, *Die Stellung der frühchristlichen Autoren*. Minucius earlier: G. Quispel, 'Anima naturaliter Christiana'; Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 189. Minucius later: J. Beaujeu, edn. of Minucius Felix (1964), pp. xliv ff.; Becker, 'Der "Octavius" des Minucius Felix'; T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 271–2. Further bibliography in *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*.

[18] E. Champlin, *Fronto and Antonine Rome*, 64–6, argued that the reference came in a speech against one Pelops, delivered perhaps in the late 170s. However, Bammel, 'Die erste lateinische Rede', restates the view that the speech focused on the Christians.

Finally, *To Demetrianus* by Cyprian, bishop of Carthage,[19] unlike Tertullian's *To Scapula*, addresses a Gentile who was stirring up persecution against the Christians, though Demetrianus was a prominent local rather than a governor.[20] The threat of persecution is slightly less imminent than in *To Scapula*, but Cyprian does claim that accusations were building up against the Christians. Demetrianus had in the past presented himself before Cyprian, in order to rail against him, but now people, perhaps partly stirred up by Demetrianus, were alleging that wars, plague, famine, and droughts were due to the Christians. The treatise was written in the aftermath of the general persecution of Decius (250 CE), and feelings against the Christians were still high. Six years later, in the persecution of Valerian of 258, Cyprian was indeed to be put to death by the Romans. Though Josephus may have been taking a line unpopular in Rome, he was writing as one in a privileged position. Cyprian, on the other hand, was, as he knew, in considerable personal danger.

Having now gone through some of the formal characteristics of these works, we should consider one of the questions of this book: was there a clear genre of apologetic? The implication of what I have been saying is that there was not. If all the works I have just been through are accepted as apologetic, it is very hard to see that there is sufficient formal similarity to establish generic similarity. Only some of the works address non-Christians: *To the Gentiles*, *Apology*, *On the Philosopher's Cloak*, *To Scapula*, and *To Demetrianus*; *On the Evidence of the Soul* moves towards an explicit non-Christian readership only by the end. *Octavius* has no explicit readership at all. Of explicitly exoteric works, two (*To the Gentiles* and *Apology*) address general problems (including the possibility of Christian deaths), while two others (*To Scapula* and *To Demetrianus*) confront a more imminent threat of persecution. *On the Evidence of the Soul* does not seek to refute pagan attacks, while *Octavius*, though commenting on the injustice of persecutions and the nobility of Christian martyrs (28–31, 37), operates at a level of civilized, rational debate. I am inclined, therefore, to

[19] Pellegrino, *Studi su l'antica apologetica*, 107–49, on this and other 'apologetic' works by Cyprian.

[20] Structure: 1, introduction; 2–5, charges that calamities due to Christians; 6–11, God asks for worship of him alone; 12–16, absurdity of persecution of Christians; 17–25, strength of hope from vengeance to come.

argue that there were generic similarities in the position of Christians during this period, though this varied significantly from time to time and place to place, and that these similarities led to a set of overlapping responses to the non-Christian world. Apologies were the product of a particular moment in the development of Christianity, when Christians were in an inferior position, but could see some hope and point in communicating with non-Christians.[21] But the forms of communication were very varied, even on the part of one author, and did not constitute a formal genre of apologetic.

PREDECESSORS

From this exposition of the texts I want now to turn backwards, to consider the relation of these texts to their predecessors. Martin Goodman argues (Ch. 3) that Josephus' *Against Apion* does not itself stand in a tradition of Jewish apologetic; Frances Young argues that the genre of Greek Christian apologetics is also problematic (Ch. 5). None the less, these Latin authors were conscious that they had precursors. Thus *On the Evidence of the Soul* starts by talking about the labour involved in collecting evidence from pagan philosophers, poets, and other authors in order to show that Christianity rests on traditional authority and wisdom. 'Indeed some of our people, who still continued their inquisitive labours in ancient literature, and still occupied memory with it, have published works we have in our hands of this very sort' (1). Tertullian (and probably Minucius Felix) did not create their works *ex nihilo*.

Before considering the Christian authors to whom Tertullian refers here, we might pause for a moment to look at Jewish writers. Had Tertullian or other apologists read Josephus? The *Apology* does refer explicitly to him at one point (19. 6), as part of its argument that the Christian belief in one god was grounded in the Jewish prophets, who were themselves of great antiquity: 'The Jew Josephus, native champion of Jewish antiquities, must be consulted.' On the face of it, this is a reference to Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, but the reference comes just after a string of references

[21] Cf. Rizzi, *Ideologia*, with review in *JTS*, 44 (1995), 306–11.

to the archives and citizens of foreign races, including Manetho, Berossus, and also Apion.[22] Some of Tertullian's alleged learning here may be mediated through reading of, and acceptance of the argument of, Josephus' *Against Apion*, and Tertullian's phrasing may be evidence that the original title of Josephus' work was *On the Antiquity of the Jews*.[23]

More can be said about these authors' relationships to earlier Christian apologetic written in Greek. The most obvious way into this is through the title of one of Tertullian's treatises: the *Apology*. The form *Apologeticum* is that given by the best manuscripts of the treatise, but the use of an accusative or neuter has no parallel in Latin book titles, and the correct title is surely *Apologeticus*. This is the form used by Jerome (*Letter 70*, 5) and in subsequent Latin treatises by other authors.[24] *Apologeticus* had not previously been used in Latin, though *Apologus* had. It is clearly a transcript of the Greek *apologētikos*. The question is why, especially as *Apologētikos* itself had not been used as a title of any work in Greek. The simpler word to use would have been *Apologia*, and one might have expected Tertullian to pick up the title *Apologia* used a generation earlier by Apuleius for his speech of defence before the governor of Africa. In fact, this title is clearly not that used by Apuleius: both the manuscripts and the fourth-century annotations to the work use a periphrastic title like 'In his Defence before Claudius Maximus Proconsul on Magic'.[25] So that title can be dismissed as a red herring. Why then *Apologeticus*? The term *apologētikos* had been used occasionally in rhetorical handbooks, for one sort of speech delivered in court, and it was certainly not domesticated into Latin.[26] In fact, Tertullian surely drew not on this rare

[22] See above, pp. 94–7, on these writers. Cf. T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 196, for borrowed erudition.

[23] Above, pp. 45–6.

[24] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 5. 4. 3, cites the work, according to the best manuscript, as 'in eo libro cui Apologeticum nomen est', but the neuter is probably an easy corruption because of 'nomen', and some otherwise inferior manuscripts do give the form 'Apologeticus'. On Greek book titles, see Henriksson, *Griechische Büchertitel*, 172–3, on this work (a reference I owe to Dr G. Hutchinson).

[25] Teubner edn., 1, 74, 114.

[26] [Aristotle], *Rhetoric to Alexander* (= Anaximenes, *Ars rhetorica*, ed. M. Fuhrmann), 1421^{b}10, etc.; *Divisiones Aristoteleae*, 11, col. 2. 8 (ed. H. Mutschmann). The later manuscript tradition has corrupted the word to *apologetikos*. The word is used by the fourth-century Latin rhetorician Chirius Fortunatus (*Rhetores Latini minores*, 110, 7, ed. Halm), but in Greek.

rhetorical term, but on standard contemporary Greek usage. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods *apologoumai* means 'to render an account or explanation', without any forensic or defensive overtones. So in second- and third-century Christian martyr acts, the verb is used to refer to a detailed presentation of oneself and one's faith.[27] The fact that, irrespective of the title of Apuleius' work, Tertullian eschewed the noun *apologia* shows how far this treatise was from a forensic setting. It was not itself an actual defence of Christianity; it offered material for a presentation of the faith, much as works like *Poliorkētika* offered material on the subject of sieges. The title *Apologeticus* thus has a Greek ring, but it does not have any forensic overtones. It was common for pagan Latin works to have Greek titles, but as this is one of only a handful of Christian Latin treatises with a Greek title, Tertullian presumably intended an allusion to his Greek predecessors.

That Tertullian was alluding to Christian material in Greek should not surprise us (though it might surprise those used to a sharp distinction between Latin- and Greek-speaking Christianity). Three of Tertullian's own works, including *On Shows*, existed both in Latin and in Greek, presumably for the edification of Greek-speaking Christians in Carthage.[28] Tertullian himself may not have been read in the Greek East, but he was certainly aware of his Greek predecessors. The same passage of the *Apology* that refers to Josephus (19. 5–8) also probably draws some of its learning from a reading of Tatian's *Address to the Greeks* (31, 36–41) and Theophilus' *To Autolycus* (3. 16–29).[29] Minucius Felix, however, if he knew the Greek apologies at all, adopted a different form, and developed very different arguments.[30]

There is a further, equally important element to the background of the Latin apologies: conventional (i.e. non-Christian) upper-class education, both rhetorical and philosophical. I am not

[27] L. Robert, *Le Martyre de Pionius*, 56; above, Ch. 3. Lugdunum letter in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5. 2. 5; *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 10. 2. Cf. Athenagoras, *Embassy*, 2. 4. Subsequently, in the fourth century, the term was used as the title for (non-forensic) works by Greek bishops: Athanasius in three treatises, defending orthodoxy against the Arians and defending his own actions, and Gregory of Nazianzus in his justification of his reluctance to be ordained bishop (*Orations*, 9–10).

[28] T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 68–9, 253.

[29] Similarly, *Apology*, 13. 9, may derive from Justin, *First Apology*, 26. 2. Cf. T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 104–8.

[30] Clarke trans. of *Octavius*, 25–6.

thinking here so much about the citation or use of non-Christian authors for particular points (though I shall return to Tertullian's use of Varro shortly) as about the general modes of argument of the treatises. Though there are no good grounds for asserting that either Tertullian or Cyprian were jurists, both men had clearly had good educations in standard liberal studies: indeed, the near-contemporary *Life of Cyprian* (2) explicitly mentions Cyprian's immersion in such an education. Both writers are masters of rhetorical exposition. Cyprian's oral abilities are attested by Lactantius (*Divine Institutes*, 5. 1. 24) and Augustine (*Sermon 312*, 4), who alike illustrate his fame as an orator. And the texts of both men can clearly be analysed fruitfully in terms of rhetorical theory and practice. This has been done most fully for Tertullian by Heinze and Eckert for the *Apology*, and by Sider for his whole œuvre.[31] Not all their work is equally satisfactory: for example, Heinze's and Sider's accounts of the structure of the *Apology* are very schematic, and depend in part on the use of abstract Latin nouns, some of dubious authority. In addition, Sider and to some extent Eckert are overdependent on a picture of Ciceronian practice, and pay too little attention to rhetorical practice in the second century (Apuleius plays no part in their work). The rhetoric of Tertullian and Cyprian needs to be set more firmly in a contemporary context. The peculiar style of Tertullian should also be noted. In general he used current Christian language, but with a strong personal element, and in a highly pointed (and sometimes extremely difficult) Asianic style.[32] Tertullian's language, in strong contrast to that of Minucius Felix, epitomizes his rejection of classical in favour of Christian culture.

Minucius Felix had the reputation among later Christians of having been an outstanding advocate (Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 5. 1. 22; Jerome, *On Famous Men*, 58). Such a reputation may be merely an inference from the text, which refers to the judicial responsibilities of the narrator (2. 3), but the text is clearly imbued with contemporary rhetorical education. The opposing arguments of the two main speakers must be influenced by the practice standard in rhetorical education of the principate of

[31] Heinze, 'Tertullians *Apologeticum*'; Eckert, *Orator Christianus*; Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric*.

[32] Mohrmann, 'Observations'. Cf. in general, against the notion of an 'African Latin', Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa*, ii. 588–98; Walsh, *Roman Novel*, 63–6.

making students plead one or other side of a case (the *controversiae*). Some of the cases on which students were trained were abstract philosophical ones. Quintilian includes among them the question whether the world is governed by providence (3. 5. 6; 5. 7. 35; 7. 2. 2). These have a real importance to the budding orator:

> For, if the world is governed by providence, it will certainly be the duty of all good men to play their part in the administration of the state. If the origin of our souls be divine, we must win our way towards virtue and abjure the service of the lusts or our earthly body. Are not these themes that the orator will frequently be called upon to handle? (12. 2. 21)

Nor was the inclusion of such topics a peculiarity of Quintilian. Greek rhetoricians of the imperial period mention the same theme: whether the world is governed by providence. One, Aelius Theon, included in his work full instructions on how to handle this particular theme.[33] Such a training surely lies behind *Octavius*. For example, Caecilius' speech denies at some length that the world is governed by providence (5; cf. 10. 5), while Octavius argues that the beauty and order of the universe prove the existence of God, and conversely that God's providence was visible in the detailed workings of nature (17–18).

This exposure to abstract arguments as part of a rhetorical education raises the issue of the role of technical philosophy in the formation of Latin apologetic. Tertullian was certainly able to make use of pagan philosophical arguments to serve his own purposes. In the *Apology*, for example, he decides to meet the objection raised by someone who accepted his earlier arguments about sacrilege and treason, but felt that Christianity was merely one more school of philosophy (46–9). Tertullian pointed out that such a position was inconsistent with actions taken against Christians: philosophers were not compelled to sacrifice, and some were hostile to the emperor. More importantly, Tertullian claimed that philosophers were inferior to Christians, both in their commitment to truth and in the morality of their lives. His examples here are standard Greek ones: Socrates was accused of corrupting the young (which Tertullian takes to be through

[33] Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata*, 12 (*Rhetores Graeci*, ed. L. Spengel, ii. 120–8), first century CE; cf. Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata*, 11, ed. H. Rabe, second century CE. Clarke, trans. of *Octavius*, 28–9, discusses these texts.

homosexuality); 'Speusippus, of Plato's school, was killed in the act of adultery'; while the Christian attains sexual continence. He claimed that the philosophers had seen the truth by reading in 'the sacred digests' (i.e. the Old Testament), but had refused to talk of God as they found him there. Hence the disagreements of the different Greek philosophical schools about the nature of God.

Some are sure that he is incorporeal, others that he had a body—the Platonists that is and the Stoics. Others say he consists of atoms, others of numbers, as do Epicurus and the Pythagoreans. Another says of fire—the view of Heraclitus. The Platonists represent him as taking care of the world; on the other hand the Epicureans picture him as idle and unemployed, a nobody (so to say) as regards human affairs.

And so on. In short, 'every one, as he felt, interpolated or remodeled'. This easy polemic does not read like the product of someone who had studied much philosophy himself, not surprisingly, as philosophy did not form part of the normal education for the upper-class Roman. Much of this material could have been taken over at second hand from earlier Greek Christian apologies or from pagan compilations.[34] Cyprian also seems to show no direct knowledge of pagan philosophy; in his treatise on 'patience' (*On the Virtue of Patience*) he simply asserts that the Christian possesses true patience in contrast to the false patience (and wisdom) of the philosophers, and in his *To Demetrianus* he makes no reference to it at all.[35]

Minucius Felix, on the other hand, had a very different relation to ancient philosophy. In addition to whatever he may have learned as part of his rhetorical training, he had also himself read some philosophical texts, in particular Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*. This treatise is a dialogue between the representatives of three philosophical schools—Academic, Epicurean, and Stoic—on the nature of the gods. Minucius Felix is obviously indebted to it (and perhaps to other philosophical dialogues) for the form of his own treatise, and for the fact that the narrator is not himself part of the debate. There are differences, however, between the two works. Minucius Felix is much

[34] Tertullian, *De Anima*, ed. J. H. Waszink, 21*–47*, showed that most of the philosophical data of that work were derived from a single treatise, Soranus' four books *On the Soul*. Cf. T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 205–6, on Tertullian's knowledge of philosophy.

[35] Indeed, the citation of pagan literature is almost totally absent from Cyprian.

more attentive to the physical setting of his dialogue, describing the Ostian shoreline with some care; Cicero, on the other hand, reaches the setting only after a lengthy introduction, and then spends only a brief paragraph on how Cicero was invited to Cotta's house to hear the dispute between leaders of the three philosophical schools (1. 6. 15). Minucius Felix also simplifies the dialogue by having only two speakers, not three. This simplification means that there is one opponent of Christianity, whose views can be carefully chosen so as to be easily refutable. And the pagan Caecilius is shown not as the representative of a philosophical school, but as an ordinary educated Roman. Finally, the endings of the two works are very different. Cicero ends abruptly, saying that 'here the conversation ended, and we parted, Velleius thinking Cotta's discourse to be the truer, while I felt that that of Balbus approximated more nearly to a semblance of the truth' (3. 40. 95). By contrast, Minucius Felix's narrator is allied from the start with Octavius' position, and happy to report the conversion of Caecilius. *Octavius* has a strong evangelistic element. Cicero's academic suspension of commitment is replaced by the narrator's Christian conviction. But Minucius Felix' style is deeply classical (Ciceronian), which conformed to the structure of his work—a civilized dialogue between pagan and Christian.[36]

ARGUMENTS

It is time now to move on from questions about the formation of these treatises and their formal argumentation to the arguments themselves. I shall begin with their exposition of Christianity, and then turn to the nature of their offensive arguments. It is striking that a presentation of the author's own case, though one might expect it to be a necessary component of apologetic, is of a pretty meagre sort. Josephus' *Against Apion*, as Goodman points out (Ch. 3), has only a very crude summary of Judaism (2. 180–219). The Latin texts under discussion here have even less on the nature of Christianity. They focus on two issues: the issue of one god and the resurrection of the body. Tertullian's *To the Gentiles*, despite

[36] The initial criticism of pagan veneration of statues is oblique (4. 3), and not comparable to the actions of 'martyrs', who courted punishment by wanton attacks on idols.

its call to the Gentiles to discover Christianity (1. 20), includes almost nothing about Christian doctrine or practice. Christian beliefs come up only as part of the issue of the Christian martyrs' alleged contempt for death. The point is raised that pagans too can despise death, but Tertullian argues that even if their beliefs are similar, the Christian and the pagan have different grounds for their beliefs: the Christian believes in the resurrection of the body (1. 18–19).

The *Apology* has a longer discussion of Christian theology, but again only incidentally to its argument. The section of the work arguing that Christians should not be held guilty of sacrilege, because the pagan gods are not actually gods, moves on to a statement of Christian belief in the existence of only one god. This is demonstrated in the ancient Jewish writings, though Christians have now separated themselves from Jewish practice: Christians worship God through his son Jesus Christ; the beings whom the pagans believe to be gods are actually dangerous demons (17–24). He ends as follows:

> I think I have proved enough as to false and true deity. I have shown how the proof hangs together consistently, resting as it does not only on discussion and argument, but on the evidence of those beings whom you believe to be gods; so that there is nothing more to be said on that issue. (25. 1)

Tertullian's *On the Evidence of the Soul* is rather different. It eschews, as we have seen, attacks or even discussion of paganism, and offers instead a single exposition of the witness of the human soul. This focuses on the same two issues. The soul adduces arguments in favour of one god, rejecting other gods as demons, and it expects to be reunited in the last days with its original body. Tertullian comments that

> this Christian view, though superior to the Pythagorean, as it does not transfer you into beasts; though more complete than the Platonic, since it endows you again with a body; though more worthy than the Epicurean, as it preserves you from annihilation, yet, because of the name connected with it, it is held to be nothing but vanity and folly, and as it is called, a mere hypothesis. (4)

The passage, in its direct confrontation with competing philosophical eschatologies, illustrates that Christian doctrine concerning the

resurrection of the body and the Last Judgement, to which this passage proceeds, were major problems for the presentation of Christianity. It is perhaps not very surprising that the first works of technical Christian theology were addressed to this very issue.

Tertullian's *To Scapula*, with its more practical purpose, does not touch on the resurrection of the body, but again states the Christian commitment to one sole god, in order to explain and justify the rationality of Christian refusal to participate in pagan practices (2). Unlike some of the Christian martyrs who are alleged in their Acts to have offered the governors trying them lectures in Christian doctrine, Tertullian offers the minimum possible statement of the Christian case.

In similar circumstances, Cyprian likewise says very little about Christianity. He too emphasizes that there is only one god, but goes further than Tertullian in saying that God demands humans worship him alone, a point supported with biblical quotations; he also says that God is angry at the fact that pagans do not turn to him, and is punishing them for their evil (6–9). In the changed circumstances of the mid-third century, Cyprian takes up a much more forthright and aggressive position than Tertullian felt able to do. By now, almost all the free population of the empire were Roman citizens, but serious structural problems were afflicting the Roman state. Christians themselves were more numerous and better organized than at the time of Tertullian, and Cyprian himself (unlike Minucius Felix or Tertullian) wielded personal authority as a bishop. But he too says little about the resurrection in its own right, though he does stress at length that Christian patience in the face of persecution was unshakable because of Christian hope in vengeance to come at the Last Judgement (17–25). Again, this is a much more threatening position than Tertullian's picture at the end of the *Apology* of the glory of martyrdom (50).

At first sight, Minucius Felix might seem to be an exception to my claim that the apologists have little positive to say about Christianity. After all, half the work is devoted to Octavius' speech in favour of Christianity. But in fact the range of topics discussed there is very limited. As we have seen, Octavius is committed to a Christian providentialism on the part of one god (the existence of one rather than many gods he almost takes for granted). After citing the opinions of pagan philosophers, he concludes:

These opinions are pretty well identical with ours; we recognize a god and we call him father of all. . . . I have disclosed the views of almost all philosophers of any outstanding distinction; though under a multiplicity of names they have defined god as unique. So it is open to anyone to suppose that either present-day Christians are philosophers or philosophers of the past were already Christians. (19. 15–20. 1)

Any truth that there is in pagan divination and oracles is due to malicious demons (26–7). The remainder of his exposition of Christianity concerns the end of the world and the resurrection of the body (34–5). Octavius notes that pagan philosophy is in agreement that the world will end in a final conflagration. The fires of hell, about which people are warned 'in the books of the erudite and the verses of the poets' (35. 1), await those who are ignorant of God.

In other words, in all these works there is little on the Bible, little Christology, nothing about the Holy Spirit or the emerging doctrine of the Trinity; little on the Redemption (only Judgement); nothing about the Church, its ministry, sacraments, and other practices. Some have suspected in the case of Minucius Felix that he was a recent convert who had not yet fully assimilated the teachings of the Church;[37] a similar case has been made out for Arnobius, who is equally silent on most aspects of Christianity. But this is to ignore the explicit claim of *Octavius* that the speaker had long since been converted to Christianity, and it is also to ignore the fact that similar silences occur in the works of Tertullian and Cyprian. While Tertullian's first four apologetic treatises are among his earliest (datable) works, and so might be the products of ignorance about Christianity, this cannot be said either of *To Scapula*, his last datable work, or of Cyprian's *To Demetrianus*. And in any case the *Apology* (17–25. 1) is clearly well-informed on Christian doctrine. The explanation of the prominence given to the exposition of Christianity surely lies in the nature of the apologetic exercise: the texts address only those issues of interest to a pagan readership. They avoid discussion of esoteric matters, of importance only to those already Christians, and focus on two issues: the nature of the Christian god, which was the problem lying behind the persecutions; and the resurrection, which was both a notorious

[37] Clarke, trans. of *Octavius*, 30, rejects this theory.

stumbling-block to pagans and a key factor in the ability of Christians to resist persecution.

I want now to turn from the exposition of arguments about Christianity to consideration of some of the arguments attacking paganism. How far are they attacking targets that would be familiar to the putative addressees of the treatises, and how far are they constructing paper tigers? Some elements of this problem we have already considered earlier, when thinking about the differences between Tertullian's *To the Gentiles* and *Apology*: that is, the more popular criticisms of book 1 of the former and the more legalistic arguments of the latter. I want now to argue further for the contemporary relevance of the treatises, though I do not wish us to underestimate their tendentiousness.

I shall focus here on the second book of *To the Gentiles*. This begins by explaining that the defence of Christianity demands that at this point Tertullian discuss whether the pagan gods be truly gods, 'as you [pagans] would have it supposed, or falsely, as you are unwilling to have proved' (2. 1).

> Wishing, then, to follow step by step your own commentaries which you have drawn out of your theology of every sort (because the authority of learned men goes further with you in matters of this kind than the testimony of facts), I have taken and abridged the works of Varro; for he in his treatise *Concerning Divine Things*, collected out of ancient digests, has shown himself a serviceable guide for us. (2. 1)

Varro is treated by Tertullian as a familiar name, with which the educated pagan was expected to be familiar. This is hardly surprising. Varro remained a towering figure in the second century CE (and beyond). As Aulus Gellius says, 'the records of knowledge and learning left in written form by Varro are familiar and in general use'.[38] In relation to Roman religion in particular, Varro's work remained the sole exposition of the subject as a whole, and was the obvious point of reference for any Latin speaker, in Rome or the provinces, who wanted to ascertain the nature of Roman religion. As Augustine also realized over 200 years later in *The City of God*, Varro offered many hostages to hostile critique, but Tertullian is not, I think, attacking a merely antiquarian target.

[38] Aulus Gellius, 19. 14. 1; cf. 4. 9. 1; 4. 16. 1. See in general L. Holford-Strevens, *Aulus Gellius*, 115–18.

Like Augustine in *The City of God*, Tertullian goes through Varro's threefold classification of gods, showing that none of them are real gods. First, with regard to the physical gods, treated by the philosophers (2. 2–6), Tertullian criticizes at some length the argument that the elements are divine. He makes the pagan admit that the divine being exists in unimpaired integrity, and then points out that the heavenly bodies, allegedly divine, are subject to changes: the moon undergoes monthly changes, while the sun is frequently put to the trial of an eclipse. Here there does not seem to be any obviously post-Varronian material; but, equally, the Varronian arguments are not necessarily out of date. Secondly, with regard to the mythic gods, associated with the poets (2. 7), Tertullian could have had a field-day, but he promises a fuller account elsewhere (it is given in *Apology* 22–3). He just assumes that the alleged gods of this class were once merely human beings, adducing in support the contemporary world. 'Look at your own practice, when with similar excess of presumption you sully heaven with the sepulchres of your kings.' Tertullian admits that the pagan principle was to honour those illustrious for justice, etc., and to deprive the impious and disgraceful of even the old prizes of human glory; but he argues that such honours are a prostitution of God's inexhaustible grace and mercy. He then passes on to the scandals of divine immorality. This was an easy target, since Plato had already sought to banish the poets from his ideal state as calumniators of the gods; but Tertullian correctly points out that though some pagans might claim that immoral stories about the gods were merely poetic fables, they none the less show respect for the stories, as the basis of the fine arts, and as the very foundation of their literature and hence higher education. Thirdly, regarding the Gentile gods (2. 8), Tertullian is quite brief, avoiding lengthy polemic against an easy target (unlike Augustine, who is wittily vicious on this subject). He points out the multiplicity of names and functions of the gods in general use among different races, citing some from contemporary knowledge (African Caelestis, Moorish Varsutina, etc.) and some explicitly from Varro (Duluentinus of Casinum, Visidianus of Narnia, etc.). 'I laugh often enough at the little coteries of gods in each municipality (*deos decuriones*), which have their honours confined within their own city walls' (2. 8). He then goes on to argue that some of the

more absurd pagan gods are derived from misinterpretations of Christian Scripture: so Serapis was derived from the biblical story of Joseph (perhaps not an immediately obvious case!). So, in picking Varro's work as his stalking-horse, Tertullian took over the three categories and some of Varro's actual material, but he adapted the points very much with an eye to the present.

This focus on the present is continued in the remainder of the treatise (2. 9–17). Tertullian turns from Varro's threefold distinction of gods, propounded by the philosophers, poets, and the nations, 'to the dominant Romans, who received the tradition and gave it wide authority' (2. 9). He then offers an extended critique of the gods of Rome, who had once merely been human beings. Even the earliest 'gods'—Saturn, Coelus, and Terra—had once been human. Who then made them gods? Some were infamous characters (like Larentina the prostitute), or Jupiter himself. The gods were associated with every stage of life, even the most indelicate (Augustine has fun with the gods of the marriage-bed[39]). Gods who were, according to the pagans, elevated to heaven were also unsuitable: Hercules was a very undesirable character. Tertullian admits (2. 15) that some of the gods whom he has enumerated are peculiarly Roman, and not easily recognized abroad; but he points out that the functions and circumstances over which they are supposed to preside are found throughout the human race. The Roman Empire was certainly not the result of Roman piety towards her gods.

Tertullian's emphasis on Rome and her gods is not the result of a facile antiquarianism. Rather, Rome is central to his contemporary world. He writes easily in *On the Philosopher's Cloak* to people who were proud to be Carthaginians, with some memory of their pre-Roman past, but recognizes that *romanitas* (a unique term which he may have invented) was now everyone's salvation (4. 1). In general, he is conscious of being a provincial, eyeing the great capital. When he talks about the pernicious qualities of Rumour, he thinks not of local gossip, but of 'news' from Rome. 'Fama, malum qua non aliud velocius ullum' (Rumour a curse and swiftest of all curses), in the words of Virgil's *Aeneid*, 4. 174. Rumour presents itself as fact. 'Nobody says, for example, ''They say this occurred at Rome,'' or ''Rumour is that so and so is

[39] *City of God*, 6. 9 (= Beard *et al.*, *Religions of Rome*, ii, no. 2. 2c).

assigned the province,'' but ''He has been assigned the province'' and ''This did occur at Rome'' ' (*Apology*, 7. 8–10). Similarly, in *To the Gentiles* (1. 16. 13–19) Tertullian treats at some length a scandalous case involving unwitting homosexual incest which had recently (? 186–90 CE) come before the Prefect of the City of Rome: the public scandal of this case was illustrative for Tertullian of conventional (if private) immorality.[40]

This focus on Rome was shared by Minucius Felix. As we saw earlier, the setting is just outside Rome, and the arguments of both speakers concern Roman gods. Caecilius' defence refers to familiar examples of Roman religious practices: the introduction of the cult of Mater Magna from Mount Ida, and the fact that after Flaminius spurned the auguries, Lake Trasimene was swollen and dyed with Roman blood. Conversely, Octavius' speech included in its attack on the absurdities of pagan practices some specifically Roman ones: 'some devotees run about naked in the depth of winter; others move in procession wearing felt caps and parading old shields; or they beat drums of hides and go begging from quarter to quarter dragging their gods with them' (24. 11). And so on. Therefore the Roman Empire cannot be dependent on Rome's piety; rather, it is due to her unpunished impiety (25). The Roman focus of the work is noteworthy. There is a good chance that Minucius Felix himself originated in Africa. Though the speaker of *Octavius* represents himself simply as resident in Rome, engaged in legal business (2. 3), his long-standing friend Octavius is shown as having just come to Rome on business, leaving his wife and children behind (2. 1), and Caecilius refers to Fronto as 'Cirtensis noster' (9. 6), explicitly claiming an African origin for himself.[41] The African element in the text is hardly strong, but that might simply show the extent to which Rome had become the conceptual centre of the world for local élites in the Latin West.

All this is very different in the Greek apologies (above, Ch. 5). They operate largely without reference to Rome, even in the case of Justin, who is supposed to have been writing in Rome itself.

[40] Cf. T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 28–9, 105. It is uncertain if Tertullian had himself been in Rome at the time (or ever); what matters is the way he presents Roman material.

[41] It may indeed be true that Caecilius had family connections with Cirta: Clarke, trans. of *Octavius*, 135 n. 11. Note also that the book is preserved in a ninth-century manuscript as the eighth book of the African apologist Arnobius, which suggests that the archetype was an edition of North African texts.

Tertullian and Minucius Felix, like Arnobius and Lactantius later (below, Ch. 9), treat critique of Rome as fundamental to their project, though Tertullian sets this critique firmly in the particular cultural matrix of Carthage: for example, in *On the Philosopher's Cloak* he starts from the once traditional dress of the Carthaginians (and their neighbours in Africa), still used in their local cult of Aesculapius (1). As Rives's book on Carthage shows, this focus would have been immediately familiar and telling to a contemporary Western audience.[42] The differences between the Latin and Greek apologies surely derive from profound differences in the nature of Eastern as against Western culture under the empire.

The focus on Rome shared by the Latin authors conceals some differences of emphasis in their attitude to contemporary culture. Octavius' speech in Minucius Felix sought to draw together the positive strands in pagan poetry (Virgil) and philosophy (Stoicism) that supported the Christian view of a unique and providential god (17–19). (In this he may have been influenced by Justin's rather similar ambition.) And of course the treatise moves at the end to the conversion of the pagan Caecilius. Tertullian, on the other hand, is at first sight much more exclusivist. In *To the Gentiles* and *Apology* he does not have much if anything positive to say about the positive contributions of pagan thought. However, there is another sense in which he does seek to build bridges between paganism and Christianity.[43] Recall the tactic of *On the Evidence of the Soul*: the treatise rejects the two obvious approaches of defending Christianity by finding pagan predecessors and of attacking pagan differences from Christianity. Instead, it presents the human soul as an impartial authority, neither pagan nor Christian. And in *On the Philosopher's Cloak* he uses arguments that an educated pagan could have accepted to suggest that conversion to Christianity was the next logical step to take. Even in *To the Gentiles* and *Apology* he is placatory in down-playing the novelty of Christianity (except *Apology*, 37. 4) and in stressing its antiquity (*To the Gentiles*, 2. 2. 5; *Apology*, 19). Even pagans, with

[42] Rives, *Religion*; cf. further Beard *et al*., *Religions of Rome*, i, ch. 7. Rome is also important in understanding the Acts of the Apostles and Josephus, *Against Apion* (above, Chs. 2, 3). Constantine's *Oration to the Saints* may have been delivered in Rome (below, Ch. 11).

[43] Klein, *Tertullian*; Frédouille, *Tertullien*, 235–54.

their commitment to traditionalism, were innovative in their customs, and laws too were capable of progress. Whereas Cyprian held a gloomy view according to which natural disasters were due to the fact that the world was growing old and weary, Tertullian upheld the possibility of progress. The Christians were the real upholders of Truth; they were responsible for the ending of natural disasters; and the empire was secure because the emperor held power from the Christian god. The path was open for a reconciliation of Christianity and Rome.

7

Origen's Treatise *Against Celsus*

MICHAEL FREDE

Origen (184/5–254/5 CE) was a notoriously prolific writer.[1] Even taking into account that the ancients tended to measure literary productivity in terms of books, rather than writings, so that a work such as a commentary on John's Gospel might count not as one, but as more than thirty-two books, Epiphanius' claim (*Panarion*, 64. 63) that Origen wrote 6,000 books sounds fantastic, but reflects the correct belief that Origen wrote a great deal. According to Jerome (*Against Rufinus*, 2. 22), Eusebius in book 3 of his *Life of Pamphilus*, listed no fewer than 2,000 books by Origen. Almost all of these writings have been lost; some of them are extant only in fragments; and very few have come down to us in their entirety. One of these is Origen's *Against Celsus*, or, to be more precise, 'Against the So-Titled *True Account* of Celsus', in eight books. The work was written, if we follow Eusebius (*History*, 6. 36. 1–3), during the reign of Philip the Arab (244–9 CE), when Origen was already over 60. There is no evidence with which to question Eusebius' date. There is some evidence internal to *Against Celsus* which suggests a date before the outbreak of the Decian persecutions (Origen seems to be writing at a time of peace for the Church), but also a time of upheaval and revolt in the empire (cf. *Against Celsus*, 3. 15), perhaps a reference to the revolts of Jotapianus, Pacatianus, and Uranius Antoninus. This would point to the year 248 CE.

Tradition classifies the writing as 'apologetic'. Indeed, even those who, on doctrinal grounds, are rather ambivalent in their

I am indebted to Henry Chadwick, and to the editors of this volume, for comments on earlier drafts of the present chapter.

[1] The best surveys of Origen's life and thought are Daniélou, *Origène*, and Crouzel, *Origen*.

judgement of Origen tend to think of *Against Celsus* as a very important—if not the most important—work of Christian apologetic literature, perhaps even the culmination of the tradition of ancient Christian apologetic writing.[2] Given that the very notion of 'apologetics' and its usefulness as a category is in question, I want, in what follows, to discuss *Against Celsus* as an apologetic writing, to try to determine the precise sense in which it is an apology, the purpose it is meant to serve, and the audience it is meant to address. I thereby hope to contribute to a clarification of the notion of 'apologetics', which often seems so vague as to be useless.

It is crucial for an understanding of Origen's work as apologetic writing that, unlike the earlier apologetic writings known to us, the well-known apologies of the second century, it is a response to a specific book by a specific author—namely, Celsus' *True Account*—rather than merely a reply to a set of more or less widespread, but essentially anonymous accusations or criticisms.

Hence we should start by at least briefly considering the author and the work to which Origen responded with his apology. Nothing is known about Celsus and his *True Account* except for what we can infer from Origen's response, and Origen himself clearly did not know anything about Celsus, except for what he could infer from Celsus' text. All later notices concerning Celsus seem to depend on Origen.

Celsus, it turns out without a doubt,[3] was a Platonist philosopher who wrote an attack upon Christianity entitled *The True Account*. The treatise must have been written after 160 CE, presumably some time around 175 CE,[4] but hardly much later. For this attack Celsus could rely on an already substantial tradition of Jewish and pagan criticism of Christianity. This tradition would have been largely oral. We can only identify one written source which Celsus clearly relied on for his criticisms, because he himself refers to it: namely, the *Dispute between Jason and Papiscus concerning Christ* (4. 52).[5] This dialogue (cf. Eusebius, *History*,

[2] See e.g. the warm appreciation in Fédou, *Christianisme et religions païennes*. For a more concise study of Origen's apologetic method, see Chadwick, 'Evidences of Christianity'.

[3] See my 'Celsus philosophus Platonicus' on this point.

[4] The date is discussed by Rosenbaum, 'Zur Datierung von Celsus'.

[5] On *Jason and Papiscus*, see Rajak in this volume, p. 61 and n. 7.

4. 6. 3) set out the Jewish criticism of Jesus and the Christian response to it. Celsus may have availed himself of this work for the first part of his treatise in which, after a preface, he sets out first the objections raised against Jesus by the Jews, then the objections which the Jews raised against Christians, in particular against their claim that Jesus was the Messiah promised by Jewish Scripture. Only then does Celsus begin to criticize Christianity *in propria persona* from a pagan point of view, attacking Christianity, for instance, for its Jewish origin. There is no evidence, though, that Celsus relied, or even could have relied, upon an earlier pagan attack on Christianity in writing; thus Celsus seems to have been the first pagan to set out to write a whole treatise against Christianity.

The importance of Celsus' writing lies in the fact that it constitutes a fairly extensive compendium of arguments against Christianity, and we may assume that Celsus, who shows himself to be reasonably well-informed about Christianity—indeed, surprisingly well-informed for an educated pagan of his time—collected arguments, tried to improve on them, and tried to raise further difficulties. A great many of these arguments were common knowledge, part of the common lore about Christians, the kinds of argument the apologists of the second century replied to—for instance, the argument that Christians are supposed to accept uncritically as true what they are told to believe (1. 9). But most arguments are much more specific and precise. So we have to assume that Celsus collected many of them from an oral tradition, being present at, or even participating in, discussions between Christians and pagans, and discussing the issues with like-minded pagans. Further, he obviously went out of his way to acquire information about Christianity which would provide him with further arguments. Especially if we assume that he did not have any written pagan source to rely on, we have to admit that his collection of objections to Christianity constitutes a considerable achievement. In addition, he managed to organize this material, as we have seen, by dividing it into Jewish versus pagan objections to Christianity, but then subsuming them under one overriding argument.

Celsus' argument basically was this: there was a true account of the world, which was the common heritage not only of Greeks, but of the whole of civilized mankind (see e.g. 1. 14): namely, the

true account to which the title of Celsus' work refers.[6] This account involves, for instance, the assumption of one God, adored by the different ancient nations under different names (1. 24; 5. 41), a God who governs the world and imposes a divine order on it. Plato had not invented this account, but had been a paradigmatic exponent of it, for those, at least, who had achieved, with his help, the insight to understand his writings. But substantial parts of the true account are accessible to any sensible person, in a form that even the ordinary person can understand and accept: namely, in the form of the religious beliefs, cults, and practices of the ancient nations which have cultivated this heritage. The Christians have abandoned this true account, to adopt, in place of the beliefs and cults of their ancestors, a 'barbarian', namely Jewish doctrine, which is a debased and highly confused form of the true account, not the heritage of an ancient nation, but one fabricated by a sorcerer, Moses. But the Christians, in turn, revolted against Judaism, which at least was a recognized religion. In doing so, and in forming secret associations, they have stepped outside the Law and its protection of recognized cults. In adopting, and converting others to, their new doctrine, they not only saddle themselves and others with a bag of false—indeed, often ludicrous—beliefs; but they adopt an outlook on things which is immoral, impious, blasphemous. They deserve to be reproached. Indeed, they deserve to be prosecuted and punished (8. 55). Celsus repeatedly refers to the persecution and the death which justly await an unrepentant Christian (see e.g. 8. 69).

Presumably, as I said, Celsus was the first pagan to write a special treatise against Christianity. But it has to be admitted that neither the fact that Celsus does not refer to an earlier pagan written source, nor the fact that we do not know of any earlier pagan author in this genre, amounts to much. For obvious reasons, tradition has been extremely hostile to anti-Christian writings. Already John Chrysostom (*Address to the Greeks*, 2) could remark that anti-Christian writings seemed to perish almost the moment they appeared, and that, if they were to be found at all, it was in the hands of Christians. If it were not for Origen's refutation of him, we would, for instance, not only not have very substantial portions of Celsus' text, we would not know anything

[6] I have discussed this at greater length in my 'Celsus' Attack on the Christians'.

about him at all. But Celsus, whether or not the first, was certainly followed by others. We know of similar treatises against the Christians by Porphyry, by Julian (*Against the Galilaeans*), and by an anonymous author whose treatise was attacked by Macarius Magnes.[7] It hardly needs to be said that none of these treatises has come down to us. Hence we are not in a position to see clearly whether there was an evolving tradition of writings of this kind, in the course of which individual arguments became increasingly refined. Eusebius suggests (*Against Hierocles*, 1), presumably with good reason, that Hierocles relied on Celsus; and at least for Hierocles' comparison of Apollonius of Tyana and Jesus, the particular argument which Eusebius focuses on in his reply to Hierocles, we can see how a passage in Celsus might have invited this argument (see below, p. 232). Thus, we are not in a good position to judge the role which Celsus played, and was seen to play, in the development of an anti-Christian position among the pagans. Nor do we have anything but Origen's treatise and a few remarks by Eusebius in *Against Hierocles* to get some measure of the importance Christians attached to Celsus.[8]

We also do not have much of a measure as to how effective Celsus' treatise might have been in persuading Christians to apostatize. We do not know how effective any of the anti-Christian treatises were. Cyril of Alexandria, in his dedicatory preface to his *Against Julian* (*PG* 76, 508C) claimed that Julian's *Against the Galilaeans* made many desert the faith. This was written under, and dedicated to, Theodosius. Hence the present tense, 'makes many desert', presupposes that even after Julian's death his work continued to be read and was perceived to constitute a threat.

We may now turn to Origen's response to Celsus. There is no doubt that Origen conceives of it as an apology. He uses the very word *apologia*, when, at the outset of chapter 3 of the preface (p. 52, 25, Koetschau), he addresses Ambrosius and says that the apology which Ambrosius has asked him to write cannot but be weaker than the defence which lies in the facts themselves, which are more convincing than any words could be. And by this time,

[7] For fuller remarks on Macarius, see my chapter on Eusebius in this volume, pp. 234–5. For a sceptical enquiry into his value as a witness to Porphyry, see T. D. Barnes, 'Porphyry against the Christians'.

[8] On *Against Hierocles*, see in this volume Swain, pp. 191–2, and Frede, pp. 231–5.

hardly a page into the printed text, he has already used the verb *apologein* five times, including once in the first sentence and once in the second. The idea of an apology, a defence, is thus pressed on us from the very beginning. And the noun or the verb recur frequently throughout the rest of the preface and the whole treatise.

The sense in which Origen himself called *Against Celsus* an apology is also clear enough. It derives from the sense of 'apology' in which a defendant in court answers the charges against him. This is evident from the fact that Origen in the preface from the very beginning speaks of an apology against 'accusations' (*katēgoria*) and the rebuttal of 'false testimony' (*pseudomarturia*), clearly evoking the image of a court case (cf. preface, 1. 51. 1, 4, 6–7, 9–10, 11–12, 16; 2. 52. 9, 19, and especially 23–4, for 'false testimony'). It is also clear from the fact that Origen begins the preface by reminding us that when Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, accused by false witnesses, he refused to respond.

Origen's use of *apologia* derives from this legal sense, but is *not* this sense. For, of course, we are not in a real court. Celsus is not going to court against Christians, and Origen does not defend Christians, let alone himself, in court against Celsus.

But, for a simple reason, the analogy of a response in court, and hence this derivative use of *apologia*, is pressed on Origen. It is Celsus' treatise which insists that Christians have a legal case to answer. To judge from 1. 1 and 3. 1, Celsus must have begun his preface with the point that Christianity was illegal. And towards the very end of his treatise (cf. 8. 68, 69), he reminded Christians rather forcefully that they would deservedly be persecuted, punished, and executed, if they did not desist from their folly of their own accord. The main body of Celsus' treatise consisted of an attempt to make them see, by rational persuasion, the folly of their ways before it was too late, rather in the way that Roman judges, for the most part, apparently tried to convince Christians of their error. But just as a judge had to condemn a Christian who did not apostatize, so Celsus insisted that those Christians who did not yield to the gentle power of persuasion would have to face the sheer force of coercion, and, if this should be of no avail, severe punishment, perhaps even death.

So the sense in which Origen writes an apology is closely related to the sense in which the apologists of the second century wrote

apologies. In both cases we are dealing with responses not given in court to accusations not raised in court. And in both cases the accusations are such that Christians are accused of criminality, so that they could stand accused in court, and in addition have to face all sorts of objections concerning their morality, their education, and their rationality—in short, their civic respectability—objections which might well be endorsed by Roman magistrates or even the emperor. But there also is an important difference in the way in which at least some of the apologists, on the one hand, and Origen, on the other, take up the image of a legal proceeding. Apologists like Justin stay within the confines of the image, by at least pretending that their apology constitutes a submission to the emperor as the ultimate judge and source of law, who, for instance, could declare Christianity legal. But Origen does no such thing. And this may not just be due to the fact that he is responding to the accusations and criticism raised by a private citizen who explicitly refrains, for the time being, from insisting that Christians should be taken to court. For even so, Origen, given that Celsus had raised the matter, could address the legal situation, and plead for a change in the law, then proceed to address the distorted picture of Christianity which Celsus paints. When at the very end of his response, in the penultimate paragraph of the treatise, Origen returns to the image of a legal case, when he, as it were, rests his case, he does not address the authorities of the State, but rather the reader as the judge in this case. It is the reader who will have to judge which of the two submissions in the case, Celsus' *True Account* or Origen's *Response*, is more imbued by a spirit of piety and devotion and a concern for a good life (3. 76, p. 293, 3 ff.). Origen presents his apology as a personal, private response to the attack of a private individual, rather than as a quasi-legal document addressed to some authority. As a result, the sense of the term 'apology' involved here, though still derived from the legal sense of the term, which right from the beginning is very much in the background of the treatise, is much further removed from its legal use than the apologists' use of it. Correspondingly, the literary form also is quite different. Origen's text belongs to a different literary genre of apologetic writing. Eusebius (*Preparation*, 1. 4, p. 10, 23–4) seems to recognize this, when he classifies as a distinct genre of apologetics 'refutations and counter-accounts of accounts directed

against us'. There is a reason to suppose that Origen's treatise is the first in this genre. His remarks, at the very end of the preface in the penultimate sentence, that those who are not satisfied with his response should turn to others who are better able to refute Celsus in words and by writing treatises, might be taken to indicate that Origen had a predecessor or predecessors. But, seen in conjunction with the last sentence of the preface and in the context of the whole preface, these remarks rather suggest that, though there may be people who are better able to refute Celsus, perhaps even in writing, a true Christian should not stand in need of a written response, but should consider the life of Jesus and those who followed him. Moreover, if Celsus had already found a Christian response in writing, we would expect some remarks to the effect that Ambrosius, who had urged Origen to write *Against Celsus*, had found this earlier response inadequate and for that reason had pressed Origen to try to improve on it. In any case, we do not have any knowledge of an earlier response to Celsus. Nor do we know of any other anti-Christian writing after Celsus and before Origen, let alone of a Christian response to it. So Origen's treatise is, at the very least, the first known example of this form of Christian apologetic writing.

Origen was followed, though, by others, and in this way stands at the beginning of a whole genre of apologetic writings. Methodius, Apollinarius, and Eusebius responded to Porphyry's *Against the Christians*; Eusebius responded to Hierocles' *Friend of the Truth*; Cyril of Alexandria wrote *Against Julian* in response to the emperor's *Against the Galilaeans*; and Macarius Magnes answered the anonymous author who is thought to have relied on Porphyry. These Christian responses, too, have been transmitted only very selectively, as if they contained the very poison they were meant to combat. The treatises against Porphyry just mentioned, for instance, are unfortunately all lost, and even Cyril's answer to Julian is only partially extant. We have to assume that there was more of this kind of Christian literature, which has disappeared without trace, along with the pagan treatises against Christianity which it tried to respond to.

Hence, it is all the more remarkable that Origen's treatise should have been transmitted intact, given that orthodoxy has regarded Origen with suspicion, if not horror. Sections of it were protected by their reception into the *Philokalia*, and thus by the

authority of Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus. But obviously, given the case of the *First Principles*, parts of which are also preserved in the *Philokalia*, but whose Greek original otherwise, apart from some fragments, is lost, this does not suffice to explain the preservation of the text as a whole. Nor does it seem enough to point out that, given that Celsus does not consider it appropriate to go into the more theoretical, philosophical, and speculative details of the true account, Origen similarly in his response is not called upon to take a stand on issues on which his own view could be regarded as unorthodox, and hence offensive. *Against Celsus* must have been thought of as particularly useful. We will return later to a guess as to why this may have been so.

To get clearer about this, we have to turn to the question of what purpose the treatise was meant to serve. There is a view which seems to make the answer to this question obvious. It is the view that here, in the last third of the second century, we have nothing less than a learned Platonist philosopher publishing a scathing critique of Christianity which demands an answer, but that this answer is not forthcoming until about seventy years later, when we finally find a Christian, namely Origen, who is in a position to give a response which has long been overdue. Even then, some think, Origen did not fully manage to meet this formidable challenge.[9] If this were correct, the purpose of the treatise would obviously be to free Christians of the embarrassing and intolerable situation of not being able to respond adequately to Celsus' attack, and thus to suffer in the esteem at least of educated persons outside Christianity whom Christians might want to attract.

But I think things must be a great deal more complicated than that. Perhaps the best way to approach the matter is to take note of the fact that Origen, right from the beginning of the preface through to the end of the treatise, makes it very clear that though Ambrosius has pressed him to write this apology, he has had grave misgivings about the enterprise and the purpose it may serve, and has only undertaken it because he has been asked to do so with such insistence. Ambrosius was his friend and patron (Eusebius, *History*, 6. 8. 1), who provided him with stenographers, scribes, and calligraphers (6. 23. 1–2), without which he would never have

[9] So at least I argue in my 'Celsus' Attack on the Christians', notwithstanding Fédou, *Christianisme et religions païennes*.

been able to produce, and to make public, his voluminous writings, such as, for instance, *Against Celsus*.

There is a trace of this in the text of *Against Celsus* itself, which reflects Origen's reliance on tachygraphers and scribes. If we look at the beginning of 1. 28, we see that something must have gone wrong with the text. Origen starts the chapter by saying:

> But since he also introduces fictional characters, he also, imitating in a way a rhetor who introduces a child into his speech, introduces a Jew who says some childish things to Jesus. . . . Let us then according to our ability also examine these things and refute Celsus also in this regard that in what gets said he has not managed to preserve at all the fictional character which is fitting for a Jew.

But then he goes on to say: 'After this he introduces the fictional character of a Jew who has a discussion with Jesus himself and tries to refute him on many points.'

There would be no problem, if it emerged from the discussion which follows in Origen that Celsus had introduced two Jews, both fictional characters, of which the first said childish things to Jesus which a Jew would never say, and the second had a discussion with Jesus, and if Origen correspondingly had first answered the first Jew introduced by Celsus revealing his childishness, and had then addressed the remarks of the second Jew. But this is not at all what happens. From 1. 28 onwards he seems to be discussing the objections of just one Jew, the one introduced in the second of the two passages quoted above from the beginning of 1. 28. At the beginning of 1. 32 he returns to these criticisms of the Jew introduced in the second passage, characterizing them as the objections of a fictional Jew. At the end of 1. 44 he turns to the point that this Jew must be fictional, as he is made to say things which a real Jew would not say. But this was Origen's criticism levelled against Celsus' fiction of the Jew introduced in the first of the two passages quoted above. Thus Origen criticizes the supposed second fictional Jew precisely in the way in which the beginning of the chapter had made us expect he would criticize the first fictional Jew. Similarly, it is the supposed second Jew about whom Origen complains in 1. 37 that the remarks attributed to him are ridiculous and not worthy of a serious person. With this he is obviously taking up the remark in the first of the two passages quoted, that the Jew introduced by Celsus is made to

say childish things. Hence it is clear that Celsus introduced only one fictional Jew, that Origen in 1. 28 ff. is addressing only the supposed remarks of this one fictional Jew, and that, hence, the passages quoted must be referring not to two different Jews, but to one and the same Jew, a clearly fictional character because he is made to say things a real Jew would not say, moreover somebody whose remarks are ridiculous and childish. But this means that the second passage quoted must constitute a doublet of the first.

Scholars have long seen this, and have connected it with a remark in Origen's preface. There (6, p. 54, 29 ff.) Origen tells us that when he came to the passage in Celsus in which Celsus introduces 'the' fictional Jew, he decided first to write the preface. So we may presume that what happened is this. Origen first wrote 1. 1–1. 28, first sentence, then the preface, and then continued with 1. 28, second sentence, which we see is a doublet of the first sentence. Obviously, if Origen had done the writing himself, he would have noticed that he had already said that at this point Celsus introduces a fictional Jew. It is only if we assume that Origen was dictating that we readily understand that, having dictated the preface, he resumed dictation of the main body of the text, but forgot that he had already dictated a sentence about the fictional Jew whom Celsus then introduces. So here we have a glimpse of the situation which physically enabled Origen to be such a prolific writer. And we also see that Origen cannot have proof read, as it were, at the end—at least not with care—as otherwise he would have deleted the second sentence. It looks as if Origen, having dictated the text, left its further production to others.

But why was Origen so hesitant to write *Against Celsus*? The notion of an apology must have evoked in any philosophically minded, or even just educated, Christian two rather different paradigms: Socrates' apology and Jesus' apology, or rather lack of it, to which Origen refers at the very outset. The precise historical details of Socrates' case are somewhat unclear. But the way in which the case presented itself to posterity was this: Socrates, because of his philosophical activity, was unjustly accused of corrupting the young; he was condemned to death because he refused to compromise and save his life—for instance, by promising in future to desist from his philosophical activity which the Athenians found so disturbing; in fact, to follow Plato's

Apology, in court he went so far out of his way to defend his activity as to invite his condemnation. It is difficult not to see a certain parallel to the case of Christian martyrs and their *apologia* in court. They are accused because they are Christians. They could save themselves by compromising—for instance, by saying that they have changed their minds and will not continue in their Christian ways. Instead, their defence consists in more or less provocatively reaffirming their commitment to Christianity, thus inviting their martyrdom. It was a parallel which, if we are to trust the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, was on the mind of some of the martyrs themselves, and certainly had come to the mind of those who composed or redacted the *Acts*. Apollonius (*Acts of Apollonius*, 19) refers to Socrates, and, somewhat later (41) in his defence, even draws a parallel between Socrates' and Christ's being unjustly condemned. Pionius (*Acts of Pionius*, 17. 2–3) compares his situation to that of Socrates, Aristides, and Anaxarchus. And Phileas (*Acts of Phileas*, 2. 2) refuses to sacrifice, referring to Socrates as somebody who cared more for his soul than his life when he was on trial. Socrates, his trial and condemnation, and his defence are also on the minds of the apologists. Sometimes this is so only very incidentally, as when Tatian (*To the Greeks*, 3) ridicules Zeno's doctrine of the eternal recurrence, according to which Anytus and Meletus will bring a case against Socrates again and again, or in Athenagoras (*Embassy*, 8. 3), where Socrates is invoked simply as an example. But sometimes the reference to Socrates is a substantial part of the argument, as in Athenagoras, *Embassy*, 31. 2, or in Pseudo-Justin, *Exhortation*, 36. It is particularly, and, given Justin's philosophical past, not surprisingly, Justin's *Apologies* which are full of explicit and implicit references to Socrates.[10] Justin goes so far as to claim that Socrates, though he lived before Christ, was a Christian, because he lived with the Logos (*First Apology*, 1. 46. 3), and because he partially recognized Christ in recognizing the Logos (*Second Apology*, 18. 8). In *Second Apology*, 7. 3, he refers to Socrates as an example of a person who had to suffer because the demons see to it that the good suffer. In *First Apology*, 5. 3–4, it is the demons who turn the Athenians against Socrates, because Socrates has tried to free Athens from the influence of the

[10] On Justin's *Apologies* and their allusions to Socrates, see Young in this volume, p. 91.

demons. *First Apology*, 18. 5, refers to Socrates' and other philosophers' views on the afterlife. More pertinently, *Second Apology*, 10. 5–8, talks about Socrates' attempt to free people from their false opinions and of his trial, but also of his inability, in contrast to Christ, to convince anybody else to die for the truth. *First Apology* starts out with two implicit references to Socrates, immediately following the address to the emperors. It talks of the true philosophers who are willing to speak the truth even under threat of death (2. 1), and, briefly afterwards (2. 4), more or less quotes Plato's *Apology* (30c–d), which has Socrates say that the Athenians can kill him, but not harm him, a passage explicitly referred to also by Origen in *Against Celsus* (8. 8).

Against Celsus itself, interestingly enough, is also full of references to Socrates: some implicit, but at least fifteen explicit ones. In fact, it turns out that Socrates could hardly have failed to come to Origen's mind in writing *Against Celsus*, since Celsus quoted Plato, *Apology*, 20d (ibid. 6. 12), and right at the outset compared the risk which Christians were running in trying to publicize their doctrine to the risk taken by Socrates for the sake of philosophy (1. 3). Many of the references in Origen are not germane to our topic (1. 64; 3. 25; 3. 66; 4. 39; 4. 97; 6. 8), but several, in one way or another, do refer to Socrates' trial and death (4. 59; 4. 67, and 5. 20–1; and of course, 1. 3 and 8. 8, which we have already cited). Origen himself refers to Plato's *Apology*, 21a (7. 6), and twice he compares the suffering of Jesus to that of Socrates (2. 41 and 7. 56).

So the parallel between the Christian who stands accused, and is supposed to defend himself, and Socrates—indeed, the parallel between Jesus himself and Socrates—was very much on people's minds, and was certainly on Origen's mind, as is clear from the very first sentence of *Against Celsus*. It should be noted that the parallel could not have been overlooked for the mere reason that attacks against Christianity, from either the Jewish or the pagan side, to a large extent, and crucially, involved attacks on Jesus. Thus Origen, preface, 2 (end), explicitly remarks that Jesus continues to be accused, and will be accused as long as there is evil. But, of course, both pagans and Christians would insist that the parallel between Christ and Socrates was limited, as there were also significant differences. After all, for a Christian, Christ was God. And it is some of these differences which are crucial for our purposes. There is something triumphant about Socrates'

apology—for instance, about his claim that he can be killed, but not harmed. And there is something disturbing about the fact that he so insists on his commitment to the pursuit of truth that he, it seems knowingly, provokes his condemnation. There is something similarly triumphant, though again somewhat disturbing, about the apologies of the martyrs to the extent that they seem meant to provoke condemnation. Now, it would not have occurred to anybody that there was anything ignominious about Socrates' being condemned to death like a criminal. The ignominy fell entirely upon the Athenians. Not only was Socrates innocent, but in his defence he had stood up to the Athenians, even if this meant his death.

But the story of Jesus is quite different. When Jesus was asked to respond to the accusations, he was silent. It is with this very point that Origen begins his apology, and which he goes on explaining for the first two paragraphs of his preface. There was no apologia—let alone a triumphant, self-assertive one. This the pagans found impossible to understand, unacceptable, and ignominious. Celsus, too, does not omit to criticize the meekness with which Jesus underwent his trial (2. 33 ff., 67–8). This is what Hierocles was out to criticize by contrasting it with Apollonius' trial, in the course of which Apollonius not only defends himself, but then miraculously disappears (cf. *Against Hierocles*, 38; Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 5. 3. 9).[11] Indeed, Apollonius is made to improve on Socrates. If Socrates said that they could take his body, but not himself or his soul, Apollonius repeats this, only to correct himself to say that they cannot even take his body (*Against Hierocles*, 38). Macarius Magnes has to respond to the same kind of criticism, perhaps already going back to Porphyry (*Monogenes*, 1).

How the pagans thought about this is illustrated in more detail by the way in which the case of Apollonius of Tyana is described by Philostratus in his *Life* (8. 5–6), on which Hierocles draws. We do not know whether Philostratus wrote the *Life* to present Apollonius as a much more attractive alternative to Jesus. But, whatever his intentions, he goes out of his way to describe Apollonius, when asked to account for himself in front of the notoriously tyrannical Domitian, as facing the emperor down in no uncertain terms (and as miraculously extracting himself from

[11] On the purpose of the *Life of Apollonius*, see the chapters in this volume by Swain, pp. 176–96, and Frede, pp. 232–3.

prison and escaping unjust punishment; but this is not the issue at this point). A forceful, fearless apologia which puts the accuser in his place is what the ancients expected of a wise or holy man.

Of the two opposed paradigms, even Christians, as we have seen, saw something attractive in Socrates' behaviour. But Origen, obviously right from the beginning, is mindful of the example of Jesus. Confronted with Celsus' false accusations, Origen is inclined to think that they should be borne in silence, rather than countered in a triumphant *apologia* putting Celsus in his place. So here is a first reason for Origen's hesitation. But rather than just saying that his hesitation, in part at least, is a matter of being influenced by Jesus' example, we can be a bit more precise about it. For Origen explains Jesus' behaviour (preface, 1). Jesus thought that his life constituted a better response to the false accusations than any words could. So Origen seems to think that the kind of accusations raised by Celsus are based to such an extent on misunderstanding, on failure, inability, or unwillingness to understand, on distortion, on lack of good faith, that ultimately the only way to respond to them is not by clever or artfully crafted words, but by the example one sets by one's life in following Jesus. So Origen, at the end of the second chapter of the preface, says that Jesus continues to be accused, but persists in his silence in face of his accusers, relying on the life of a true Christian to be a response to the accusations against him.

So this is the first reason for Origen's hesitation, a reason he went out of his way to make clear right from the beginning, with the first sentences of the preface. A second reason for Origen's hesitation, by its very nature, is much more difficult to pull out of the text. I want to argue that Origen quickly came to realize that his apology was bound to be inherently unsatisfactory, because it would not serve the purpose for which it was intended.

Let us leave the intended purpose aside for a moment, and just note in what regard Origen's work is unsatisfactory, was bound to be unsatisfactory, and was realized by Origen himself to be unsatisfactory.

One thing which is unsatisfactory about Origen's *Against Celsus* is its lack of structure. Book 1 closes with the remark that Origen has now dealt with the objections against Jesus which Celsus has put into the mouth of a Jew, to turn in book 2 to the Jew's criticism of the Christians in following Jesus as the Messiah.

Book 2 opens correspondingly, repeating the aim of book 1 and announcing the topic of book 2. Book 3 opens with a remark as to what has been accomplished in books 1 and 2, and announces that he will now turn to the objections which Celsus raises as a pagan against Christianity. So there is this much clear structure. But it is telling that from book 3 onwards the book divisions do not seem to correspond to a division in the argument. Unlike at the end of books 1 and 2, we no longer get a remark as to what the subject of the book was. Instead, at the end of books 3, 4, 6, and 7, we get the somewhat bland remark that the book is now long enough to be concluded, as if Origen, or rather his scribe, had come to the end of the book roll. Indeed, the different books, with the conspicuous exception of books 4 and 5, are all of rather similar length, in Koetschau's pages 74, 76, 69, 82, 67, 72, as opposed to 101 and 99 for book 4 and book 5. Nor do the prefaces of the books after 3, with the slight exception of book 7, even try to give us an idea of the content of the book. Rather, they give the impression that Origen is pressed to go on commenting on Celsus' argument, point after point, as well as he can.

Now this lack of structure must be largely due to a certain lack of structure in Celsus' argument. As Origen tells us at the beginning of book 3, Celsus' treatise had a preface, then turned to Jewish objections to Jesus, then to Jewish objections to the Christian belief in Jesus as predicted by Jewish Scripture, and then to pagan objections to Christianity. Celsus, as we saw, also tried to fit his objections to Christianity into an overarching argument to the effect that Christians had abandoned the true account and should return to it. Obviously and understandably, though, he had great difficulty in organizing his collection of anti-Christian arguments into one well-ordered whole with a transparent structure. It is surely no accident that scholars who have tried to reconstruct Celsus' argument have had considerable difficulty identifying an underlying train of thought which would have given structure to the whole treatise, and this in spite of Origen's generous quotations and paraphrases following the order of Celsus' text.[12] Even in the case of Celsus' preface, which we have to imagine to have been written with particular care, the first twenty-seven chapters of book 1, which Origen

[12] For a reconstruction, see the edition of Glöckner.

spends on its main points, make it difficult to discover any clear line of argument. And from book 3 onwards, when we turn to Celsus' pagan objections to Christianity, the lines of Celsus' thought or argument become quite diffuse and unclear, as a simple look at the many attempts to present his argument in outline immediately show (e.g. Koetschau's in the preface to his edition, pp. li–lvi, which was already Koetschau's second attempt to produce such an outline). So we are not surprised to find that Origen already complains at the beginning of 1. 41 that he just has to take up Celsus' points one by one, without concern for the logical place and order of the matters discussed, but following their order in Celsus' treatise. And very soon, from 1. 49 onwards, many of Origen's chapters begin monotonously with 'After this', or 'Next', or 'Then' (1. 49, 50, 58, 62, 67, 68, 69, 71, just to consider the rest of the first book after the change of plan), as if there were no logical order between the topics addressed. At 2. 32 Origen says that he is not going to repeat himself just because Celsus is repeating himself. But at 6. 10 he complains that he has to repeat himself, because Celsus is repeating himself, instead of dealing with a topic once and for all in the place in which it belongs. This complaint against Celsus' repetitiveness appears again and again (cf. 2. 5; 2. 46; 4. 18; 5. 53; 6. 12).

Now this question of logical order and structure, the lack of which Origen himself complains about, is of obvious practical importance. And here we have to return to the question of the envisaged purpose of the book. At 1. 41 Origen complains that he has to take up Celsus' points one by one, as they come in Celsus' text, rather than in logical order. After all, he has been asked to respond to Celsus, and he is afraid, as he explains in 1. 41, that if he does not take up all of Celsus' points one by one, people will think that Christians do not have an answer to points that Origen fails to address. Now, if we imagine Celsus to have been a well-known author, and the *True Account* to have been a well-known book, which for seventy years had awaited, and demanded, an adequate answer on the part of Christians if they wanted to be assured of the defensibility of their own position and were concerned to retain their intellectual respectability, then Origen could not do anything else but what he did—namely, rebut Celsus point for point.

But, as I have already indicated, I doubt very much that Celsus

was a well-known author, that the *True Account* was a well-known challenge to Christianity, that it had a wide circulation, and that what was urgently needed was somebody with the qualifications of an Origen to respond to it. Even Origen had not heard of Celsus. Otherwise he would not have persisted, for more than half of his response, in referring to Celsus as an Epicurean. Eusebius, too, not short on learning, had not heard of Celsus independently of Origen's reply to him. Otherwise he would not have continued to call Celsus an Epicurean (*Ecclesiastical History*, 6. 36, 2).[13] There is, as I said earlier, no ancient information even among Christian authors about Celsus which is independent of Origen; this would be surprising if Celsus had been regarded as such an important author. Almost certainly Origen did not have a copy of Celsus' treatise, as he received the text only from Ambrosius. Almost certainly he had not read the treatise before he received Ambrosius' request to respond to it, let alone carefully. Admittedly, Origen wrote his response assuming that some readers might have Celsus text available to them. Otherwise he would not have worried (1. 41) that people might think him not to be in a position to answer a point of Celsus if he just passed it over. And if Eusebius is right that Hierocles relied on Celsus, then the text did have some circulation. But it is equally clear that Origen wrote in a way which suggested that he assumed that readers in general would not have access to Celsus' text. Otherwise there would have been no point in quoting and paraphrasing Celsus at such length, as if readers would not know what Celsus' objections were, would have had no ready way to find out, and had to be told by Origen.

In any case, it is not true that Origen had no alternative but to write an apology rather lacking in structure by following Celsus' text point by point. For he himself tells us in the preface (6) that he changed plan when he arrived at the point in Celsus' text at which Celsus introduced the fictional Jew—that is, presumably, at the end of Celsus' preface and the beginning of his actual treatise. Origen, indeed, 'apologizes' (p. 54, 35–6), and asks our forgiveness (p. 55, 7)—rather strong, loaded words in this context. It is very clear from Origen's remarks, especially given that we have the text from 1. 28 onwards, written according to the new plan, to which plan Origen switched. It is not so clear what the original

[13] For a fuller account of Eusebius' relation to Origen, see T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 80–125.

plan was. Origen tells us that originally he had planned to proceed in two steps, to first note the main points (*kephalaion*) which Celsus made, and briefly sketch the kind of response he planned to give, and then, in a second step, to give body (*sōmatopoiēsai*) to his reply (*ton logon*) (p. 55, 1–3). But, he continues, in order to save time, he just let 1. 1–27, his originally provisional notes, stand; but from 1. 28 onwards proceeded to take up Celsus' objections one by one, and to immediately write a full reply to them. 1. 1–27 corresponds to the description in the preface. Chapter 1 begins, 'Celsus' first *kephalaion* is . . .', followed some lines later by 'against this one has to say that . . .' (p. 56, 9), a phrase which turns into a formula repeated, for instance, in chapters 3 (p. 57, 25), 9 (p. 61, 21), and 12 (p. 64, 16–17), sometimes replaced by 'one has to say' or 'one has to refute this' or 'him'.

What is less clear is how Origen originally planned to use the provisional notes. One possibility is that he had planned to give the different points some further thought, or even work on them, before he turned to writing his final text, but that, having come to the end of the preface, he decided that he did not need to give the points further thought, perhaps even that most of them did not deserve any thought, and that hence he would save time if he wrote his final responses immediately, as he was going through the text, as he then, in fact, did from 1. 28 onwards.

But there are quite a number of other possibilities, though there is not much hard evidence on the basis of which one could decide between them. One piece of evidence one might hope to extract a clue from is the phrase *σωματοποιῆσαι τὸν λόγον*. *σωματοποιῆσαι* is a surprisingly common expression; hence, unfortunately, it also has a considerable variety of meanings or at least connotations. Chadwick translates 'putting the work into definite shape', thus preserving the vagueness of the verb taken by itself. Lampe (*A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. 3) lists our passage, and gives as the meaning 'embark on the body or main part of, construct, of a written work'. The verb might mean 'to produce a body for something', 'to realize something materially', 'to give something actual existence', 'to represent something materially'; but it is also used in Origen and in Eusebius (cf. Lampe, s.v. 4) in the sense of turning something into one body or one whole. Instructive is Eusebius, *History*, 1. 4. Eusebius complains that in his enterprise of writing a history of the Church he does not have any

predecessors, that all he can rely on are partial accounts by men who recount what they passed through in their days (1. 1. 3). And he promises to take from what they have to say what seems appropriate, and to turn it into a body by means of a historical account. Here, clearly, the point is not that Eusebius is going to give his planned account real, concrete existence by carrying it out in detail on paper, but that by means of a historical account he will turn the scattered, isolated observations of his sources into one whole, complete, coherent account. Eusebius also offers a parallel to the whole phrase *sōmatopoiēsai ton logon*, which we find in Origen, which is also reminiscent in other ways, even in its language, of our sentence in Origen's preface. In *Against Marcellus*, 1. 1. 6, Eusebius tells us that, given the blasphemous nonsense Marcellus is talking, he will proceed by just briefly recapitulating Marcellus' absurd claims, and then arranging them so that they hang together, so as thereby to create one whole, coherent account, thus making manifest the sheer absurdity of Marcellus' claims.

It is simple to see why something like this may also have been Origen's original intention. Neither Ambrosius nor Origen may have been particularly interested in Celsus' treatise as such. Ambrosius may have been interested in Celsus only as a fairly complete compendium or repertory of arguments against Christianity. And he may have thought that Origen's reply, correspondingly, would provide an authoritative manual in which a Christian could count on finding an adequate reply to whatever criticism of Christianity he was likely to encounter. Perhaps it is also in this light that we should see Origen's repeated assertion that he is addressing all of Celsus' points, however banal and absurd they may seem (1. 28; 1. 41; 2. 20). In fact, this is precisely what Eusebius thinks of Origen's *Against Celsus*. In *Against Hierocles*, 1, he tells us that Origen's work contains a refutation of everything that has ever been said against Christianity, and already counters in advance any objections which anybody could ever possibly raise. This is rather exaggerated praise on the part of an ardent admirer of Origen, but it presumably reflects the fact that Origen's work generally came to be seen as providing an answer to almost all possible objections directed from the outside against Christianity. And this may also explain why even Origen's numerous enemies did not stand in the way of its preservation.

But if this was the purpose it was meant to serve, the project faced two serious difficulties which Ambrosius may not have appreciated. Given the lack of organization of Celsus' treatise, a point-by-point response to it would make the practical use of Origen's book rather awkward. Especially given the physical nature of ancient books, it would be extremely irksome to try to find the place at which Origen addressed a specific objection one was concerned with. Moreover, the discussion had surely advanced on both sides since Celsus' writing. Not only were there difficulties which Celsus had overlooked, but new difficulties had been found, often by Christians themselves, and old difficulties had been formulated in a more sophisticated, informed way. Thus in 2. 32 Origen can point out that, though Celsus criticized Jesus' genealogy, he did not notice that there is a discrepancy between the Gospels on Jesus' genealogy, a point on which there has been a good deal of discussion among Christians, and one raised against them as an objection. There were a host of other difficulties raised by Scripture, which Origen was aware of, and some of which were exploited by Porphyry.

Thus, I submit, Origen did not originally plan the kind of response he actually produced, even if originally he planned to do it in two steps, first taking notes and then filling out the details. Nor do I think that Origen's plan had been, as the parallel with Eusebius' *Against Marcellus*, 1. 1. 6, might suggest, just to take brief note of Celsus' main points, arrange them in such a way as to give his response the form of a continuous argument, and thus make short shrift of Celsus' treatise without bothering about all the tedious details. What stands in the way of this assumption is that Origen must have thought that it would be less time-consuming, rather than more time-consuming, but also that, as, for instance, 1. 41 indicates, he somehow felt bound to address all of Celsus' points. So the plan was, I suggest, first to note Celsus' main points, then to arrange them in such an order that all of Celsus' objections, but also further objections, would fit into this logical order, and Origen's response to them could take the form of a continuous, well-organized, clearly structured argument. Thus we would have a comprehensive, systematic response to the objections that can be raised against Christianity, in which it would be relatively easy to find the place at which Origen

discussed the kind of objection, if not the very objection, one was concerned with.

If Celsus' work had come with a more developed logical or argumentative structure, in which difficulties were raised, more or less, in a logical order, this would have been a much simpler undertaking. Celsus himself would already have provided much of the structure. But, as Origen sat down to work on Celsus' treatise, and arrived at the end of Celsus' preface and the beginning of the treatise itself (this is where Origen changed plan and wrote his own preface), he must have realized, given the lack of argumentative structure even of Celsus' preface, that a work according to the original plan would be an enormous undertaking, and would, moreover, no longer, except incidentally, be a response to Celsus. So Origen changed his original plan, and from 1. 28 onwards he wrote his responses to Celsus' points in the exact order in which they came up in Celsus; though very soon, in 1. 41, he complained about this procedure, forced on him by Celsus' text, of discussing difficulties irrespective of their logical order.

But, given Origen's hesitation about this sort of enterprise in the first place, he was not prepared to engage in the enormous task that a systematic discussion of the difficulties would have involved. On the other hand, if my suggestion is right as to its intended purpose, Origen must have seen that a point-for-point response to Celsus would not serve this purpose well and fully. This, then, is a second reason for Origen's hesitation to write an apology against Celsus.

Origen, then, thought that words or books were not the appropriate way to respond to accusations against Christianity. He further thought that a book answering these accusations, to be really useful, should deal with them in a logical order, in their most reasonable, most advanced, and clearest form, and should deal with all significant difficulties. A response to Celsus would not constitute such a book. Thirdly, Origen makes it abundantly clear in his preface that he thinks that a proper Christian does not stand in need of the apology he is about to write, as he will not be shaken in his Christianity by Celsus' treatise or any treatise of this sort (preface, 3).

This brings us to our last question: what audience did Origen envisage for *Against Celsus*? From the way Origen writes in the preface, it seems clear that Ambrosius' concern was that Chris-

tians would want to know how to answer the objections to Christianity found in Celsus. For it must be a concern like this which Origen addresses when, in preface, 6 (p. 54, 32–5), he says that this book is written for people who have not yet had a taste of what it is to believe in Jesus at all, or those who, as Paul says, are weak in their faith, not for those who already really believe. Now one might think that by 'those who have not yet tasted belief at all' Origen is referring to the outside world in general. But I think it is much more likely that he is referring to those who sympathized with Christianity, but were unable to commit themselves to it, rather than those who had already been baptized. For if one looks at the way the preface begins, by referring to Jesus' refusal to defend himself, this hardly seems a promising way to address complete outsiders, who will think that Jesus, rightly or wrongly, suffered the ignominious death of a criminal, and added to the shame by not defending himself. It is true that Origen in the preface, chapter 2, addressed the point, explaining, for instance, that Jesus did not deem his accusers worthy of a response, so high-mindedly overlooked them (p. 52, 13–14). But even this explanation does not address the questions which complete outsiders would raise—for instance, why Jesus would allow himself to be treated like a criminal. It already seems to presuppose a minimal understanding of Jesus' willingness to accept his suffering when he did not have to, an understanding that a complete outsider would not have, and which Celsus, for one, does not have. And the whole treatise seems to be written in a way which presupposes a minimally sympathetic, though perhaps not a convinced, reader. Hence, it appears that the book was written for Christians and perhaps for those who, though not Christian, were looking for resolutions of the difficulties raised against Christianity, exactly because they were in sympathy with it. But, however we interpret the reference to those who have not yet tasted the faith, it seems clear that the primary targets of Origen's apology are Christians.

Origen says that he does not need to write for those whose choice cannot be shaken by words such as those of Celsus or any such person (preface, 3, p. 52, 31–53, 1). He then goes on to say (preface, 4, p. 53, 30 ff.) that he is writing for those who are held to believe, but perhaps may be shaken in their belief by Celsus, though he does not quite know what to think of this case (p. 53, 27–30, but also p. 53, 24–7). Finally (preface, 6, p. 54, 34–5), he says

that in writing this apology he is following St Paul's admonition (Rom. 14: 1), 'Lend a hand to him who is weak in faith'. So there is repeated reference to those who are weak in faith, and just one reference, which we have discussed, to those who have not yet had a taste of faith at all. Hence the writing would seem to be directed primarily at Christians who are weak in faith, those thought to be believers, who are supposed to believe, but may be shaken by words like those of Celsus.

Perhaps it is relevant that Celsus wrote that Christians would face persecution again if they did not give up their faith. If it is true that *Against Celsus* was written in 248, the Decian persecution was imminent. Koetschau (preface, p. xxiii), Chadwick (introduction, p. xv and n. 5), and others believed that they could see, on the basis of 3. 15 and the roughly contemporary Commentary, on Matthew 13: 23, that Origen sensed that persecution was threatening any time. Origen himself was arrested and tortured, and died, it seems, some years later of broken health.

But one has also to assume that Origen is addressing himself to a group of people who can afford to acquire a book of this size and have the leisure to read, or at least use, it. Moreover, they must be people who might be impressed by the kind of learning Celsus displays. So the intended audience would seem to be the (by Origen's time already fairly large) group of people who were reasonably well-to-do, reasonably well educated, and who were either already Christian or at least considering conversion.

In conclusion, we should note that even with a relatively unproblematic text such as Origen's *Against Celsus*, scholars' judgements about Origen's achievement are often guided by a desire to see Christianity put paganism in its place, or a desire to see Christianity as not up to the task of responding to paganism at its enlightened best, or a desire to see Origen as failing in his task. Having spent a considerable amount of time trying to get clear about Celsus' philosophical views in their own right, quite independently of Celsus' views about Christianity, I have come to the conclusion that, on the basis of the little evidence which Celsus himself provides through Origen's quotations and paraphrases of him, there is no reason to suppose that he was a philosopher of any significance. So when Origen in his preface (5, p. 54, 20) says that Celsus cannot even claim for himself that empty, vain, deceitful wisdom which, according to Origen (p. 54,

9 ff.), St Paul is granting Greek philosophers, we see that there is nothing deceptive about Celsus, since he does not have a sufficiently philosophical mind to engage in anything that could be called 'deception', but is just a blunderer. We readily recognize the polemical tone, characteristic of this age, and familiar, for instance, from Galen.[14] But we have no evidence, no reason to suppose, that Origen was so wide of the mark. It also seems to me that, in judging Origen's achievement, we have to take into account that, by Origen's time, Celsus' treatise must have seemed in many regards rather uninformed and unsophisticated—so that it would have been difficult for anybody at that time to write a response to Celsus which did not suffer significantly from the fact that Celsus' text, especially if considered in isolation from its historical context, must have seemed rather inadequate. It was a text which had waited for a response for too long.

[14] Galen was a medical writer of the late second and early third centuries with strong philosophic interests. For his attacks on Christianity, see Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians*.

8

Defending Hellenism: Philostratus, *In Honour of Apollonius*

SIMON SWAIN

INTRODUCTION

In the period of the High Roman Empire apologetic literature was largely confined to Christian authors. But the justification of religion and culture is not of itself 'Christian', as (for example) Goodman's study of Josephus' *Against Apion* well shows (see Ch. 3). The present chapter offers another text from this period, *In Honour of Apollonius of Tyana* (hereafter *Apollonius*),[1] which can be read as apology without straining the bounds of a necessarily loose category.

Behind Christian apologetic stand the hostility and suspicion of non-Christian society and, to some extent, the internal disagreements and polemics of Christians themselves. Comparable factors cannot be found in Greek pagan society, at least in the first and second centuries. Here there is no sign of serious debate about the fundamental cultural and religious principles of Greek life. Polemic between philosophers exists, as it always has (see, for example, Plutarch's anti-Stoic and anti-Epicurean tracts or Galen's denunciations of rival logics). But this functions at an entirely abstract level, and is not in any way analogous to the bitter disputes and antagonisms of Christian schism and heresy. Externally, no vindication or justification of the Greek way of life was required, for there was no serious challenge to the dominance of Greek culture. Celsus' attack on Christianity in the 180s, as reported by Origen, is the only text that might be taken as a defence. Yet its tone is very much that of an establishment figure picking holes in the views of an idiot minority. The precise

[1] *Ta es ton Tuanea Apollōnion* (cf. *Lives of the Sophists*, 570; *Apollonius*, 8. 29), literally 'the deeds/sayings relating to/in honour of Apollonius of Tyana'.

motivation is unknown. During the third century, however, there were a number of decisive changes in the cultural-political make-up of the Greek world. By its end, significant numbers of the educated were Christian, and the distinctive features of pagan culture in the Greek East were under serious threat. The heavy-weight anti-Christian tracts of Plotinus and Porphyry show clearly that Christianity could not be ignored. There is no way of telling when it became clear that the new religion constituted a major problem. But if we look at the third century as a whole, *Apollonius*, which was written in the 220s or 230s, begins to look extremely important. For here we have for the first time a celebration and justification for society at large of a Hellenism which is defined primarily through a combination of religion and philosophy, rather than through the general cultural and political inheritance. This looks like a response to change at some level. Moreover, the work contains a lengthy technical apologia for philosophy as a spiritual system of personal living, and this amounts to a serious defence of fundamentals. That is enough to merit the work's inclusion in a volume on the phenomenon of apologetic discourse.

Apollonius is a historical biography of the first-century holy man and religious reformer Apollonius of Tyana. It was composed by the third-century belletrist Flavius Philostratus of Athens. Philostratus is a perfect example of the high culture of his time. He was educated by the best teachers (whose lives he included in his famous *Lives of the Sophists*, henceforth *Sophists*), held prominent office in Athens, and was a courtier in attendance on the cultured empress Julia Domna (died 217). Two factors determined his outlook. First, it was widely believed that the intellectual life of the Greeks had declined drastically during the Hellenistic period, and that this decline had been halted and reversed in the late first century BCE. Philostratus was a strong adherent of this view, and it forms the structural basis of both his major works. Second, belief in decline entails belief in a high point before decline set in. For Philostratus and his contemporaries this high point was the classical age of Greece. Once again, Philostratus is a very strong proponent of this model. Thus the emphasis he places on a revitalized traditional religion in *Apollonius* is certainly part of the Hellenist ideology of the day. But the work is much more than a historical re-creation of a pivotal figure in the Hellenic revival.

For its religious and philosophical aspects seem closely to reflect conditions at the time of writing.

Philostratus' study vindicates a life lived by the mystical and spiritual principles of Pythagorean philosophy, and explores the semi-divine nature of one who has given himself up to this way of living. From the lifetime of Philostratus onwards, Pythagoreanism was a central constituent of mainstream Platonism, and played a crucial part in ensuring the dominance of Platonic philosophy in later antiquity. *Apollonius* is not justifying a new trend in Greek intellectual life, for Pythagoreanism first came back into fashion among Platonists in the late first century BCE; but the novelty of making Pythagoreanism the core element of Hellenism certainly means that we must read the work with an eye to the status of this system in the third century and to the reasons which could make it a vehicle of Hellenic ideals. The apologetic credentials of the work can further be understood by taking cognizance of deep problems in the Hellenist ideology. The level of individual and civic investment in classical Greece was regulated by racial/ethnic origin, domicile, religion, language, and so on. For those who were close to the edge of what could pass as Greek, the adoption of Greek culture was beset by tensions. These are present throughout the period covered by this collection of essays. A particular new problem in Philostratus' time was the possession of the imperial throne by a dynasty which had close connections with the Hellenized Greek East. The Julio-Claudian, Flavian, and Antonine emperors (27 BCE–192 CE) had all been of Roman or Italian origin. As outsiders who admired classical Greece, there was no general problem for Hellenism, despite the fact that Romans claimed the legacy of the Greek classics for themselves (with the imputation that their Greek subjects had fallen into an irrevocable decline). The key thing was that both Romans and Greeks were in broad agreement about the paradigmatic value of classical Greek civilization. The Eastern-looking Severan dynasty (193–235) presented new difficulties. For it was in the wider Greek East that Hellenism had stored up trouble of its own making. In that region the benefits of Hellenism had always to be weighed against the complications it brought with it, as an ideology that threatened to taint adherents and recruits with the charge of barbarian origin. Philostratus reminds readers at the start of *Apollonius* that the work has been

commissioned by the late Julia Domna, who was the wife of the new dynasty's founder, Septimius Severus. Here and elsewhere she is presented as a paragon of Hellenist virtue. But her nieces, the dominating mothers of the emperors Elagabal and Severus Alexander, were by no means fully committed to orthodox Hellenism, precisely in the sensitive matter of religion. Thus for the first time since the Hellenic revival in the time of Augustus, not everything could be taken for granted. An apology for the Greek way of life and a telling affirmation of its value were not at all beside the point.

THE TOILS OF HELLENISM

The following sections will place the *Apollonius* in the context of cultural and philosophical developments in the intellectual circles of the first three centuries, and will consider how its interests and arguments reflect pagan Greek society at the time it was written. Before proceeding, it is as well to say a little about the meaning of Hellenism and the attractions of classicism. To describe the cultural-political orientation of the Greek élite during the first three centuries, modern scholars often borrow the phrase 'Second Sophistic' from Philostratus' *Sophists* (481). Since in-depth studies of various aspects of the second sophistic are readily available, I can be brief.[2]

Hellenism (effectively the consciousness of being Greek and not barbarian) is not reducible simply to classicism. It is more correct to observe that the Greeks of this time were obsessed with all periods of Greek history before the coming of Rome and the end of Greek freedom. In the arts, the models of the classical age dominate for obvious reasons of quality. But in the cities of the Greek cultural commonwealth, the foundational legends, myths, and local histories of the Hellenistic and archaic ages may be as, or more, important, depending on individual circumstances. One particular aspect of mainstream classicism merits comment. This is the phenomenon of 'atticism', the imperative to use—or to try

[2] See amongst others Bowersock, *Greek Sophists*; Reardon, *Courants littéraires*; Bowie, 'Greeks and their Past'; *idem*, 'Importance of Sophists'; Russell, *Greek Declamation*; *idem*, *Antonine Literature*; Anderson, *Second Sophistic*; Pernot, *La Rhétorique de l'éloge*; Swain, *Hellenism*; and esp. Schmitz, *Bildung und Macht*.

to use—the Greek of the classical Athenian authors in such written or spoken contexts as carried prestige or required a display of linguistic expertise over and above the ordinary educated, but not consciously classicizing, Greek used for other purposes. One of the interesting things about atticism is the difficulty that authors had in identifying the right models for their language. As we shall be seeing shortly, a major reason for the rise of Platonism, and for the particular quasi-religious direction it took during the second sophistic period and after, is this same quest for the right kind of model.

Classicizing or archaizing tastes can be found in many times and ages. It may be the case that some aspects of Greek classicism in the second sophistic had already been developed by Romans in the first century BCE.[3] But Greek use of the Greek past has a significance of its own, and must be explained from within Greek culture. The reasons behind it are best accounted for by considering its sphere of operation. This must certainly be called 'political', which refers in this context to the workings of Greek society in the Greek city (the *polis*) and in its relations with Roman society and culture above and beyond the city. It has been argued that Hellenist ideology acted primarily as a form of escapism for Greek élites who had been deprived of real power by Rome.[4] But we must also take into account the confidence of these élites in themselves, as Greeks who were part of a living Greek heritage, and who were still largely in control of their political organizations and budgets at local level. The connections made by contemporary leaders of the Greek world with the leaders of 'free' Greece served to empower those who were able to sustain such a grand idea; and in making this connection, they were making claims primarily about their social position, access to wealth, and educational/cultural attainments. In other words, obsession with the past goes far beyond the cultural sphere, where its productions encourage us to leave it, and is the foundation of Greek élite identity in this age. As regards Rome, I have argued elsewhere

[3] For example, some Roman orators in the late Republic were interested in defining models of style in Greek, and the influence of these so-called Attici was acknowledged by Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Caecilius of Caleacte when they began to reform the Greek canon: Gabba, *Dionysius*. Again, classicism in sculpture may have developed first under Roman patronage in first century BCE: so Smith, *Hellenistic Art*, 258–61.

[4] Bowie, 'Greeks and their Past'.

that Hellenism involves a negative reaction to Roman rule.[5] This did not prevent members of the élite from becoming Roman citizens or participating in imperial government, since for the most part (as has been mentioned) Roman philhellenism allowed a way round potential conflict. In cases where there was conflict—and Philostratus' *Apollonius* dwells on the problems created by Nero and Domitian—a Greek's loyalties were not in doubt.

Once established, Greek classicism and the Greek identity it supported became self-perpetuating, at least in the first and second centuries. One of the secrets of its success was the high material and emotional investment required of those who wished to refer to themselves as Greeks. I have already alluded to the tensions embedded in Hellenism between insiders and outsiders, including Greeks versus barbarians. One aspect of this that is important here is the question of whose wisdom was more ancient, that of Greeks or non-Greeks, a matter which was fiercely contended also by Greeks and Christians. At the start of his *Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers*, Diogenes Laertius, who is generally held to have been writing at more or less the same date as Philostratus,[6] notes that

> there are some who say that the work of philosophy began among the barbarians. They point to the existence of the Mages among the Persians, the Chaldaeans among the Babylonians and Assyrians, the Naked Sages among the Indians, and the Druids and Revered of God among the Celts and Gauls. . . . They point out that Mochus was Phoenician, Zamolxis a Thracian, and Atlas a Libyan. . . . [But] in ascribing to barbarians the achievements of the Greeks they forget that not only philosophy but also the human race began with the Greeks. (1. 1. 3)

He caps his argument by observing that the word *philosophia* 'refuses to be translated by any barbarian term', and notes that the first person to give the discipline its name was Pythagoras (1. 4. 12).[7] The debate about the priority of wisdom was more than a quest for the best model. If Hellenism was to be the most attractive system, it must have the most secure authority, and that meant having the oldest authority. It is to Pythagoras' pioneering role in the development of Greek culture, and the

[5] Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*. [6] So Delatte, *La Vie de Pythagore*, 6.

[7] Cf. Nicomachus (on whom see pp. 169–70) *ap* Iamblichus, *In Nicomachi arithmeticam introductionem* (*On Pythagoreanism*, 4), p. 5, 27, Pistelli-Klein.

function given to him in the Hellenism of the Second Sophistic and after, that I now turn.

IN SEARCH OF THE SAGE

Until the quarrel of Philo of Larissa and Antiochus of Ascalon early in the second decade of the first century BCE, the Platonic school had been led since Plato by a series of designated 'successors' (*diadochoi*). The dispute which broke this succession arose from the long-standing problem of what to do with the Stoics' views on cognition and from the so-called New Academy's ploy of brandishing scepticism against Stoic sureness. The Academy split into rival parties, each claiming the inheritance of Plato, and ceased to exist.[8] The changing political fortunes of the Greek world had a part to play in this event, the consequences of which are important both for the structural-scholastic organization and for the technical-philosophical development of Greek thought. For the modification of Platonic doctrine which so antagonized Antiochus of Ascalon was worked out by Philo at Rome, where he was in exile from Athens during and after the first war with Mithridates. Given Athens' central place in Greek culture, the siege and storming of the city by Sulla at this time must have made plain to Greeks everywhere their impotence in the face of Roman power. Although old Greece did not become a province in its own right until the time of Augustus, the area was already *de facto* subject to the governor of the Roman province of Macedonia. Each stage in the ending of Greek freedom marks a stage in the beginning of the Greek past. For a break with the political inheritance of the Greek past allowed the past to take on the ideological meaning it bears in the period of the second sophistic. The end of the Academy as a continuous line of philosophers since Plato had a similar result. For now the possibility existed of approaching Plato in person, without the distraction of his successors.

Indicative of this new situation is the beginning of doxographical/exegetical commentary on Platonic works (especially the *Timaeus*)

[8] On the background, see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 52–106; Glucker, *Antiochus*; J. Barnes, 'Antiochus of Ascalon'. 'New Academy' means the period from Arcesilaus (died *c*.240 BCE) to Philo.

sometime in the mid- to late first century BCE. Until this point, Plato's written work had become increasingly less important, the more the anti-Stoic tactics of scepticism and distrust of doctrine came to dominate.[9] We also see a revealing shift in the nomenclature of Platonic philosophers. Platonists had till now been known as *Akadēmaïkoi*. With one major exception, it seems to be the case that Platonists henceforth became known to themselves and others as *Platōnikoi*. The exception is Plutarch, who, together with his pupil Favorinus (at least in the context of Favorinus' relationship with Plutarch), still kept up the fictional notion of a living Academic inheritance as late as the early second century CE.[10] It seems likely that for Plutarch himself, close association with Athens as a physical witness to the Athenian past was a significant reason behind this desire to see a continuity from Plato to himself through the Academic succession. Another reason is his strong philosophical-historical interest in the sceptical New Academy, whose anti-Stoicism he was happy to adopt when it suited him. But other consumers of Plato had no need to bother with anyone but the master. After Antiochus, the doctrines of the sceptics went out of fashion. The term 'Academic' itself was now used to designate the tainted New Academy and its perceived rejection of Plato's *dogmata*.

But Plato was not enough on his own. All aspects of classicism were at risk from the difficulty of identifying the best model. Plato was in fact a model of Attic vocabulary and style, and, though some impugned his value in this respect,[11] his linguistic credentials have been seen as a contributory factor in his rise as a philosophical model.[12] However, as a model for philosophers, Plato suffered from three potential defects. He was by no means the first Greek philosopher. Worse, some suggested that Plato and his Greek predecessors had acquired the rudiments of their philosophy from older barbarians. And even if Plato reigned

[9] Dörrie, 'Von Platon zum Platonismus', 13–15, 40–5; Sedley, 'Plato's *Auctoritas*'.

[10] Cf. Swain, 'Plutarch, Plato, Athens'; Holford-Strevens, 'Favorinus'.

[11] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Demosthenes*, 5–7; *idem*, *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius*, 1–2; Caecilius of Caleacte, *ap* Ps.-Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 32. 7–8 (= fr. 150, Ofenloch).

[12] Russell, *Plutarch*, 63; though it should be noted that most Middle Platonic Greek is not atticizing—the writing of commentaries or introductions or exegeses did not call for the high style of public performance.

supreme among men, there was the problem of his mortal nature: his wisdom lacked a divine pedigree.

These problems were countered by appeal to the sixth-century sage Pythagoras, the figure who is never far from the mind of Philostratus' Apollonius. Pythagoras was not the oldest Greek philosopher, but his fame and his influence on Plato led Platonists to view him as a major source of Plato's own philosophy. Pythagoreanism had retained some of its early importance during the later classical and Hellenistic ages, as the production of pseudo-Pythagorica attests.[13] But after the demise of the Athenian Academy, modified Pythagorean beliefs began to play a serious role within Platonism. The key mediator here was Eudorus of Alexandria, who was active in the 40s and 30s of the first century.[14] It was always believed that Plato himself had been sympathetic to a number of important Pythagorean concepts.[15] The dialogue that is the most influential among later Platonists, the *Timaeus*, is named after a (fictitious) Pythagorean of Locri, whose name is associated with one of the better-known pseudo-Pythagorean tracts.[16] Aristotle famously alleges that the theory of the Forms owed a good deal to Pythagorean belief (*Metaphysics*, A, 987a–b). But Eudorus (if we understand him rightly) goes much further in directly ascribing to Pythagoras various of Plato's central tenets.[17] Most important is his attribution to the Pythagoreans of the concept of the 'Supreme God' who transcends the dualist principles of the material world.[18] This 'most fruitful development for later Platonism' was certainly based on Platonic thought,[19] but its concise expression seems to be original to Eudorus. Making it a cardinal belief of *hoi Puthagorikoi* again seems to be Eudorus' move. It is plausible to hold that his aim was

[13] These writings, whose dates are controversial, already imply the debt owed to the Pythagoreans by Plato and his followers, since they contain consciously Platonic and Peripatetic material: see Thesleff, *Introduction to the Pythagorean Writings*; *idem*, *Pythagorean Texts*; 'On the Problem of the Doric Pseudo-Pythagorica'; Burkert, 'Zur geistesgeschichtlichen Einordnung'.

[14] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 115–35; Calvetti, 'Eudoro di Alessandria'; Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus*, 509–19.

[15] See briefly Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 83–92; cf. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, iv. 35–6, 251–2, *idem*, v. 285–8, 430–1, 435–42.

[16] Viz *On the World and the Soul*.

[17] Notably the key goal of the Middle Platonists and Neoplatonists, 'likeness to god' (*Division of Philosophy*, *ap* Stobaeus, *Anthology*, 2. 7. 3 f.).

[18] Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, i(ix). 181. 10ff., Diels.

[19] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 128; cf. Dodds, 'The *Parmenides* of Plato', 135–41.

that of trumping rival Platonists by advertising his familiarity with Plato's own (but so far unnoticed) main source.[20]

The revival of interest in Pythagoras was no doubt accompanied by an extension and a refinement of the traditions surrounding his life. Polemic is again part of this. Most of our evidence comes from the third- and fourth-century accounts of Diogenes Laertius (8. 1–50), Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* (the only fully surviving part of a four-volume history of philosophy to Plato), and Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Life* (book 1 of *On Pythagoreanism*). These accounts, which rest on Hellenistic foundations, deal with the question of barbarian influence. Here Pythagoras was at risk, as Plato was, for his foreign travels were an important part of the Pythagorean story.[21] For some, this was best played down, leaving Pythagoras' authority to smother any problems. For others, Eastern influence could be an advantage. Porphyry (from Tyre) and Iamblichus (from the small Syrian town of Chalcis ad Belum) certainly had no difficulty here.[22] But neither man felt the need to claim that Greek wisdom was older. And it would indeed be surprising if they did, since both came from regions where the antiquity of 'oriental' wisdom was a simple, unembarrassing fact, and where barbarian origin was no disadvantage, if one was prepared to make sufficient effort to define oneself as Greek. Diogenes Laertius is quite different. His Pythagoras is initiated into 'Greek and barbarian rites' and journeys to Egypt to learn about the gods (8. 2–4). There is nothing more. Leaving aside criteria of space and balance in his *Lives*, it is tempting to connect the scale of this information with Diogenes' Hellenocentrism. We may recall that in the first half of his prologue he goes through the arguments for the 'invention' (*heuresis*) of philosophy by *barbaroi*, concluding: 'so much, then, for invention; but the first to use the term *philosophia* and to call himself *philosophos* was Pythagoras'

[20] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 120, 126–8.

[21] According to Aristoxenus, Pythagoras' own father had been a Tyrrhenian (i.e. a *barbaros*): Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 8. 1—not the majority view (but see Plutarch, *Table Talks*, 8. 7 = *Mor*. 727b; and cf. and ctr. Lucian, *False Critic*, 5, for a declamation by ?Hadrian of Tyre turning on Pythagoras' origins). Aristoxenus is presumably the source of Neanthes, *ap* Porphyry, *Pythagoras*, 2 (*FGrH* 84 F29).

[22] Porphyry, *Pythagoras*, 1 (Chaldaeans), 6 (knowledge of mathematics from Egyptians, Chaldaeans, Phoenicians; of the gods from the Magi), 7–8 (ascesis with Egyptian priests), 11–12 (visits to Egyptians, Arabs, Chaldaeans, Hebrews), 41 (influence of the Magi); Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life*, 13–19 (years of training with Phoenician, Syrian, and especially Egyptian and Magian holy men).

(1. 11–12). Furthermore, he asserts that Musaeus and Linus invented the concept of philosophy, and makes it plain that he regards them as older and better than any barbarian candidate (1. 3–4).[23] If we could be sure that Diogenes came from Nicaea, as is suggested by *Lives*, 9. 109,[24] he could be attached to a part of the Greek world where Hellenic identity was always far clearer, and oriental wisdom more distant. In any case, he had coherent reasons of his own for not attributing too much of Pythagoreanism to the barbarians.

The problem of divine authority could also be addressed through Pythagoras. In the Second-Sophistic period the pagan gods were extraordinarily active. They not only appeared to humankind in person or in dreams. They were also diligent in giving out oracles. The paganism of the High Empire does indeed have a vibrant feel to it.[25] The special relationship between very great men and the gods is an intrinsic part of Greek culture from the earliest times. If Plato had made such a claim in relation to his own wisdom, future generations would have had no problem accepting it. In this regard Pythagoras' semi-divine parentage/ancestry was certainly advantageous in furthering his position in a religious age. Even if it was not credited in its own right, the main biographical accounts have no difficulty in accepting his semi-divine nature. Diogenes Laertius makes the least of this. He records Heracleides Ponticus' account (*Lives*, 8. 4–5 = Heracleides, fr. 89, Wehrli), where Pythagoras' soul traces its ultimate origin to Hermes. Porphyry records a version of his divine birth (*Pythagoras*, 2), and has no doubt himself of the huge number of 'really amazing and divine things about the man' (28); he includes many examples of his miracles. Iamblichus goes a stage further. Although he is not interested in divine parentage, Pythagoras for him is *ho theiotatos* (*Pythagorean Life*, 162), and his status as a 'divine' (*theios*) man is mentioned on every page of his book. It

[23] Cf. Mejer, *Diogenes Laertius*, 51–2, 56. Diogenes probably shares something of the view expressed at Ps.-Plato, *Epinomis*, 987d–988a (fourth century BCE), that if the Greeks do borrow anything from the barbarians, they radically improve it—at any rate, he is careful not to fight the chronologies of the barbarian sympathizers (1. 1–2).

[24] *Ἀπολλωνίδης ὁ Νικαεὺς ὁ παρ' ἡμῶν. Παρ' ἡμῶν* is taken by some to mean 'a member of our school of thought'. Reiske's interpretation ('ea dictione indicat Apollonidem illum Nicaeensem eadem secum patria usum fuisse') seems far more natural (*ap* Diels, 'Reiskii animadversiones', 324).

[25] MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*; Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*.

would be right to connect this quest for divine authority with the general classicizing demand for the best model, rather than seeing it as the result of an upswing in 'popular' religiosity, or as a reaction against the impersonal mechanism of Hellenistic Tyche.[26]

Pythagoras' divine parentage and powers are among several elements which determined his rise to influence in Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism. His travels and contacts with barbarians testified to his extensive experience and years of training. Plato's acknowledged debt to Pythagoreanism was another crucial part. In addition to these factors, the Pythagoreans of the early empire could point to the especially positive morality of Pythagoras in the human community. The story of his life was dominated by his political role in the cities of southern Italy and by his teaching there, which was mystical and esoteric, yet designed to influence the masses and to promote stable government. All forms of ancient philosophy (even Cynicism) were linked with and interested in upholding élite rule at the same time as they sought to reform it according to their own beliefs. Platonism was no exception. The politics of Plato accorded well with the political-administrative arrangements of the Greek élites under Rome. Thus Pythagoras' example of reinforcing the rule of the Thousand at Croton, by advising them how to gain the consent of the ruled (Iamblichus, *Pythagorean Life*, 45–50; cf. Porphyry, *Pythagoras*, 18; Diogenes, *Lives*, 8. 3), added to his list of credentials as a figure-head of Greek philosophy.[27]

Since our main evidence for neo-Pythagoreanism comes from professional philosophers, to whom I shall turn in the next section, we should not forget Pythagoreanism's widely acknowledged identity beyond technical philosophy, which again links it with Platonism in its own role as a philosophy to live by. The 'Pythagorean way of life', which makes its followers 'distinct in society's eyes', is remarked on already by Plato at *Republic*, 600b. In our period, Lucian counts as an independent witness to various degrees of Pythagorean conduct (which is not always mocked).[28] Although the trappings of Pythagoreanism were no doubt easy to

[26] e.g. (respectively) Goulet, 'Les Vies de philosophes', 174–5; Dörrie, 'Von Platon zum Platonismus', 35–6.

[27] On the ideology of consensual government, see Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, index *s.v.*

[28] Caster, *Lucien*, 43–52; cf. C. P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, index *s.v.* 'Pythagoras', 'Pythagoreans'.

affect, a Pythagorean life did not have to be lived *per se* to function as a worthwhile model. The account of it in Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Life* acts as a protreptic to serious philosophy in the volumes which follow.[29] We should bear this in mind when we come to Philostratus' portrait of Apollonius. Here there is little philosophy in the technical sense. Nor do we have a simple Pythagorean life. Rather, Pythagorean living gives Apollonius irreproachable credentials for his own serious role as a champion of a Hellenism which Philostratus was keen to claim as a universal solution.

THE SECOND-CENTURY BACKGROUND

After Eudorus we can identify at least three Platonists of the first century CE with strong Pythagorean interests. Thrasyllus (who is responsible for the 'tetralogic' arrangement of Plato's dialogues), his shadowy associate (or predecessor) Dercyllides, and Ammonius, the teacher of Plutarch (and possibly the son of Thrasyllus), also come from Alexandria. In the second half of the century stands the 'aggressive Pythagorean', Moderatus of Gades.[30] He is called a 'Pythagorean' by Plutarch,[31] but he could easily be seen as part of a general Pythagoreanizing Platonism, and is taken for an intellectual ancestor of Plotinus by Porphyry (*Life of Plotinus*, 20. 74–6, 21. 4–8).

Between the first and second centuries, Plutarch of Chaeroneia displays a typically Pythagorean interest in numerical mysticism and mathematics, not to mention a strong dualism. From the same era we have Theon of Smyrna's 'concise and summary exposition' of Plato's mathematical material. The second century itself brings an intensification of interest in Pythagoras, with the important figures of Nicomachus of Gerasa (and his less well-known comrade, Cronius) and Numenius of Apamea. This pair constitute the

[29] Vol. 2 of *On Pythagoreanism* is the *Protreptic to Philosophy*. See O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived*, 32–5.

[30] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 346. The aggression is discovered in Moderatus' statement (*ap* Porphyry, *Pythagoras*, 53) that Plato, Aristotle, Speusippus, Aristoxenus, and Xenocrates had plagiarized the Pythagoreans' best ideas, leaving anything absurd to represent the received teaching of the school.

[31] *Table Talks*, 8. 7 = *Mor*. 727b.

major influences on the third-century Pythagoreanism we see in Ammonius Saccas and Plotinus. The steadily increasing importance of Pythagorean thinking which they represent stands directly behind Philostratus' account of Apollonius.

Nicomachus of Gerasa seems to have been active in the first half of the second century. He was particularly interested in mathematics and the applications of numerical symbolism in ethics and physics. His standing in this field may be judged from the eulogy bestowed on him by Iamblichus, who republished his *Introduction to Arithmetic* as the fourth book of his own series, *On Pythagoreanism*. For Iamblichus (who was himself a rhetorician as well as a philosopher), Nicomachus was distinguished both for his fidelity to Pythagoras and for the high quality of his writing.[32] Both he and Porphyry used Nicomachus' account of Pythagoras.[33]

Numenius of Apamea in Syria should probably be placed in the second half of the century.[34] His large output had a great influence on the later Platonists whose writings contain his fragments. He is famous for his interest in Judaism, and is praised by Origen for 'tropologizing'—that is, allegorizing—the stories of Moses, the prophets, and even Jesus ('without giving his name').[35] Sympathetic interest, however, does not mean belief, and we have been warned not to push Numenius too far (or at all).[36] On the other hand, Numenius' appeal to the harmony between Plato's views of God and the sayings and doings of the Brahmins, Jews, Magi, and Egyptians (fr. 1a, des Places) reminds us of Iamblichus' stress on the value of ancient Chaldaean and Egyptian revelation in *On the Mysteries*. Porphyry also, as has been noted, found it entirely natural to cite the wisdom of Chaldaeans, Egyptians, Indians, Jews, Phoenicians, and Persians, and used it to good effect—for example, in *On Abstinence*

[32] *In Nicomachi arithmeticam introductionem* (*On Pythagoreanism*, 4), pp. 4, 12–5, 25 Pistelli-Klein.

[33] Use of him is much heavier than the few explicit quotations (Porphyry, *Pythagoras*, 20, 59; Iamblichus, *Pythagorean Life*, 251).

[34] It is reasonable to identify his associate, Cronius, with the addressee of Lucian's *Peregrinus* (not long after 165): C. P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian*, 20.

[35] Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4. 51 (= Numenius, fr. 1c, des Places).

[36] M. J. Edwards, 'Atticizing Moses?', who argues that the philosopher had no particular sympathy with ordinary Judaism and that what he knew of the Old Testament came through Gnostic channels. For the 'orientalist' view of Numenius, see Puech, 'Numénius d'Apamée', with Dodds, 'Numenius and Ammonius', 4–11.

(especially in the fourth book). Iamblichus goes even further than his teacher in portraying the Chaldaeans and Egyptians as repositories of a learning more ancient than that of the Greeks in general and of Plato in particular.[37] Thus it is quite possible that Numenius' presentation of Plato as an 'atticizing Moses' (Clement, *Stromateis*, 1. 150. 4 = Numenius fr. 8 *ad fin*., des Places) represents more than casual syncrisis, and offers a clue to his adherence to Pythagoras, the one Greek philosopher whose wisdom was reckoned to owe so much to the non-Greek civilizations of the East. There is no need to promote Numenius as a representative of 'Semitic' culture (and his actual knowledge of Judaism has rightly been cut down to size).[38] But it is also too cautious to deny to him any regional outlook.[39]

THE ROLE OF AMMONIUS

By the start of the third century, charismatic Pythagoreanism was poised to become a central part of a Platonist outlook on the world. It is highly likely that the man who lodged Pythagoreanism within Platonism once and for all was Ammonius Saccas of Alexandria. The problem with Ammonius is that we know little about him. The matter is not helped by a confusion that arose in antiquity and persists among moderns over the identity of Ammonius with Ammonius the teacher of Origen and a further confusion between Origen and a (pagan) Platonist homonym.[40]

[37] Cf. *On the Mysteries*, 7. 4–5, contrasting the Greeks' unlawful innovations in divine names and prayers with the superiority of barbarian names of the gods and the essential holiness of the 'whole dialect' of the Egyptians and 'Assyrians'.

[38] M. J. Edwards, 'Atticizing Moses?'; cf. above, n. 36. Edwards suggests that Numenius wrote 'Musaeus' (i.e. the mythical poet and philosopher) rather than 'Moses' (as reported by Clement), since he makes 'Musaeus' the leader of the Jews against the Egyptians in a fragment quoted by Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 9. 8. 2 (fr. 9, des Places). The (pro-)Jewish historian Artapanus (second century BCE) alleges that 'Musaeus' was indeed the Greek form of 'Moses' and that this Musaeus had passed on (Jewish) knowledge through his pupil Orpheus (*ap* ibid. 9. 27. 3 = *FGrH* 726F3). If Numenius did use the form 'Musaeus', he surely distinguished Musaeus/Moses from the mythical Greek poet, for the latter was held in most sources to be Athenian or Eleusinian (DK^{6}2A), and to call Plato an 'atticizing Musaeus' would otherwise make little sense.

[39] Millar, *Roman Near East*, 518.

[40] The existence of two Ammoniuses (the other being the Peripatetic praised by Longinus and Philostratus; see below) and two Origens should not be doubted: see M. J. Edwards, 'Ammonius, Teacher of Origen'.

Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* talks of Ammonius Saccas only in relation to Plotinus, but regards him as of tremendous importance to Plotinus' philosophical development. An anecdote which explains his by-name is recounted by Theodoret, and this has him embracing philosophy during the reign of Commodus (180–92 CE).[41] From Porphyry's information we can be sure that he died in 242/3.[42] It is reasonable to assume—if we rely on the anecdote—that Ammonius was born 160–70, in which case he is more or less an exact contemporary of Philostratus.[43] It is clear that Ammonius was heavily influenced by Pythagorean ideas, and passed these on to Plotinus.[44] The compact of his three pupils not to disclose any part of his system is designed to recall the traditional secret transmission of lore amongst the Pythagoreans. According to the Neoplatonist Hierocles of Alexandria (as reported by Photius), Ammonius, *ho theodidaktos* ('taught by God'), was 'the first to be inspired to search for philosophic truth'.[45] We cannot press 'inspired' to mean that Ammonius achieved 'oneness' (*henōsis*) with God, as Porphyry records of himself and Plotinus (*Life of Plotinus*, 23).[46] But since it is a fair bet that Hierocles is reproducing comments made by Porphyry, the primacy accorded to his teacher's teacher should not be ignored. It seems that Ammonius set Platonic philosophy on a new course. The power of revealed wisdom had been discovered in Pythagoras and, through him, accorded with the doctrines of Plato. After Ammonius, revelation was no longer to be a thing of the distant past: by dint of prolonged physical and mental preparation (the *askēsis* of a Pythagorean life), it could be granted to the wise man at any time.

Pythagoreanism in Platonism entailed a formidable combina-

[41] Ammonius came to philosophy from a job portering sacks of wheat: *Graecarum affectionum curatio*, 6. 60. The by-name itself is first found at Ammianus Marcellinus, 22. 16. 16.

[42] Cf. M. J. Edwards, 'Plotinus and the Emperors', 140.

[43] Philostratus died in the reign of Philip the Arab (244–9; Suda, ϕ 421), and is generally assumed to have been born 'not much earlier than ca. 165' (Flinterman, *Power, Paideia and Pythagoreanism*, 21).

[44] Dörrie, 'Ammonios, der Lehrer Plotins'.

[45] Photius, *Library*, cod. 251, 461a. *Theodidaktos* (in origin a strongly Christian word first recorded at 1 Thess. 4: 9) is more than 'a polite equivalent of *autodidaktos*' (Dodds, 'Numenius and Ammonius', 30, in polemic against Dörrie, 'Ammonios').

[46] See Dörrie, 'Ammonios, der Lehrer Plotins', 462, corrected by Dodds, 'Numenius and Ammonius', 29–30, cf. 44.

tion of religion, philosophy, and politics. This established a more exclusive system at the heart of Greek intellectual life. Only a very few had sufficient control over leisure and wealth to acquire an understanding of the philosophical difficulties involved and to share through careful study and training in the possibility of a religious revelation. It also made Platonism less exclusively Greek. Already in the second century there were some for whom the pretence of being Greek involved too much effort. Iamblichus, the author of the *Babylonian Story*, wrote in Greek, but in comments preserved by the scholiast to Photius' summary of his work (which is virtually all that survives), he makes it plain that he was 'not one of the Greeks who have settled in Syria, but one of the natives [*tōn autochthonōn*]'.[47] The consequences of such an attitude were devastating: Greek language and Greek identity could be sundered with impunity. Christianity capitalized on this. The question most often asked about Christianization is why people converted. It is as important to ask why they defected—and to realize that defection in this context is not just a religious concern. Spiritual satisfaction, theological cohesiveness, and social organization are major reasons why Christianity overtook paganism at the socio-religious level. It is surely also important that Greek identity was a construct from which many even among the (male) élite drew insufficient benefit. The farther one lived from the Athenian epicentre of Greek culture, the more this was true, for (as has been noted) the assumption of Greek identity in the period of the Roman Empire entailed a disparagement of *barbaroi* that might just be asking too much.[48] In the later third, fourth, and even into the fifth century, many a Porphyry, an Iamblichus, or a Libanius continued to find the investment more or less worthwhile at a time when others were embracing an alternative religious and social system that had more to offer (or something to offer). The response of those who remained 'Greek' was to dig in. The 'theologization' of philosophy through Pythagorean revelation assisted this process by deluding them into supposing that the wreckage they clung to was a means of

[47] The text of the scholium is printed in ii. 40 n. 1 of the Budé edn. of Photius' *Library* (ed. R. Henry (Paris, 1960)).

[48] For the case of Lucian, see Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 45–9 (to which add the exasperation with atticizing purity felt by Lucian's fellow 'Assyrian' Tatian, *To the Greeks*, 28), 69, 307–12.

salvation. It also devolved higher Greek learning from the centre to regions where no one doubted the antiquity of non-Greek wisdom, a development which was not comforting to everyone.

FROM AMMONIUS TO PHILOSTRATUS

L. Flavius Philostratus was not immune to the cultural and religious changes of his time. A citizen of Athens, he and his family had a connection with Lemnos (which was probably Athenian territory), and owned property at Erythrae.[49] At some point in the first decade of the third century he was introduced to the imperial court, and became familiar with the empress, Julia Domna.[50] This is 'Julia the philosopher' (*Sophists*, 622). We may assume that Philostratus stayed close to her until the murder of her son, the emperor Caracalla, in April 217, and her own death through starvation shortly afterwards.[51] At the beginning of *Apollonius* he asserts that Julia had asked him to write about Apollonius of Tyana (1. 3). It is plain from the way she is referred to that the work was finished (or at least published) after her death. *Apollonius* is cited in *Lives of the Sophists*, and is therefore before 237/8.[52]

Apollonius is a work of high literary value. No one who reads it properly can fail to observe that Philostratus has taken great care over its composition. He was not the first to write on the subject, nor the last. He himself criticizes an account by one Moeragenes and an account of Apollonius' early life in Aegeae by one Maximus. In addition, Philostratus used some of the extant collection of *Letters* attributed to Apollonius. There is also the problem of his main source, the 'tablets' (*deltoi*) of Damis of Nineveh, which were brought to the attention of Julia Domna by 'a certain relative of Damis'. Philostratus alleges that his role was to recast these 'memoirs' (*hypomnēmata*) in a suitably high style (*Apollonius*, 1. 3).[53] 'Damis' has been dis-

[49] See Flinterman, *Power, Paideia and Pythagoreanism*, 15, 17–18.

[50] Ibid. 20–1 argues reasonably for the period between mid-203 and the end of 207/start of 208.

[51] Cassius Dio, 78. 23–4.

[52] Date of *Sophists*: Avotins, 'Date and Recipient'.

[53] At 1. 19 Damis ironically calls his book 'Scraps' (*ekphatnismata*), a very rare term in a metaphorical sense.

cussed many times.[54] Since I am interested in the role that Apollonius played for Philostratus and his audience in the early third century, source criticism is in some ways irrelevant (though impossible to disregard completely). But I should say that I concur with Bowie (amongst others) in holding that Damis is an invention of Philostratus, that the story of the tablets is suggestive of certain *topoi* of ancient fictional writing (though this does not mean that Philostratus thought he was writing a fictional account, or that his audience was supposed to take it as such), and that the particular pseudonym 'Damis' was chosen to honour the great sophist and benefactor Flavius Damianus of Ephesus, whom Philostratus knew in Damianus' final years (*Sophists*, 605–6). Although Damianus himself was long dead by the time *Apollonius* appeared, his three sons were senators in the Severan period, and the honour was easily transferable, as Philostratus indicates in *Sophists*.[55]

Did Philostratus have philosophical interests? Although they were contemporaries, no link can be established with Ammonius Saccas. Philostratus does mention the other Ammonius (Ammonius the Peripatetic), saying that he has 'never yet known a man who was more erudite' (*Sophists*, 618). This Ammonius has recently been put forward by Edwards as the teacher of Origen.[56] He is lavishly praised also by Longinus, in his preface to *On the End* (*ap*. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 20. 49–57). And the difference between the two sources is revealing. Unlike Longinus, Philostratus praises Ammonius for scholarly expertise rather than philosophy. It has indeed been pointed out that Philostratus shows no great interest in philosophy, including Pythagoreanism, in his other works. Hence, if *Apollonius* is different, it is argued that he must have been drawing on a pseudo-Pythagorean work (which went under the name of 'Damis').[57] However, to ask directly about Philostratus' philosophic interests may be misleading, for the question places

[54] Bowie, 'Apollonius of Tyana', 1653–71; Anderson, *Philostratus*, 155–73; Flinterman, *Power, Paideia and Pythagoreanism*, 79–88; each of these refers to earlier literature.

[55] Leunissen, *Konsuln und Konsulare*, 192. Cf. *Sophists* 605: 'all of them have the rank of senator and are admired for their great renown and indifference to money'.

[56] M. J. Edwards, 'Ammonius, Teacher of Origen', 179–81.

[57] Speyer, 'Zum Bild des Apollonius', 50. Flinterman, *Power, Paideia and Pythagoreanism*, advances a similar idea.

undue emphasis on adherence to a particular philosophy of a particular school, at the expense of a general interest in philosophy as an ethical system in society. We would do better to try to place Philostratus against the cultural-philosophical background of his time, taking account also of the likely interests of his audience and his patrons.

Taking patrons first, we must not pass by a piece of evidence for the Pythagorean and Platonist interests of Julia Domna. At *Sophists*, 622, Philostratus says that the sophist Philiscus of Thessaly won the patronage of Julia by attaching himself 'to the geometers and philosophers who surrounded her'.[58] Cassius Dio also attests Julia's philosophic interests (75. 15. 7; 77. 18. 3). In this age *geōmetria* remains the name of one of the two theoretical branches of mathematics (the other being *arithmētikē*), as a glance at Theon's or Nicomachus' introductions will confirm. Thus 'geometers' means 'mathematicians' (in our sense of the word), and 'Philostratus' characterization of Julia's coterie points to Platonic or Pythagorean philosophers'.[59] We do not have to imagine Julia doing pure mathematics to see here a reference to a plausible interest in the dominant (pagan) intellectual trend of the time.[60]

We can also point to the interest shown in Apollonius by other imperials and their courtiers, to see that Philostratus is not making a false claim when he says he was asked to write by Julia Domna. Caracalla honoured the sage by erecting a *hērōon* to him at Tyana in 214/15 (Cassius Dio, 77. 18. 4). The author of the *Augustan History* alleges that Severus Alexander worshipped Apollonius in his private chapel alongside Christ, Abraham, Orpheus, and various others (*Alexander*, 29. 2).[61] The devotion of the 'kings' to Apollonius at Tyana is attested by Philostratus himself in the last words of his work (8. 31). During the third and fourth

[58] The date must be 212: Halfmann, *Itinera principum*, 225.

[59] Flinterman, *Power, Paideia and Pythagoreanism*, 23, referring to Burkert, 'Zur geistesgeschichtlichen Einordnung', 54–5 (who fantasizes that the pseudo-Pythagorean *On Kingship* by Ecphantus arose 'aus diesem Zirkel'; see Thesleff, 'On the Problem of the Doric Pseudo-Pythagorica', 72); cf. Rothe, *Kommentar zu ausgewählten Sophistenviten*, 256–7.

[60] Note also Galen's remarks on Julia's and her husband's care for the Arria, who was 'praised by them particularly because of her command of philosophy and her special fondness for the writings of Plato' (*On Theriac to Piso*, xiv, p. 218 Kühn).

[61] Even if this is fiction, it at least attests to the possibility of worshipping Apollonius in the later fourth century. See also n. 63.

centuries, and at least in one case as a direct result of Philostratus' portrait, Apollonius became a focal point of pagan reaction to Christianity. Special prominence was given to him shortly before the Great Persecution of Diocletian and Galerius in 303. The *vicarius Orientis* Sossianus Hierocles used *Apollonius* as the basis of a work comparing the sage with Jesus, in order to demonstrate Apollonius' superiority. This received a scornful, sarcastic rebuttal from Eusebius, to which I shall return. An Egyptian poet named Soterichus, who wrote an encomium of Diocletian, is known also to have written a *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, presumably with similar anti-Christian aims.[62] And the figure of Apollonius himself was surely involved in the anti-Christian activities of the shrine of Asclepius at Aegeae, which was destroyed by Christians with the approval of Constantine, for in *Apollonius* he is closely connected with that god (1. 7–13), and Sossianus made him a priest of the rites on this basis.[63]

As to audience, what I have to say in the following sections should make it plain that Philostratus is addressing himself to those who shared his Hellenism and who could be expected to approve Pythagorean elements in intellectual definitions of it.[64] The dedication to Julia focuses this on the court in particular. If it is reasonable to hold that the 'historical' Apollonius had been a man of Pythagorean persuasions, we have nevertheless been warned that 'his dietary and sartorial practices and other ascetic features [may] stem from . . . the stock-in-trade of the Near Eastern holy man [rather than from Pythagoreanism]'.[65] We should also remember that Pythagorean living is just as important as technical-philosophical aspects of Pythagoreanism, and that 'Pythagoreanism' covers both aspects. Moreover, leading a Pythagorean life in the first century (whatever the reality of Apollonius) is quite different from leading a Pythagorean life in the third. In the first century, Pythagoreanism was only beginning to exert a serious influence on a Platonism which was far from dominant

[62] Suda, σ 877.

[63] Eusebius, *Against Hierocles*, 370, 29, Kayser (in vol. 1 of his edn. of Philostratus) = 2 Conybeare (in vol. 2 of his Loeb Classical Library translation of *Apollonius*); *Life of Constantine*, 3. 56, with Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 671–2. Asclepius of Aegeae was patronized especially by Severus Alexander: Weiss, 'Ein Altar für Gordian', 198–203.

[64] At *Apollonius*, 7. 3, Philostratus specifies his hearers as admirers of Plato—see below, n. 105.

[65] Bowie, 'Apollonius of Tyana', 1692.

itself. By the 220s/230s, in the age of Ammonius Saccas and Plotinus, it had become a major influence in what was now the major philosophy.

FROM PHILOSTRATUS TO APOLLONIUS

Geographical descriptions (Babylon, 1. 25; Caucasus, 2. 2 ff.; Hyphasis, 3. 1–2; Spain, 5. 1–2; Ethiopia, 6. 1; Upper Nile, 6. 23–4), disquisitions on art (2. 22), excursuses on animals (2. 11–16), the wonders of India (3. 45–57), an interview with Achilles (4. 11–16), the merits of the *aulos* (5. 21), a debate on the best form of constitution (5. 33–55), the customs and laws of the Spartans (6. 20), and the purposes of long hair (8. 7. 6): all of these are good examples of the sophistic décor for which *Apollonius* is well known.[66] For many modern readers the taste for such descriptions, often of trivial or strange items (*adoxa*, *paradoxa*), and the use of so many hackneyed themes in this type of material represent the unacceptable face of a society in intellectual decline with nothing better to do than play with words.[67] This reaction is both understandable and unquestioning. We must always go beyond particular texts to ask why these elements are so important. Two general points may be made. First, we must not forget that writing of this sort uses the stylistic register of atticizing Greek. Anyone enquiring into the function of such tastes must bear in mind the function of language purism in second-sophistic society as a means of distinguishing élite and mass. Second, the recycling of trivia is not simply enjoyment of what is familiar and comfortable, but also reveals the intense pleasure the élite derived from displaying a detailed knowledge of Greek culture and the moral/political thought wrapped up in it.

As to *Apollonius*, the fantasy of the whole may make us think that 'sophistic fillers' are commoner than they in fact are. The question of evidence looms large here. If we find *topoi* of contemporary fictional writing (the 'Greek novel') in the work,[68] we are in danger of making assumptions about the truth-value of

[66] See Anderson, *Philostratus*, esp. 124–31 (comparing themes in *Apollonius* and *Sophists*), 199–226 (Apollonius' travels).

[67] See Anderson, *Second Sophistic*, 144–55, 171–99, for an outline of some of these traits.

[68] Bowie, 'Apollonius of Tyana', 1665.

the text. There is certainly no need to suppose that everything in *Apollonius* was believed by Philostratus or intended to be believed. On occasion he excuses himself in Herodotean style by claiming that he has been obliged to set out such and such a story. The clearest expression of this is at 3. 26, where he introduces fabulous Indian material by saying: 'This account has been written up by Damis,[69] . . . I must not leave it out, for there is advantage in neither believing everything nor disbelieving' (3. 45).[70] This contrived sense of balance is part of a general self-consciousness of the narrative's progress and status as a reliable, well-paced, directed, and interesting account.[71] It would be unhelpful to dismiss such statements simply as affectations of historiographical or novelistic stock-in-trade. Notice how relaxed Philostratus is: he is purveying a larger truth, and not every detail matters so long as the integrity of Apollonius himself cannot be called into question. In *Apollonius* the terrain of the true had been mapped out by God. Philostratus may express incomprehension (especially at 4. 45[72]), but there is no lack of faith. What was (?should be) good enough for the royal family, as he reminds his audience at the beginning and end of the work, was good enough for him.

How does *Apollonius* work? Ignoring the book-by-book structure, there are two major parts to the story. Apollonius' defence before Domitian and his speech of defence occupy books 7 and 8. This section is marked off from everything that goes before it by the final words of the last chapter of book 6: 'These were the deeds of the man on behalf of temples and cities, these were his words to peoples and on behalf of peoples, these were his actions on behalf

[69] Cf. e.g. 1. 3, 19; 2. 17, 28; 3. 27; 4. 25; 7. 28, 35, 41; 8. 29.

[70] *καὶ γὰρ κέρδος ἂν εἴη μήτε πιστεύειν, μήτε ἀπιστεῖν πᾶσιν*. Cf. 2. 9 (*δεῖ δὲ ἀληθείας ἐμοί*, a reminiscence of Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7. 30. 3), 18 (*ἀντιλέγειν μὲν οὐκ ἀξιῶν·οὐ μὴν ξυντίθεμαί γε λογιζόμενος*); 3. 57 (*ἄξιον δὲ μηδὲ τὸν . . . παρελθεῖν λόγον . . . πλάττεται ἥδιστος*); 4. 45 (*ἄρρητος ἡ κατάληψις τούτου γέγονεν οὐκ ἐμοὶ μόνῳ*); 5. 1 (*τὰ μὲν μυθώδη ἐῶ, τὰ δ' ἀκοῆς τε καὶ λόγου ἄξια δηλώσω μᾶλλον*); 6. 27 (*οὔτε γὰρ ἡ πεῖρα ἀπιστητέα οὔτε ἐγώ*); 7. 1 (*χρὴ γάρ που τἀληθὲς οὕτω μαστεύειν*); *et al*.

[71] Cf. e.g. 1. 4 (*μεμνῆσθαι χρὴ . . . ἐπειδὰν προιὼν ὁ λόγος δεικνύῃ*); 2. 21 (*οὐ ξυγχωρεῖ μοι ὁ λόγος παρελθεῖν*); 3. 1 (*τάδε χρὴ γιγνώσκειν*); 4. 25 (*ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἐμήκυνα*); 5. 39 (*τὰ μὲν δὴ τῆς διαφορᾶς . . . τοιάδε εὗρον*); 6. 25 (*ὑπὲρ μὲν δὴ τούτων ἐν ἑτέροις λόγοις ἱκανῶς εἴρηκα . . . ὡς δὲ μήτε ἐς λόγων ἴοιμεν μῆκος . . . μήτ' αὖ διαπηδῶντες φαινοίμεθα λόγον . . . τὰ σπουδαιότερα ἐπελθεῖν τούτων καὶ ὁπόσα μνήμης ἀξιώσεται*); 7. 28 (*ἕτερα . . . ἐπεισόδια . . . οὐδ' ἄξια ἐμοὶ σπουδάσαι . . . τὰ δὲ λόγου ἐχόμενα*); 8. 29 (*ἐμοὶ δὲ οὐδὲ τοῦτο χρὴ παραλελεῖφθαι δεῖ γάρ που τὸν λόγον ἔχειν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ πέρας*); *et al*.

[72] The girl 'who appeared to have died': ctr. 8. 7 [14] (Apollonius cannot raise the dead).

of the dead and the sick, these his words to the wise and the unwise and to kings, who made him their adviser in virtue' (6. 43).[73] The end of this passage may be compared with the very last words of book 6: 'his shrines at Tyana are fitted out with royal offerings—for the kings would not deny him what they claimed for themselves'. In the first part of the work Philostratus states at 5. 39 that his purpose is 'to record the life (*bios*) of Apollonius for those who do not yet know it'. Similarly, at 6. 35 he describes his narrative as a *logos* 'which we are taking the trouble to record for those ignorant of the man'. Philostratus has, then, a biographical aim.[74] In the Roman imperial period, biographical records came to function as vehicles of belief systems, pagan and Christian.[75] The 'life' of Apollonius is not the life of an individual called Apollonius: it is the *way* of life of that individual. In the case of Apollonius the way of life was 'the Pythagorean life' (*ho Puthagoreios bios*).[76] The first part of *Apollonius* relates what Apollonius was able to do for things or people by leading such a life (6. 43). In the second part, the key speech of defence (*apologia*) sums up this life, and defends its philosophy at the imperial court. This defence is a *logos* for 'those who will pay careful attention both to me and the man' (8. 6). The author's demand to be heard reflects the importance of his message and its relevance to himself.

THE PROBLEMS OF HELLENISM

Apollonius soon decides on a 'Pythagorean life' (1. 7).[77] Occupation of the moral high ground leads to a reform of falling Hellenic standards in religion and other matters at Antioch (21. 16). The link between being Pythagorean and being Hellenic is of the utmost importance in the work from here on. In the *Sophists* Philostratus presents the culture and society of his own time as

[73] Cf. the role of the philosopher according to Demetrius and Damis at 7. 12, 13: he might die to liberate his city, protect family and friends, temples and tombs.

[74] For the idea of providing information, cf. *Sophists*, 527–8, 574, 590–1.

[75] Momigliano, 'Ancient Biography'; Edwards and Swain, *Portraits*.

[76] Cf. 1. 7, *τὸν τοῦ Πυθαγόρου βίον*; 6. 11, *βίου αἵρεσις . . . κατὰ τὸν Πυθαγόραν*. See above in text before n. 28.

[77] His dissolute teacher of this life, Euxenus, who was 'devoted to food and sex', is an allusion to Heracleides Ponticus, a crucial source for Pythagoras and a well-known *bon viveur* (Diogenes Laertius, 5. 86).

taking shape in the mid-first century.[78] A reforming first-century Apollonius, who is welcomed, admired, and needed, is in keeping with this viewpoint.

To anyone mounting a defence of Hellenic values, as Philostratus certainly is, the problem of the exclusivity of Hellenism in class and 'race' (that is, in regard to the imaginary biology of Greek descent) could not be ignored. Philostratus' younger contemporary Origen attacks his Platonist opponent Celsus on precisely these grounds.[79] 'We say that it is the task of those who teach the true doctrines to help as many people as they can . . . not only the intelligent, but also the stupid, and again not just the Greeks without including the barbarians as well' (*Against Celsus*, 6. 1, trans. Chadwick). Again, 'the divine nature, which cares not only for those supposed to have been educated in Greek learning but also for the rest of mankind, came down to the level of the ignorant multitude of hearers, that by using a style familiar to them it might encourage the mass of the common people to listen' (7. 60).

Origen follows St Paul in rejecting the old divisions.[80] No one who saw himself as part of the Greek élite could be interested in choosing 'the foolish things of the world to confound the wise' (as Paul advises the Corinthians). That said, the claim that Hellenism was universal in its appeal was part of the Hellenist agenda. All élites must recruit. For Hellenism, this meant extension horizontally, never descent to 'the level of the ignorant multitude'. The task of recruitment was especially important—and especially risky—in the extended 'Greek East'. As has been noted, the advent of the Severan dynasty brought its own problems in this regard. Septimius Severus was quick to ally himself in name and aim with the legitimate Antonine emperors; but his origin from the Punic city of Lepcis Magna (which had remained free of Italian immigration) and his marriage to a member of a (probably)

[78] See *Sophists*, 511 for the 'scarcity of genuine sophists' and the 'dire straits of the science [of oratory]' before the career of Nicetes of Smyrna in the time of Nero. Cf. *Apollonius*, 8. 21.

[79] According to Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6. 36. 2, *Against Celsus* was written during the reign of Philip (during which Philostratus died: see above, n. 43) when Origen was over 60, i.e. during the years 245–9. See Frede, above in this volume, p. 131.

[80] Rom. 1: 14; cf. Col. 3: 11; *Against Celsus*, 1. 26, 2. 13, 3. 54, further 7. 44, quoting 1 Cor. 1: 27. The objection of exclusivity was part of Jewish anti-Greek polemic too: see Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2. 169–70.

Arabic dynastic family from Emesa marks the end of Italian pre-eminence in the Empire. Under Elagabal (son of Julia Domna's niece, Julia Soaemias) and Severus Alexander (son of her other niece, Julia Mamaea) the imperial household had a Greek feel, but one which shows arguably local or regional aspects. The cult of the sun-god, Elagabal, at Emesa, of which Elagabal was priest, and after whom he is known to later writers and moderns, may originally have had nothing to do with Helios—it has been argued that it had in fact undergone a remarkable process of *interpretatio graeca*.[81] Whatever the truth of this, the rite and its ministers were hardly orthodox Graeco-Roman, but were consciously following a local tradition.[82] Severus Alexander has none of his cousin's eccentricities. But his mother's attested interest in the Christianity of Origen and Hippolytus should again be seen as an example of un-Hellenic conduct. This interest must have been a public fact, if Eusebius is right in saying that she brought Origen to Antioch by military escort.[83] We do not have to turn *Apollonius* into a pagan response to Julia's flirtations: but there is also no reason to fail to connect Philostratus' stress on traditional Hellenic values with a religious and political climate that had begun to change, and where Hellenic values could not necessarily be taken for granted despite (or because of?) a Hellenized court.

[81] Millar, *Roman Near East*, 301, 304–8, 531. The cult was focused on a large, conical, black stone, which is described by Herodian at *After Marcus*, 5. 3. 5, and Millar argues that the symbolism of the stone had come to be read from a Greek perspective: 'the stone with its eagle [the form of representation known from a limestone relief discussed by Starcky, 'Stèle d'Élagabal'] has changed meaning and—rather improbably—has come to be interpreted as a symbol of the Sun (''Helios'')' (305). The argument depends on taking the Aramaic form of the god's name 'LH'GBL (found on the relief) as 'God-Mountain' (i.e. having no reference to the sun, but allowing a slide between Aramaic 'LH', 'god', and Greek *hēlios*; cf. the epigraphically attested *Hēlios Elagabalos*); but it could easily mean something like 'Deus-Formator' (the root GBL produces a number of verbal forms in Aramaic languages meaning 'mould', 'form', 'shape', 'create'); in which case native association of the stone with the sun (a widely worshipped Semitic deity: Seyrig, 'Le Culte du soleil') is by no means impossible. Herodian, after all, says that the projections and marks on the stone, not the stone itself, were taken as 'an unworked representation of the sun'.

[82] Evidence from Herodian and Cassius Dio in Millar, *Roman Near East*, 307. We have no way of knowing whether the local paraphernalia of the cult was genuinely traditional.

[83] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6. 21. 3–4 ('a most religious woman, if ever there was one'); perhaps another reason for not dismissing the *Augustan History* on her son Alexander's religious likes (see n. 61). See further in text before n. 89. For her correspondence with Hippolytus, see n. 89.

Competition between Greek and Eastern wisdom has been mentioned above, and allows a line of enquiry. It had long been part of the Jews' response to Greek slurs to argue that the Greeks themselves were an upstart race who had appropriated others' ideas, especially Jewish ones. Josephus' *Against Apion* turns largely on this question. Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Plato, the Stoics, and the rest took their conception of God (amongst other things) from Moses and the Jews (1. 162–5; 2. 168, 257), whose civilization was far older.[84] These ideas passed happily into Christian apologetic (see, for example, Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 3. 16 ff.; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 1. 71. 3–73. 6) as a way of combating the suggestion that Christianity had no past and no tradition worth listening to. It is no surprise that Celsus was prepared to admit the antiquity of every race except the Jews. He adopted this position, says Origen, 'out of mere perversity, with a view to impugning the origin of Christianity which depended on the Jews' (*Against Celsus*, 1. 16, trans. Chadwick). We should compare Diogenes Laertius. When he is busy rejecting the idea that philosophy began among the barbarians, Jews are conspicuously absent from his list of competitors to the Greeks (*Lives*, 1. 1–11; above, p. 162). They are mentioned only in passing as possible descendants of the Magi, along with the Gymnosophists (ibid. 9).[85] At *Lives*, 8. 10, Diogenes quotes innocently from the second book of Hermippus' *On Pythagoras*. This author, says Josephus, was 'careful about every historical fact', and in the first book of the same work had stated that Pythagoras' 'doings and sayings were imitation and appropriation of the beliefs of the Jews and the Thracians' (*Against Apion*, 1. 164–5).[86] Information of this sort hardly suited Diogenes' Hellenocentrism. But was his silent denial of Jewish claims to ancient wisdom simply anti-Semitic? Or should we recall Origen on the purpose of

[84] Ctr. *Jewish Antiquities*, 15. 371, where Josephus in a different train of thought has the Essenes 'follow a way of life which was pioneered among the Greeks by Pythagoras'.

[85] From Clearchus (fr. 13, Wehrli). It is more usual for Greek writers to allege that the Jews were Egyptians and had revolted from the ways of their fathers: Strabo, *Geography*, 16. 2. 34–5 (C 760); Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2. 10 ff., 28 ff. (where the Egyptian Apion's allegations ingratiate him with the Greeks); Origen, *Against Celsus*, 3. 5; cf. Tacitus, *Histories*, 5. 3, and above, n. 38.

[86] Hermippus, fr. 22, Wehrli. Thracians may refer to Orpheus or perhaps Zamolxis, whose connection with Pythagoras (here as pupil) is recounted by (*inter alios*) Antonius Diogenes in *The Incredible Things beyond Thule* = Porphyry, *Pythagoras*, 14; Antonius is also the source of Porphyry, *Pythagoras*, 11, on Pythagoras learning dream interpretation from the 'Hebrews'. Cf. below, n. 110.

Celsus' attitude to Jewish antiquity? Consciously or not, in damning Jews by ignoring them, Diogenes was also denying Christians ancient learning at a time when their claim on this through Judaism was growing ever stronger. The fact is that the more Hellenic philosophy became the motor of Greek religion, the more urgent was the need to deal with those who had better claims to precedence. To do this through silence was the response of those who feared to raise the matter. Likewise, the more Christianity fancied itself a philosophy, the more Greek philosophy had to respond. Cutting Christianity off from its past seemed a promising tactic.

In the *Apollonius*, contacts with ancient wisdom are extremely important. Philostratus sends Apollonius to the Magi (briefly), the Brahmins, and the Egyptians. Jews are not on the list. There is a good literary-structural reason for this: the Jewish revolt and Apollonius' advice to Vespasian on the role of the good king allow Jews to be counted out of bounds. They are characterized once at 5. 33, where Euphrates comments on their revolt from the 'whole of mankind', not just Rome, and stigmatizes their 'unsociable life' and inability to share a common table or to join in 'libations, prayers, and sacrifices'.[87] These traditional views were extended to Christians.[88] The rebuttal of a thoroughgoing 'godlessness'—a social and political charge as much as a religious one—is the stuff of Christian apologies such as the *Embassy* of Athenagoras. Could the link between Jews and Christians have been in Philostratus' mind? 'The House of Alexander [Severus]', says Eusebius, 'consisted mostly of believers', and against it Maximinus Thrax 'raised a persecution as a grudge' (*Ecclesiastical History*, 6. 28. 1). Eusebius presumably based this assessment on his own report of Origen's demonstration at court of 'the excellence of the divine teaching' (ibid. 6. 21. 4). For a scholar so devoted to exegesis of the Old Testament, 'teaching' can hardly have excluded the ancient wisdom of the Jews. A fragment of a letter to Julia Mamaea from Hippolytus glosses Exodus 25: 10.[89] For what it is worth, Alexander Severus' sympathetic interest in

[87] For other references to the Jews, see 5. 27, 34; 6. 29, 34.

[88] Tacitus, *Annals*, 15. 44. 5 (Christians); cf. *Histories*, 5. 5. 2 (Jews); Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 10. 2, 11. 1; Origen, *Against Celsus*, 8. 2, 17.

[89] In the Septuagint version *καὶ ποιήσεις κιβωτὸν μαρτυρίου ἐξ ξύλων ἀσήπτων*. See Achelis, *Hippolytstudien*, 189–93. See further Richard, 'Quelques nouveaux fragments', 79–80, for a fragment of this or another letter from Hippolytus 'to Mamaea' on the resurrection.

both Jews and Christians is a theme of his biography in the *Augustan History*.[90] It suits Philostratus to emphasize that the Jews were anti-empire and anti-society in a context where Apollonius is presented as giving Hellenic advice to the Roman king. If we believe Eusebius and the *Augustan History*, we will say that it was of benefit to him to repeat the charge of Jewish hostility to men and empire, and to pass by their ancient wisdom, because he could thereby undermine Christian influence among the royals, who were certainly a part of his intended audience. If we do not, and suppose that there was no real Christian influence at court, we must at least allow that Philostratus' highly self-conscious Hellenism involves antipathy towards rival groups of all sorts, and that in the 220s and 230s Christians, however minor a threat they might still seem, were one of these.

PYTHAGOREANISM AND HELLENISM

I want now to pursue the relation between Apollonius and Hellenism and the East by looking at Apollonius' relations with the sages and some other matters. In the court of the Persian king Vardanes, Apollonius lectures Damis on the difference between Hellenic and barbarian morals. 'To a wise man Hellas is everywhere' (1. 35). The origin of the tag is Isocrates, *Panegyric*, 50 ('the name ''Hellenes'' [is the name of] those who share our culture rather than a common nature'). Isocrates was speaking of Athenian culture in particular; but he was well aware of the power of Hellenic culture to civilize barbarians (such as Cyprians/ Phoenicians at *Evagoras*, 47–50). Second-sophistic Greeks took the outlook of Isocrates very much to heart. For Philostratus, it is essential to present Hellenism as a universally appreciated ideal. Thus the court of Vardanes is thoroughly philhellenic (1. 29, 32; 2. 17, etc.), and the statement of Hellenism's appeal follows Apollonius' exposition of Pythagoreanism (1. 32).

The 'indigenous' wisdom of the Mages is respected by Apollonius (1. 32), though not totally (1. 79). For Vardanes and the

[90] *Alexander* 22. 4: 'Iudaeis privilegia reservavit. Christianos esse passus est'; cf. 29. 2 (above, n. 61), 43. 6–7, 45. 7, 49. 6, 51. 7. We can also point to his acquaintance with the Christian intellectual Julius Africanus, who sent him his *Kestoi*: Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 307.

Persians are mere preparation for the Indians, their philhellenic king Phraotes, and for the wisest men of them all, the Brahmins and their leader, Iarchas (books 2 and 3). The account begins with a description of the royal city of Taxila, giving Apollonius a chance to discourse in sub-Platonic mode on art theory with reference to engravings of the deeds of Porus and Alexander (2. 22). He and Phraotes recognize each other as philosophers (2. 25 ff.). Greek and the Greek character command the king's highest respect. Phraotes explains that his studies with the Brahmins were aided by his fluency in Greek, since they regarded him on this basis as one of their own (2. 29 ff., esp. 31). 'Black-arse', as Damis calls him (2. 36, a proverbial reference to a doughty opponent), holds his own in philosophical discussion, and sends Apollonius off to the Brahmins with a commendation as 'the wisest' (2. 41). Their possession of Greek and their respect for Greek culture is fundamental to Philostratus' presentation (e.g. 3. 12, 14, 16). Apollonius says that his stay with them will at least teach him that he has nothing more to learn (3. 16). Since the Brahmins are referred to in Pythagorean style as *autoi* ('themselves'), we expect them to discourse on metempsychosis (3. 13, 19). Their opinion is 'what Pythagoras imparted to you, and we to the Egyptians' (3. 19). The claim that Indian wisdom is the source of Egyptian wisdom, and therefore of Pythagoreanism, is Philostratus' invention.[91]

Contemporary interest in India and Indian religion is assured by an Indian embassy which visited Elagabal. The ambassadors happened to meet with the Edessan courtier and intellectual Bardaisan, who recorded his discussions with them about Hindu (*Brachmanes*) and Buddhist (*Samanaioi*) holy men.[92] Philostratus has Apollonius plan to visit the *Brachmanes* and the *Hurkanioi* (1. 18), but nothing more is heard of the latter (the form of which is best considered a scribal corruption for *Samanaioi* or something similar).[93] It is not implausible to suggest that Philostratus' contacts at court mean that 'we can assume interest in these

[91] Philostratus ignores the tradition about Pythagoras and the Brahmins reported or invented by Alexander Polyhistor, *FGrH* 273F94; cf. Apuleius, *Florida*, 15.

[92] Bardaisan, *FGrG* 719F2 = Porphyry, *On Abstinence*, 4. 17–18; for the date, see ibid., F1 (= Porphyry, *On the Styx*, fr. 376F, Smith).

[93] Christol, 'Les Édits grecs d'Asoka', 49. Ctr. *Apollonius*, 5. 20.

matters is high places'.[94] Against this may be the fact that Apollonius' voyage to India follows the traditional route of Alexander, as several reminiscences show. If Philostratus was thinking as a contemporary, he would (it is argued) have sent Apollonius by sea from the Euphrates to the Indus, which is how St Thomas travels in the *Acts of Thomas*.[95] The traditional route and the restriction of contact to the Brahmins suit Philostratus' Hellenic agenda. Apollonius follows the most famous honorary Greek, and outdoes him in his contacts with the most famous Indian sages.[96] Moreover, in so doing, his 'progress in wisdom is more divine than Pythagoras', as Philostratus puts it earlier (1. 2), since Apollonius visits the sages whose wisdom was the ultimate source of his own hero's, but from whom he himself has little to learn. In one go the acknowledged influence of the East is neutralized and brought safely within Hellenism.[97]

Apollonius, assured of his merits, returns to the Greeks to lecture them on Hellenic standards (4. 1 ff., 21 ff., 28 ff.). Several miracles are performed: three exorcisms, including that of a plague demon (10, 20, 25), a raising from the dead (45), a 'bilocation' (10: 'doing, I think, exactly what Pythagoras did when he was in Thurii and Metapontum at the same moment'). There is an interview with Achilles and other 'heroic' material (11–16),[98] which is to be seen not simply as sophistic cliché or

[94] Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 84.

[95] *Acts of Thomas*: Drijvers, 'Acts of Thomas', 323 (dating to the 'beginning of the 3rd century'); Dihle, 'Neues zur Thomas-Tradition', 64–6, on the sea route to India. As Dihle notes, Alexander Severus' Persian campaign in 231 included an expedition to the mouths of the Euphrates and Tigris (Herodian, 6. 5. 2), possibly with an eye on future economic benefits. Note that Apollonius does return by sea (3. 52–8) to copy Nearchus (3. 53).

[96] Alexander's influence: apart from Caracalla's *imitatio* during his Parthian campaign and the name of Severus Alexander (probably an Emesene family name, but with obvious associations for Cassius Dio, 79. 17. 3, and Herodian, 5. 7. 3), there is the extraordinary story of the false Alexander who processed from the Danube to Chalcedon in 221 with 400 attendants and 'lodgings and all his provisions at public expense' (Cassius Dio, 79. 18. 1–3).

[97] On the role of the Brahmins, cf. Anderson, *Philostratus*, esp. 210. Very pale reflections of Platonism may be found in Iarchas' discourse on the world soul (3. 34–5), where the five elements are a Peripateticizing reading of *Timaeus* developed in some Middle Platonists (Dillon, *Alcinous*, 119–20, 135–6); the cosmos as *zōion* is again straight from *Timaeus*; and the phrase for the transcendent 'creator god' (*theos genetōr*) is found in the pseudo-Pythagorean *Timaeus of Locri* and the Pythagoreanizing Pseudo-Aristotle, *On the World*.

[98] Note 4. 16: 'Pythagoras, ancestor of my wisdom'; cf. 5. 15, where Aesop's *philosophia* comes from Hermes (the ancestor of Pythagoras: Diogenes, *Lives*, 8. 4).

Homerkritik (a somewhat misleading term anyway), but part also of an appeal to the royal house.[99] The end of book 4 takes Apollonius to Rome for a confrontation with Nero's henchman, Tigellinus, 'on behalf of philosophy' (35–47). This is further preparation for Domitian and the apologia in books 7 and 8.

Apollonius' next voyages to the 'barbarians' of the West and to Egypt. He is pleased to find that some of the former are 'Hellenic', and 'are educated in the fashion of our country' (5. 4), again an advertisement of the wide appeal of Hellenism.[100] A journey to Alexandria via Rhodes brings Apollonius into contact with Vespasian, and allows him to offer advice on how to be a good king (26–41). Apollonius deals with his competitors, Dio of Prusa and Euphrates, and gives the advice a Roman emperor wants to hear: monarchy is best (35). When he turns to details, he emphasizes amongst other things the need to behave well towards the Greeks (36); Vespasian is rebuked when he later fails to follow the spirit of what Apollonius has said (41). The stress on Hellenism here must be borne in mind when we consider this advice. Christian apologists may (Justin, Melito, Athenagoras) or may not (Theophilus, Tatian) stress their loyalty to the empire, or at least advert to the coincidence between the birth of empire and the life of Jesus.[101] In this they naturally have their own agenda. Greeks' advice to the emperor is again an expression of loyalty on their own terms. Apollonius is not simply 'on the side of the established Roman order'.[102] He supports what supports him, and Vespasian receives his blessing, because he accepts Hellenic advice and values Apollonius as much as Vardanes and Phraotes.

[99] Cf. Caracalla's care for the tomb of Achilles in 214 (Herodian, 4. 8. 4; Cassius Dio, 77. 16. 7): if the *Heroicus* (a celebration of traditional hero cult with much material on Achilles: Anderson, *Philostratus*, esp. 252) represents a courtier's response to this, it was a response which was fully genuine.

[100] For 'our country' (*ἡμεδαπὸν*) cf. 2. 2, where *ἐν τῇ ἡμεδαπῇ* includes Asia Minor. Cf. and ctr. Herodian, 1. 1. 4, 'in our country and among many of the barbarians', where the right translation of *ἐν τῇ ἡμεδαπῇ* is probably 'Roman territory' (Whittaker)—though this depends on how one takes the similar phrasing of 3. 8. 9, *ἀπὸ πάσης γῆς ἡμετέρας τε καὶ βαρβάρου*, while at 2. 11. 8 the Alps are 'far bigger than anything in our land' (*ἐν τῇ καθ' ἡμᾶς γῇ*) clearly offers an Eastern perspective.

[101] For Melito, see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4. 26. 7. Coincidence: Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, 4. 8–10 (not, given the context, the most favourable link); Origen, *Against Celsus*, 2. 30. Cf. Peterson, *Der Monotheismus*, 66 ff., on these passages and later ones.

[102] Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 116.

Book 6 takes Apollonius to the 'Naked Sages' of Upper Egypt and Ethiopia. It appears that the *Gumnoi* of Ethiopia (they are never called *Gumnosophistai*) are another Philostratean invention.[103] Their main role is to restate the superiority of Indian wisdom (6. 6, 11, 16). They are disrespectful to Apollonius, and are consequently shown the limits of their learning. Apollonius' reply to their leader's attack on him (11) is a highly wrought production, which is used to confirm his devotion to Pythagoreanism, a philosophy designed, he says, for 'an endless and incalculable time'. He finishes his speech by hailing the power of Helios. A denunciation of the animal gods of Egypt (19) leads to a final talk on the soul, following the arguments of the *Timaeus* (22; cf. 11). The book finishes with (amongst other things) Apollonius' favourable relations with the emperor Titus (29–34), a selection of incidents which recall 'the visits paid to us by the children of Asclepius',[104] and a final statement of the words and deeds of a Pythagorean life, which summarizes the first part of the work (43).

THE APOLOGIA

Books 7 and 8 form the second part of *Apollonius*. Philostratus begins by informing us that his hero is better than other philosophers (7. 1–3).[105] Socrates' trial appears to be comparable (11, 13). At any rate, like Socrates, Apollonius cannot be deflected from his purpose by his friends. How would the cowardly Damis ('an Assyrian and a neighbour of Medians') defend himself before Philosophy, Apollonius asks (14)?[106] Apollonius enters Rome, and secures the aid of Domitian's praetorian prefect, Casperius Aelianus (16–21). He assures him that 'I have come here to make my defence'. Careful readers will remember that this is what Socrates had failed to do (4. 46 (47)). Apollonius is thrown

[103] Cf. Anderson, *Philostratus*, 216.

[104] Cf. Eunapius, *Lives*, 454 (2. 1. 5. G.): 'he should have called [*Apollonius*] "The Visit of God to Mankind"'.

[105] He will not dwell on Plato's failings here, in case 'my audience takes it badly' (3).

[106] Yet Damis, from Nineveh, is also proof of the appeal and potential of Hellenism: 3. 45.

into prison. His wise words make fellow prisoners 'walk in the hope that they would never suffer harm in his company' (7. 26). He duly defends his philosophy to Domitian, and replies to some of the charges against him, especially his support of Nerva (32–3). Cast back in prison, he impresses upon Damis that his nature is divine by breaking his fetters (38). Philostratus is careful to distinguish this action from pure wizardry (39). Damis is now sent away to Dicaearchia. '"You will see me appear there." "Alive", said Damis, "or what?" Apollonius laughed, "As I think, alive", he said, "but as you will think, come back to life [*anabebiōkota*]"' (41).

Defence in the sense of justification has much in common with attack. Christian and Jewish apology plays with this. Apollonius' apologia in book 8 is far from meek. After hearing riddling and flippant replies to the four charges against him, Domitian acquits the sage and commands a private interview. Apollonius denounces the government of the Empire and announces his own immortality, since 'he thought it would be best, if no one was ignorant of his nature' (8. 4–5). He disappears.

Philostratus now tells us to listen 'both to me and the man' (6), as he prepares to publish the *apologia* which Apollonius was too considerate to deliver. This lengthy speech, which for the most part has attracted nonsense or ridicule from modern interpreters, is a carefully structured defence against particular charges levelled by Domitian, and also a general justification of Apollonius' Pythagorean life. Apollonius begins by saying that he will be sounding like a 'critic rather than a defendant' (7 (1)). He is not a wizard (7 (2)). His philosophy is not for gain (7 (3)). 'Divine Pythagoras, help my defence, for I am tried because of what you discovered and I praise.' Pythagoras got his distinctive way of life from the Egyptians, and they from the Brahmins. His purity allowed him to understand his own soul and its transmigrations. Apollonius dresses as a philosopher (7 (4–6)). He is not a god. Good men have something of God the Demiurge. The cosmos of men needs a man who stands in the image of God. This man is a 'god who comes from Wisdom' (7 (7)). Having outlined his way of life, Apollonius goes on to particular charges concerning, among other things, his aversion of plague from Ephesus, his magical prescience (in reality a facet of his purity), his alleged child sacrifice for Nerva and sacrifice of an Arcadian child, which

would be completely impossible for someone so opposed to blood sacrifice in accordance with 'what Pythagoras decreed' (7 (8–12)). The speech ends with further justification about the Arcadian ('I have made you a wiser listener'; cf. 8. 6), and about some hackneyed remarks that Apollonius made on fate (7 (16)), which offer a handle to Eusebius, as we shall see shortly.

The rest of the book is largely concerned with demonstrating Apollonius' divine nature. Damis and Demetrius are waiting for him in a cave of the nymphs in the Odyssean landscape that features in 'the myths about Calypso', when Apollonius appears by 'divine escort', and overcomes their doubts that he is really alive (11–12: 'hold me'). He now journeys to Greece, where he is welcomed as 'divine' (15). Here he visits the cave of Trophonius, to enquire after the 'most perfect and most pure philosophy'. Pythagoreanism is singled out by the god who presents him with a volume of Pythagoras' tenets, which Hadrian later secured in his villa at Antium (19–20). In the last section of the book, Philostratus discards Damis (whose account has ended), and reports versions of Apollonius' final time on earth. The main one is of Apollonius' ascension on Crete, accompanied by a chorus singing, 'climb from earth, climb to heaven, climb' (30). The final chapter makes Apollonius appear to a doubter among the 'companions' who are devoted to his philosophy (31; cf. 21). His oracular pronouncement on the immortality of the soul allows us 'to go forward in good cheer whither the Fates appoint'.

However long-winded or absurd Apollonius' defence—and indeed Philostratus' whole account—may seem to modern readers, we must remember that it was taken very seriously by its ancient ones.[107] One of these readers was Eusebius. His reaction to pagan engagement with *Apollonius* survives in the attack on Sossianus Hierocles and the comparison Sossianus drew between Apollonius and Christ.[108] In this blast Eusebius uses plenty of rhetorical tricks, principally misrepresentation and out-of-context quotation, backed up by ridicule and sarcasm, to produce a masterly explosion of the claims made about Apollonius. '10,000 refutations', he crows, are provided by the text itself

[107] And by some early modern ones: Jenkin, *Account*, still regards Apollonius as an agent of the Devil.

[108] See T. D. Barnes, 'Sossianus Hierocles'; cf. *Constantine*, 164–7. See Frede, below in this volume, pp. 231–5.

(399, 5, Kayser = 31, Conybeare).[109] The third book on the Brahmins made *The Incredible Things beyond Thule* look 'quite believable and completely true' (383, 20–2 = 16).[110] What especially excites him are Apollonius' clichés on the power of fate (*Apollonius*, 7. 9, 8. 7 (16)). His reaction to these remarks is presented as an addition to the book-by-book commentary that precedes it (where they have already been considered, 404, 28–407, 2 = 39). The relation between free will and fate is a tricky one for any philosophy or religion. But Eusebius relentlessly exposes the contradictions in supposing that everything is subject to destiny, as though Christianity could never have any difficulty in the matter (408, 19–413, 10 = 41–2). It must be significant that he pays special attention to remarks which occupy a prominent position in Apollonius' apology (cf. above). For his own record of Christian apologies in the *Ecclesiastical History* was to assure 'apology' its meaning of a justification of Christian life and belief. Perhaps this is why he is particularly pleased to report that, although Apollonius' defence was addressed to the emperor (as so many Christian ones had been), the emperor could not be bothered to wait around to hear it (403, 13–27 = 37).

APOLLONIUS AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE

Eusebius was no fool. He never attempts to deny Apollonius' existence, or even that he was a philosopher (393, 11 = 25). A theme of his work is that Apollonius has been 'falsely implicated' by his author (cf. 397, 26 = 29), and that the myth and magic are Philostratean inventions. Eusebius professes, indeed, to be addressing a friend who is tempted to admire Sossianus' comparison of Apollonius and 'our saviour' (369, 1–4 = 1). Even if the form of address (*ō philotēs*) is perhaps not as polite as it might be,[111] he

[109] See e.g. 402, 23 ff. = 35: 'Surely one can start from his arguments and use them against him?' For the method of citing *Against Hierocles*, see above, n. 63.

[110] The reference to the fabulous *Incredible Things* no doubt depends on its role as an 'accurate' account of Pythagoras' early life (cf. the citations at Porphyry, *Pythagoras*, 10, 32; Porphyry's usage may have been extensive). See recently Stephens and Winkler, *Ancient Greek Novels*, 112–14.

[111] Literally, 'O friendship!', which sounds far less odd in Greek than in English, but is still unusual; it is a favourite of Lucian's (though not always used in irony).

does allow that Apollonius could be taken seriously. What he will not allow is that the Philostratean Apollonius should be.

Between the ages of Philostratus and Eusebius the culture and society of the Greek world underwent major change. To take one example of disagreement between them, Philostratus is quite happy to present Apollonius putting various Homeric questions to Achilles (4. 16). Eusebius simply cannot understand the point of this: 'For a man who allegedly associated with gods both seen and unseen to be so ignorant that he had to ask these questions is surely a matter of the utmost disgrace' (392, 13 = 24). For Philostratus, Apollonius' questions are part of the constant replaying of classical culture that feeds the identity of the Greek élite in his age. The answers were nothing without the workings-out. The failure of a Eusebius to understand what was going on only two or three generations before him shows the extent to which the elements that formed this identity had unravelled. Homeric questions were no longer the province of a man of God. This change should be seen in part, at least, as a phenomenon within Greek culture and its relations with its neighbours. In recent years, regional studies of the Roman Empire have been advancing apace in many areas of historical and cultural enquiry. Christianization, however, is still often investigated as if an empire-wide development allows an empire-wide solution. Yet the progress of religion in the Greek East is particular to that region and its subdivisions. Even general parameters of change, such as the role of miracles or the appeal of suffering and courage,[112] are better understood against particular regional patterns and local religious histories. The Christianity of any man who was born into the Greek élite and rejected Hellenism must be explained against the burdens of Greek identity and the understandable reasons for renouncing it in the areas where it claimed jurisdiction. This is why *Apollonius* is a crucial document, not of sophistic trivia, but of the religious mood of a society not unaware of change, but totally unable to grasp the scale and the effects of what was to come.

It has been suggested recently that Philostratus made a major new contribution to religious life by legitimating the idea of ascetic living through the person of Apollonius.[113] The idea that

[112] Cf. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*; Perkins, *Suffering Self*.
[113] Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 126–9, 184–6.

Philostratus rehabilitated Apollonius—the very opposite of Eusebius' reading—goes back in its modern form to the great nineteenth-century Church historian Baur, who saw Philostratus as a 'doubtful syncretistic mediator' who used a sanitized Apollonius to seek an accommodation with Christianity.[114] To find parallels (healings, exorcisms, doubting followers, ascension, the whole idea of mission) between Apollonius and Jesus and his disciples is not absurd.[115] After all, it has long been recognized that the prototypical saint's life, the *Life of Antony*, was written under the influence of a version of the story of Pythagoras, whose phraseology reappears both in Porphyry's *Pythagoras* and in *Apollonius*.[116] Why should Philostratus not have launched a new genre of pagan hagiography with an eye on the Gospels? Yet, as we have seen, the Pythagorean mysticism which his Apollonius embodies had become progressively influential in the Platonism of the preceding two centuries. Philostratus was right to look back on the first century as a period formative of the pagan vitalism of his own time. He saw a change between the second-sophistic period and what preceded. But his model did not allow for the perception of change within this period. It may be pointed out by us that the appeal of Apollonius to some of the Severan royals marks a departure in what intellectuals were expected to offer their masters. (Dio of Prusa's models in his *Orations on Kingship*, written a century before, look austere and classical in comparison.) But Philostratus thinks of himself as working within the Hellenic tradition, and presents his hero as doing the same. This is not change in the self-conscious manner of Christians. There is no need to herald *Apollonius* as the birth of the 'divine man' of later antiquity.[117]

What is new about *Apollonius* is the combination of religion and philosophy with a very intense Hellenism, which looks forward to pagan intellectual activity in late antiquity, but arises from a quite different cultural environment. Philostratus' Apollonius can still speak like a 'critic rather than a defendant', because Hellenism is

[114] Baur, *Church History*, 178–9; these ideas were fully elaborated in an essay published in 1832, *Apollonius von Tyana und Christus, oder das Verhältnis des Pythagoreismus zum Christenthum*.

[115] See esp. Labriolle, *La Réaction païenne*, 180–8.

[116] Reitzenstein, 'Des Athanasius', 14–39.

[117] For a good discussion of the 'divine man' in relation to recent literature on *Apollonius* and other texts, see Flinterman, 'Ubiquitous Divine Man'.

not really on trial. This Hellenism does not have much to learn even from the Brahmins, and Philostratus' attitudes are those of someone whose claim on Hellenic values as a resident of old Greece did not encourage the independence accorded to Eastern wisdom by a Porphyry or an Iamblichus. What must have worried a Philostratus were the encroachments of barbarism. The reign of Elagabal was centred on a cult whose styles and practices were unknown 'among Greeks and Romans' (Herodian, 5. 3. 5). The difference from the philhellenism of Julia Domna showed up the instability of a lightly Hellenized East. Christian contacts with the court of Severus Alexander would have concerned him in the same way. The assertive Hellenism of *Apollonius* is not necessarily a response to particular problems such as these. It is a reaction to the moods of its time, and most of the details of these are lost to us. It is a shame that this reaction, this demonstration of Hellenism's universal appeal from Spain to India, and of its revealed, divine wisdom, amounts to a traditional exclusivity and élitism, which non-members might partake of only if one worked hard (Damis) or happened to be an empress (Julia Domna).

The early third century was recognized as a time of change. The late fourth-century biographer Eunapius places the end of the 'third crop' of philosophers in the reign of Septimius Severus, and begins his own lives with 'the appropriate starting point' of Plotinus and Porphyry (*Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*, 455 = 2. 2. 6–8, G.). For modern scholars, Ammonius Saccas, teacher of Plotinus and Philostratus' contemporary, is the last of the Middle Platonists.[118] The change was the entry of religion into philosophy, the new role of the philosopher as the privileged associate of the divine, and his concomitant social and cultural visibility. If some allowed that the sources of knowledge were wider than heretofore, this did not make higher Greek culture any more accessible. Thus the emperor Julian, though influenced by Christian care and communalism,[119] shows in the main expositions of his ideas for reforming polytheist religion (letters 84a, 89a–b, orations 5, *To the Mother of the Gods*, and 7, *To the Cynic Heracleius*) a familiar exclusiveness. Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* is an important stage on the road to the fourth-century

[118] e.g. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 380–3.

[119] Cf. Sozomenus, *Ecclesiastical History* 5. 16; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* 4 (*Against Julian*, I), 111.

Neoplatonism of Julian and his associates. But Philostratus still lived in a world where Greek culture was inextricably bound up with being and feeling Greek. He wrote (it has been argued) with an awareness of the limits of Hellenization in the East. His subject-matter involved acceptance of Eastern wisdom. Yet his message was traditional: if Greeks borrowed, they made the borrowing better. Apollonius had nothing to learn. The difference between this apology for Hellenism and the Christian texts that have been studied in this volume is that Philostratus was still apologizing for the old, not the new.

9

The Flowering of Latin Apologetic: Lactantius and Arnobius

MARK EDWARDS

In a previous chapter, Simon Price considers the Latin apologists who wrote before the accession of a Christian emperor.[1] He notes that they exhibit certain generic similarities, employing as they do a range of arguments which, far from being original or peculiar to Christianity, were the stock-in-trade of pagan rhetoric. He also shows that, despite their African origins and the indifference of their Greek contemporaries, they are all aware of being in some sense Roman, though they cannot be said to speak of Rome in accents of conventional patriotism. All these traits can be discerned again in the last two authors who regarded the defence of Latin Christendom as their principal occupation; yet Arnobius and Lactantius, though by far the most voluminous, are also the most neglected of the tribe. This, no doubt, is because, unlike their forerunners, they tell the historian little of their own times, and they offer even less to the theologian, who can at least read Tertullian and Cyprian with an eye to the development of dogma. A kinder way of putting this is to say that their endeavours are essentially—one could even say, quintessentially—rhetorical; I shall argue here that both, in their capacity as teachers, chose to flaunt their education and play host to a wider variety of arguments, in order to rob the pagans of that arsenal which Greek writers had employed in their attacks on Christianity, and to make their readers ask themselves what it is to be a citizen of Rome.

[1] See esp. pp. 105–14, this volume. The present chapter does not include Firmicus Maternus, whom Wlosok, 'Zu lateinischen Apologisten', joins with the other two as a Constantinian apologist. He wrote his *On the Error of Heathen Religions* under Constantine's successor, and it is clearly more polemical than apologetic.

THE AUTHORS AND THEIR SITUATION

Each requires a word of introduction. Arnobius of Sicca, though he taught Lactantius rhetoric, was an old man at the time of his conversion, and was told that he must put his skills at the service of his new beliefs before he could be admitted to the Church.[2] Jerome, who reports this, dates the treatise *Against the Nations* to about 326 CE. This date has been disputed on the strength of vague assertions which suggest that he wrote before the year 300;[3] but there are other statements, equally vague, which point to his writing in the fourth century,[4] and there is little external or internal evidence which fails to support the later date assigned to him by Jerome. His allusions to the burning of the Scriptures, for example, make it probable that he saw the execution of the imperial decrees against the Christians in 303, but do not prove that he wrote while persecution was in force.[5] He names no pagan magistrate, and makes no appeal to laws in the manner of Justin or Tertullian; if he wrote when the persecution was abated, we can understand his silence, and make sense of Jerome's statement that the audience intended for this treatise 'against the nations' was the Church.

Although he came from Sicca, he shows few signs of being an African. A recent study notes his frequent references to Saturn, whose name was given to an indigenous deity of the region; his disparagement of Venus, who was the object of a special cult at Cirta; the aforementioned allusion to the burning of the Scriptures, which we know to have occurred in parts of Africa; and his use of certain ecclesiastical terms which were at home in the vocabulary of Cyprian and Tertullian.[6] The last two points are, I think, of little weight, since almost all the Latin of the third

[2] Jerome, *Chronicle*, at 325 CE. *On Famous Men*, 79, states that he flourished under Diocletian as a teacher of rhetoric, without giving a precise date for *Against the Nations*.

[3] At 2. 71 he says that Rome has existed for 1050 years. This yields a date of 297 CE, if he is using the most conventional chronology. On this question, see now Simmons, *Arnobius of Sicca*, 55–64.

[4] e.g. at 1. 13, where he can only say that Christianity has existed for 300 years 'more or less'. If the MS reading 400 stands, it may allude to Porphyry's prediction (Augustine, *City of God*, 18. 53) that Christianity would survive for exactly 365 years.

[5] Simmons, *Arnobius of Sicca*, 64–93, offers excellent proofs that Arnobius saw the Diocletianic persecution.

[6] Ibid. 94–117 and 184–215.

century is the Latin of Christian Africa, and the first of Diocletian's edicts was at least supposed to be universally enforced.[7] As for the other two, there would have been no need of a modern book to make them if Arnobius had shared the provincial temper of Augustine or Tertullian; as it is, his Saturn is invariably the patriarch of Latium, and his Venus has as little African colour as the poetry of Lucretius,[8] which Arnobius appears to have valued far more highly than his native town.

The evidence for the later date is strengthened by Lactantius,[9] when he enumerates as previous Latin champions of the faith Minucius Felix, Tertullian, and Cyprian, with no word of his master, whose eccentric contribution he might have criticized, but would have had no plausible reason to ignore. Lactantius himself we know much better from his writings. Since he studied rhetoric with Arnobius,[10] he was an African, though he does not care to say so. The proofs of his education are his style and his own assertion that he was summoned to Bithynia as a tutor. It was in the Eastern capital, Nicomedia, that he became a Christian. Barnes's observation that he did so when it was 'safe and fashionable' is tendentious;[11] in the court of Diocletian and Galerius it was always safer and more fashionable to be a pagan. This became apparent in events which drove Lactantius from Bithynia after 303, and remained for him a vivid recollection:

> When I had been summoned to Bithynia and was teaching oratory there, and it happened that the Temple of God was overturned, then there stood forth two who trampled on the prostrate and abject truth; whether their pride or their rashness was the greater, I cannot say. (*Divine Institutes*, 5. 2. 2) . . . I saw in Bithynia a chief magistrate elated with joy, as if he had subdued some race of barbarians, because one man, who had withstood him with great virtue for two years, appeared to have succumbed at last. (5. 11. 5)

These men are probably Hierocles, who contrasted Apollonius and Christ to the disadvantage of the latter, and Porphyry, whose

[7] On the edicts of Diocletian in 303–4, see T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 19–27.

[8] On Lucretius and Saturn, see below, pp. 207–8 and 216–17.

[9] At *Divine Institutes*, 5. 1, cited below.

[10] Jerome, *On Famous Men*, 80. Lactantius almost certainly did not learn his Christianity from Arnobius.

[11] T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 13.

treatise *Against the Christians* was the most erudite, and the most resented, of all the Greek polemics.[12] If both wrote in the reign of Diocletian (284–305 CE), they may have helped to fan the persecution which he unleashed against the Christian Church in 303 CE.[13] This entailed the destruction of books and churches, the confiscation of property, the arrest of clergy, and finally an edict requiring everyone to pay homage to the gods. Arnobius, as we have seen, recalls the burning of the Scriptures, and although he never takes issue with a living pagan writer, Michael Simmons has argued that his treatise was designed as a compendious refutation of Porphyry.[14]

The best evidence that Arnobius was acquainted with the works of this philosopher is his second book, which brings a number of arguments against the pre-existence of the soul. This, with other tenets, is ascribed to certain 'new men' (*novi viri*) who appealed to the authority, not of Porphyry himself, but of the second-century Platonists Numenius and Cronius, whom we know to have been his literary mentors.[15] His defence of Jesus against the charge of sorcery, and the antiquarian learning which he brings to his attacks on pagan cults, would have served him well in a reply to Porphyry's strictures.[16] On the other hand, Arnobius leaves at least one fatal argument unanswered, for, having himself no interest in the Old Testament, he has nothing to say to Porphyry's demonstration that the Book of Daniel lies about its date.[17]

But in neither Arnobius nor his pupil should we look for perfect scholarship, any more than for original philosophy. Both were rhetoricians, trained in the Roman manner, and had lived under Diocletian, who had set himself the task of turning even the most

[12] See Frede in this volume, pp. 231–5 on Hierocles, and pp. 235–40 on Porphyry. On the hopes reposed in Constantine by Lactantius, see T. D. Barnes, 'Lactantius and Constantine', and *idem*, *Eusebius and Constantine*, 291 n. 96: both suggest that *Divine Institutes* preceded *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, written some time after 313.

[13] On the dating of Porphyry, the arguments of T. D. Barnes, 'Porphyry against the Christians', still seem to me impressive. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 5. 2. 2, maintains that he does not reply to spent attacks, and if Porphyry's animosity to the Christians appeared only in one writing (as seems probable), one cannot but suspect a political collaboration.

[14] See esp. *Arnobius of Sicca*, 216–318—a very cogent case.

[15] *Against the Nations*, 2. 11–62, discussed below. Simmons is here supported by Courcelle, 'Les Sages de Porphyre'.

[16] See nn. 41 and 42 below.

[17] See Casey, 'Porphyry and the Origin of the Book of Daniel'.

peripheral of his subjects into Romans.[18] Africa at that time was not peripheral, but the heart of Latin culture, and it was here that the persecution fell most heavily; here, above all, security for the Christian lay in being Roman, not in being right. Or rather, one must be more than Roman: the Christian polemicists of the fourth century may aspire to take their place with the Latin classics, like Tertullian,[19] but at the same time they are boasting of their franchise in a heavenly republic which has already outlasted Rome.

RHETORIC AND THE DEFENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

Our authors make no secret of their original profession; Lactantius even boasts of it, as something that is bound to enhance the merits of his work:

> My exercise in imaginary cases has, however, done much to increase the abundance and facility with which I am now to plead the cause of truth; granted that this may be defended, as it has been by many, without eloquence, still it should be illumined and in a manner sent abroad, by clarity and brilliance of speech, so that it may flow into souls more powerfully, being both instinct with a vigour of its own and adorned by the radiance of oratory. (*Divine Institutes*, Proem, 10)

Oratory in the ancient world was of three kinds: the forensic, used by lawyers; the deliberative or symbouleutic, practised in political assemblies; and the epideictic proper to the literary show-piece, which, because it puts the best of an author's talents on display, is much the commonest in Second Sophistic literature.[20] The three are not exclusive, since orators of the first two kinds would not succeed before a learned audience unless they also cultivated the epideictic skills. Christians had reserved the name *apologia* for

[18] See Corcoran, *Empire of the Tetrarchs*, 177–8.

[19] See Apuleius, *Florida*, 18. The pagan Apuleius of Madaura is the foremost Latin writer of the mid-second century; on the relation between the prologue to his *Golden Ass* and Tertullian's playful apology for his philosopher's cloak, or *pallium*, see Edwards, 'Reflections on the African Character of Apuleius'. Wlosok, *Laktanz*, 225–7, argues that Minucius Felix was indebted to Apuleius for knowledge of philosophy.

[20] On the second sophistic, see Swain in this volume, pp. 160–3.

works in the forensic mode,[21] while Theophilus' *To Autolycus* could pose as a symbouleutic dissertation.[22] Lacking any forensic or political occasion, the writings of Arnobius and Lactantius would appear to be epideictic; but to use this term need not imply that the authors are insincere, or that their arguments are unsound. It does, however, mean that they are aiming at a similar effect on every audience, without regard to context, place, or time, and it follows that they cannot bemuse their audience by trading on its temporary passions or the slowness of its wits. An apologist whose writing is abstracted from historical circumstances uses only the most durable and universal matter. Simmons rightly notes that Arnobius' work lacks certain elements which would once have been demanded of an apologist, but fails to add that this is because he wrote for other times:

> How can books 1–2 be called an apology when Arnobius betrays very little knowledge of that which modern historians impose upon him to defend? One hears nothing about the organization, liturgy, sacraments or polity of the North African Church. He is apparently ignorant of the Old Testament, and there are only two possible allusions to the New Testament . . . There is not a reference made to the Virgin Birth, the Holy Spirit, and only one Christian predecessor is named.[23]

If we take 'apology' to mean only what it means in Greek—a forensic refutation of a charge defined by the prosecutor—criticism of this kind will be seen to be irrelevant. Arnobius has undertaken only to show that Christianity cannot be held responsible for every ill that mars the common universe of Christians and pagans; he is thus required to demonstrate that Christ was no impostor, and his case is greatly strengthened by reflection on the impotence of pagan gods and mysteries, but it hardly calls for a doctrine of the Trinity, which most of the early apologists, after all, did not possess or thought it proper to reserve.[24] The virgin birth invited pagan slanders, and was not yet part of a credal

[21] Thus both Tertullian's *Apology* and Justin's *Apologies* dwell on charges against the Christians. See in this volume Price, pp. 115–16, and Young, pp. 82–4.

[22] See Young in this volume, pp. 88–9.

[23] Simmons, *Arnobius of Sicca*, 126.

[24] One finds it in Justin, *Second Apology*, 6 and 13, as well as in Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, 2. 10, etc. But often apologists speak only of the Logos and the Father: e.g. Tatian, *To the Greeks*, 18; Tertullian, *Apology*, 19; Origen, *Against Celsus*, 8. 12.

declaration;[25] and though, according to Simmons's own chronology, Arnobius wrote at a time when copies of either Testament would be difficult to obtain, comparison with his predecessors would find him almost profligate in allusions to the human personality and earthly works of Christ.

It is true that Arnobius cannot vie with earlier Latin writers in that test of Christian orthodoxy, the handling of the Scriptures. But much the same could be said against Lactantius, for he too mentions little of the New Testament but the Gospels, and, while he takes perfunctory account of the Jewish prophecies, he displays a closer acquaintance with the Sibyl, whom he takes for a pagan seer. Yet of him at least we know that he intended his *magnum opus* to be the last and best in a series of apologies produced by Latin authors on behalf of Christianity. He informs us, in the passage already cited for the dating of Arnobius, that the failings of his eloquent compatriots have rendered his own labours necessary.[26] Affording our only evidence for the date and occupation of Minucius Felix, he says that this accomplished lawyer would have been a redoubtable defender of Christianity, had he only studied the arguments more deeply. The virtues of the erudite Septimius Tertullianus, on the other hand, are fatally impaired by many passages that are frigid, hyperbolic, or obscure. Cyprian is incomparable for eloquence, but of no use to outsiders, since he wrote for those already steeped in the mysteries of the faith. He takes the opportunity to record an obscene lampoon on Cyprian's name,[27] and to reverse the pagan judgement that his task had been unequal to his powers:

> The learned of this age who have happened to make the acquaintance of his writings are accustomed to deride him. I have heard a certain man, of great sophistication, calling him, with the change of a single letter, Coprianus, as one who had applied an elegant genius, worthy of greater things, to fables fit for old women. (*Divine Institutes*, 5. 1)

A further animadversion on Tertullian, not wholly fair, contrasts his limited interests with the more ambitious project of Lactantius:

[25] First perhaps in Epiphanius of Salamis (373–6), then in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of (?)381–2. Origen, *Against Celsus*, 1. 38, notes that the story had given rise to slanders.

[26] *Divine Institutes*, 5. 1. On these predecessors, see Price in this volume, pp. 105–11.

[27] See McGuckin, 'Does Lactantius Denigrate Cyprian?'.

Although Tertullian has amply pleaded the same cause in that book which is called the *Apology*, it is one thing to respond to accusers, which consists solely in defence or refutation, and another to instruct (*instituere*), as I am doing, which entails setting out the substance of the whole doctrine. (Ibid. 5. 4)

If we allow Lactantius to be an apologist in the light of such remarks, it would be hard to deny this title to Arnobius. Each, like a practised orator, says only what is requisite to his case, which is that persecution of Christians is a mark of Rome's decline and her enslavement to foreign vices. Both maintain that the Christian is the true compatriot of the virtuous Roman: Lactantius pleads from the writings of the great Italian poets and antiquarians, while Arnobius summons the conscience of his readers to decide between his rational theology and the superstitious folly of the Greeks.

RHETORIC AND THE ROMAN WAY

Christianity in these writers is therefore an alternative philosophy, not merely an alternative to philosophy; a social creed, not merely a remonstration with society. 'Philosophy' is the proper term, for antiquity allowed no facile contrast between this discipline and rhetoric, least of all in the Roman world, where all the known philosophers had been trained in the schools of eloquence. The care with which Lactantius marks transitions at the ends of books is an index of his comprehensive purpose and his readiness to work along the grain of his education: 'what religion and wisdom are, the next book will more plainly indicate' (end of book 3); 'since we have said enough of true religion and wisdom, in the next book let us speak of justice' (end of book 4). Arnobius also takes conspicuous pains with the commencement of a book, supporting the reader's memory with a brief review of the argument so far, or introducing an objector to anticipate fatigue. Even his manifesto against the followers of Porphyry in the second book must justify its place, as Simmons says, as a 'planned digression' within the rules of Latin rhetoric.[28] Each of the first

[28] See Simmons, *Arnobius of Sicca*, 247–52, on the divisions and recapitulations of the work.

three books, however, ends with a reflection on the dangerous sterility of eloquence. It is Christ and no one else, the first declares, who, by his mastery of virtue, has delivered us from the peril of eternal death. The second brings this still closer: the philosophers must beware lest, while they arm themselves against the truth, they be overtaken by the day of reckoning. Your danger is in your own hands, says the third, for it is clear that the debates of your mythographers never come to rest in knowledge:

> If Janus be, let him be Janus, if Liber, let him be Liber; for this is what it is to have faith, to hold fast, to be fixed in the knowledge of a proven theory; not to . . . bring such matters into the danger that, while you take some away and restore others, it will be possible to doubt whether any of them have any existence whatsoever. (*Against the Nations*, 3. 44)

The Christian 'institution' which Lactantius undertakes will be superior to the secular philosophies, since these are contradicted by the incapacity of their own professors: 'But when you yourself do not do it, what insolence it is to impose rules on a free man which you yourself do not obey? You who teach, learn first, and before you correct the ways of others, correct your own' (*Divine Institutes*, 5. 23).

If Christians ever depreciated rhetoric, it was in the spirit of Plato:[29] the ornaments of style, being indispensable to persuasion, were therefore doubly dangerous when estranged from a love of truth. Moreover, they were saying nothing new when they averred that one could not have a true philosophy unless one also followed the corresponding way of life. Yet one had only to read Cicero, the greatest of both orators and philosophers in the Latin world, to learn that it was common for the life of a pagan sage to be at variance with his teaching:[30]

> They seek not profit but pleasure from philosophy, as Cicero indeed bears witness, saying, 'That whole debate of theirs, although it contains rich founts of virtue and knowledge, when it is compared to what they do and

[29] Plato (429–357 BCE) was the fountain-head of Greek philosophy. See his *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, the latter of which proposes the invention of a philosophic rhetoric.

[30] The fragment of Cicero's *On the Commonwealth* is known only from Lactantius. The latter's case against philosophers is well summed up by Wlosok, *Laktanz*, 229–31.

achieve, will none the less be found, I fear, to have been not so much a source of profit in the affairs of men as of pleasure in their hours of recreation'. He had no reason to fear when he spoke the truth. (Ibid. 3. 16)

Pagan rhetoric, therefore, must give way to Christian rhetoric—which is to say that skills used only for prolonging disputation must give way to arguments based upon the facts of history. In Jesus Christ—in him alone—salvation is made both possible and visible; but this appeal to a concrete personality does not invalidate the arts of speech. On the contrary, Lactantius puts the record of his actions into the mouth of Christ himself:

Should anyone say 'your precepts are impossible', he can answer, 'I do them myself' yet I am clothed in flesh, whose nature is to sin. And I bear the same flesh, yet sin has no power over me. It is hard for me to despise wealth, since one cannot live otherwise in this body. Yet I too have a body, but I fight against every appetite. I cannot bear pain or death for the sake of justice, being frail; behold, death and pain have power in me, and I overcome the things you fear. (Ibid. 5. 24)

In this position there is nothing novel: it had been a commonplace of Latin rhetoric to extol the virtuous hardihood of Rome's unlettered ancestors while scorning the effete sophistication of the East.[31] It had also been a commonplace to impute bad lives to Christians, to urge that they were politically redundant or subversive, to treat them as a foreign sect with all the usual traits.[32] As we shall see, Arnobius and Lactantius differ widely in their choice of pagan targets and in their judgements as to what will count as Roman; yet both conduct the attack on paganism from within. Each rebuts the charges by presenting Christianity as the only path to virtue, as the most enduring bond of human society, and as the heir to the *mos maiorum*, the ancestral way, which Romans praise but rarely emulate. Under these three heads I propose to illustrate their affinities, as well as the special character of each.

1 *Virtues*

Against the frequent charge that Christianity is immoral, Arnobius and Lactantius exhibit Christ, the pattern of Christian character, as one whose life subsumes and yet surpasses all the

[31] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 9. 593 ff. (the speech of Numanus Remulus) is a famous instance.

[32] See Benko, 'Pagan Criticism of Christianity'.

merits of his counterparts in Roman literature. Hercules was the universal symbol of undeviating virtue. Matching force with strength and craft with strategy, his victory over Cacus cleared the wilderness for the founding of a city which went on to tame the nations by a similar union of power and law.[33] He appears in the insignia of rulers from Augustus on, supplying, in the lifetimes of Arnobius and Lactantius, an emblem for the emperor Gallienus.[34] He had also brought the Roman and the Greek mind into harmony, as Stoicism, which allied itself most readily to the temper of the Roman noble, celebrated Hercules as a paragon of reasoned self-denial.[35] To denigrate this figure was to throw doubt upon the imperial philosophy and the disciplines by which it was upheld.

Lactantius, however, has no esteem for the Roman hero, whom he styles 'an illustrious man, and as it were *Africanus*' (*Divine Institutes*, 1. 9). The allusion is to P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus, whose victory over Hannibal made it possible for Lactantius to be born a Roman citizen. This Scipio was himself a man of questionable virtues,[36] but Hercules fell even further below the common level into a life of crime which aggravated the infamy of his birth: 'This earth which he is supposed to have traversed and purged, did he not foul it with fornication, lust and adultery? No wonder, when he was born from the adultery of Alcmena' (ibid. 1. 9). Just as he denies elsewhere that Romulus ascended into heaven, so Lactantius may be seeking here to explode the false analogy between Hercules and Jesus which is inspired by their miraculous conceptions.[37] A literary precedent will hardly have escaped him: the sceptical Lucretius[38] had averred that the few strange beasts destroyed by Hercules could not have been such a danger to mankind at large as the terrors of religion, whose bloody and useless rituals were fostered, as Lactantius too complains, by the inanities of philosophers and poets. Not the gods of poetry, but the human Epicurus, through his conquest of

[33] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 8. 184–267; Galinsky, *Herakles Theme*, 126–52.

[34] De Blois, *Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 125, 149–50, etc.

[35] See Galinsky, *Herakles Theme*, 167–84.

[36] See Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, 3. 18, on his political misdemeanours.

[37] On Romulus, see *Divine Institutes*, 1. 15. 31–3. The comparison of Christ with Hercules, which has beguiled some modern scholars, is criticized by Rose, 'Herakles and the Gospels'.

[38] Lucretius (fl. 55 BCE) belittles Hercules in *The Nature of Things*, 5. 1 ff., and attacks religion at 1. 101 ff.

religion, was the true deliverer of the human race. Lucretius was a classic in the society, whose public life his ridicule had been powerless to alter, and Lactantius' frequent use of him is a hint that Christianity is more Roman than the Romans, since it carries to its logical end an argument endorsed by the Roman syllabus. At the same time, it supersedes the sceptical critique, which is revealed to be incoherent when the poet himself concedes the immortality of the soul (ibid. 3. 16):

Lucretius, forgetting what he asserted before, and what doctrine he was defending, wrote these verses:

> That which is of the earth to earth again
> Returns, but that which came from heaven's shores
> The blazing precincts of the sky receive.
> (*On the Nature of Things*, 2. 999–1001)

To Lactantius, the certainty of a reckoning in the afterlife is a necessary inference from God's manifest concern for human character. Christ is the successor to Epicurus, in that he wrought a path to heaven by his virtues; he is greater in that his is not a metaphorical heaven, but a real one in which virtue will obtain its long reward.[39] At the climax of his argument, he borrows and amends a famous eulogy:

He alone, as Lucretius says,

> Has purged the hearts of men with truthful words,
> And fixed the bounds of appetite and fear;
> Revealed what is that highest good to which
> All tend, and in brief compass shown the way
> By which we may most surely strive for it.
> (*On the Nature of Things*, 6. 24–8)

Nor did he show it only, but he went before, lest anyone might shrink from the path of virtue through timidity. (*Divine Institutes*, 7. 27)

Even an Epicurean like Lucretius may permit himself to deify a human benefactor, and Christians of this time adopt the theory of Euhemerus that the cults of all the gods began as posthumous memorials to such men.[40] Hence Arnobius argues that comparison

[39] Lucretius makes ironic use of the common motif in ibid. 1. 62–79.

[40] Lactantius is, after Diodorus Siculus, the chief source of quotations from Euhemerus in Jacoby, *Die Fragmente*, i., sect. 63. See esp. *Divine Institutes*, 1. 11, 1. 13, 1. 14.

with others will not only excuse the Christian worship of a mortal man, a *natus homo*, but will demonstrate that Jesus is the one man who deserves it. A Bacchus, a Minerva, or a Hercules may invent a single art, but it is Christ who has revealed to us the most important truths about our nature and destination (*Against the Nations*, 1. 37 ff.). The charge that he was a sorcerer is refuted by the manner of his working, which depends on no machinery but his spoken word, and is uniformly good in its effect.[41] The scandal of his death is mitigated by the analogy with Hercules (1. 38); but when the objector urges that he died upon the cross, and therefore shamefully, Arnobius turns from legendary figures to the Roman paradigms of civic virtue:[42] 'Many who excelled in glory, virtue and reputation suffered the most bitter forms of death, such as Aquilius Trebonius Regulus; were they ever reckoned sinners after their deaths because they did not die by the general law of fate, but lacerated and tortured by the harshest kind of death?' (ibid. 1. 40). Thus Christ can be commended to the Romans as a model of Roman fortitude. If it be objected that the Gospels are unreliable, the same or more, Arnobius reminds us, could be said of pagan histories.[43] These the Christian advocate could hardly fail to trust when they supplied him with such evidence of mortal and immortal misdemeanours. The birth of Servius Tullius, king of Rome, is told by Plutarch as a proof that Roman virtue is the fosterling of providence;[44] in Arnobius the absurdity of the legend is a satire on the ritual that commemorates the man.

Let us in the same way conceal in silence the *dei Conserentes*, whom Flaccus, among other authors, reports to have been changed into the form of a human penis and to have risen from the ash which had been left under a small jar; when Tanaquil removed this, the gods slipped out and grew firm with divine sinews . . . Ocrisia inserted the gods into her vagina . . . and thus was born Servius Tullius, king of Rome. (Ibid. 5. 18)

[41] *Against the Nations*, 1. 43–52. The charge is an ancient one: cf. Justin, *First Apology*, 26.

[42] Regulus was famous for his fidelity to oaths, even at the cost of his life: see e.g. Horace, *Odes*, 3. 5. 13–56.

[43] *Against the Nations*, 1. 57. It is more usual for Christians to subscribe to the truth of pagan stories told against the gods; see Swift, 'Two Views of the Pagan Poets', and my essay on Constantine, Ch. 11, this volume.

[44] Plutarch, *On the Fortune of the Romans*, 323b–d. Arnobius and the Romans would both disagree with Plutarch's attempt to divorce Rome's fortune from her moral deserts; but Arnobius would not share Rome's estimate of her own felicity.

We need not be surprised that pagan records offer little help as to the identity of Flaccus. Just as it lets slip no opportunity of competing with the paradigmatic virtues of the Romans, so Catholic Christianity is not to be surpassed in its contempt for the useless valour of the Greeks. Lactantius can align himself with the Romans in disdain of other nations, though not in their estimation of themselves: 'So are our people much better, who despise athletic virtue, because it is of no effect, but have such admiration for regal power, because it can cause wide damage, that they assign to brave and warlike leaders a place among the gods?' (*Divine Institutes*, 1. 18). Instead, let Rome remember what is truly admirable. Christianity is not the superstition of a beaten race, but the natural religion of the masters. Lactantius tells his former educators that they have nothing to unlearn except their weakness, since Christ has put the signature of history on virtues which their literary traditions have disposed them to admire.

2 *Society*

The second and more dangerous complaint against Christianity, that it fails to respect the empire, is upheld in part by every Latin spokesman of the Church. For all his protestations of fidelity, Tertullian sees the whole world as a pageant of the devil (*pompa diaboli*), which is soon to disappear before the triumph of the Lord.[45] Augustine, shedding few tears for the fall of Rome, regards all secular offices as violent antidotes to human fallenness, which magistrates are required by God to exercise at the risk of their own salvation.[46] To treat these statements merely as expressions of the factious African temper, or as local observations on the perils of existence in the region, is to do them less than justice: we cannot blame the Christian who elects to take the founder of his religion at his word.[47]

Arnobius and Lactantius see the empire in the Latin way, as a sepulchre of virtue, not, like their contemporary Eusebius, as an instrument of God.[48] Caesar, says Lactantius, echoing Lucan,[49]

[45] See *On the Shows*, 12. 5–6, and Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 412–19.

[46] See esp. *City of God*, 19. 4, and Rist, *Augustine,* 216–36.

[47] See Mark 10: 42, John 18: 36, etc.

[48] See esp. the *Tricennial Oration* and the discussion in my chapter on Constantine, Ch. 11, this volume.

[49] See esp. the judgement implied at *Civil War*, 128: 'victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni' (the gods preferred the winning cause, Cato the vanquished one). Lucan was a Stoic poet, executed by Nero in 65 CE.

'was your founder, though he was one of the worst of mortals' (6. 18), whereas Pompey, though a better man, 'was abandoned by your gods' (6. 6. 17). Both can take for granted that the extension of political dominion by warfare is iniquitous, and Lactantius can aver that patriotism is a proof of moral ignorance:

> If you take away human concord, there is no virtue anywhere. For what are the goods of one's fatherland, if not the evils of another commonwealth or nation? That means to spread one's boundaries by violently stealing those of others, to increase dominion, to make taxes greater. All these things are not virtues, but virtues subverted. (*Divine Institutes*, 6. 6. 23)

Here we have an attack on secularity which does not presume a Christian understanding or experience of the world. We may begin to illustrate the difference with Augustine's condemnation of the theatre in the *Confessions*, where his hatred of illusions is bound up with a belief in the ubiquity of daemons and contempt for the phantasmal Christ of Manichaean teaching.[50] When he turns from theatre to amphitheatre, he denounces not the cruelty but the pleasure of the spectacle, which can turn a Christian heart away from God. Tertullian, in his *On the Shows* (30), reviles the shows as places where the pagan gods are worshipped and the Christians put to death:

> How shall I laugh, how shall I exult, when I see so many great kings, who were proclaimed as denizens of heaven, weeping together with Jove and all who accredit him in the lowest part of hell! And magistrates too, persecutors of God's name, melting in flames that attack them with more savagery even than they showed against the Christians!

We shall not join Gibbon in sneering at the 'affected and unfeeling witticisms' of this passage, unless we too are prepared to smile at a century of inquisitions, massacres, and burnings.[51] Nevertheless, we should notice that Lactantius, though he too retails with pleasure both the present and the future tribulation of his persecutors, bases his rejection of the shows upon abuses that are as obvious to the Romans as to him:

[50] See *Confessions*, 3. 10, 4. 1, etc. Though Lactantius at least was a Catholic (*Divine Institutes*, 4. 30), neither shows the interest in heresy that invades the apologies of e.g. Justin and Origen.

[51] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, i. 457. On his contribution to the study of apologetic, see this volume, p. 12.

> Anyone who deems it pleasure to see a man's throat cut before his eyes, even a man condemned deservedly, has a stain upon his conscience . . . I cannot describe the corrupting influence of plays, for comic dramas speak of the immoralities of virgins and the loves of prostitutes . . . and tragic dramas thrust parricides and the enormities of bad rulers on our eyes. . . . In circuses and games what else is there but triviality, vanity and madness? (*Divine Institutes*, 6. 20)

This might be the voice of a cultivated pagan,[52] until Lactantius, mindful that some readers will be Christian, offers as supplementary objections to the circuses the fact that they occur on public holidays, and that any pleasant habit has a tendency to draw the mind from God. Arnobius comes to the theatre near the climax of a long and picturesque denunciation of the 'new men' (*novi viri*), who profess to know the origin of the soul.[53] In his response he denies it any eternal preconceptions, and asks why God would send an unblemished soul to such a pit of misery.[54] Did he send us only that we might suffer famine, torture, and oppression? Or worse still, that we might become oppressors and the slaves of our own benighted tyranny? That we might deceive, forge testaments, break doors at night, and entertain our bellies with the most far-fetched luxuries? Did he send us, therefore, 'that souls might distend mouths by blowing trumpets, that they might go before with obscene songs . . . whereby another lascivious multitude of souls might lapse into dissolute motions of the body?' (*Against the Nations*, 2. 42).

Arnobius, burlesquing a number of famous Greek experiments in a comprehensive parable,[55] does not believe that humans are by nature equipped for virtue. He prefers the thesis of the philosopher Protagoras, that human beings developed civil polity to defend themselves from nature.[56] Lactantius, by contrast, based his own

[52] See e.g. Pliny, *Letters*, 9. 6, on circuses; Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life*, 13; *idem*, *Moral Epistles*, 95. 33, on the games.

[53] On the teaching of the 'new men' (*viri novi*), with some thought on their identity, see Festugière, 'La Doctrine des *viri novi*'.

[54] It is evident that the view of the world entertained by Arnobius here is pessimistic, but not, as some of his editors have wished to argue, Gnostic.

[55] Herodotus, *Histories*, 2. 2 (on the Egyptian king Psammetichus and his experiment with children); Plato, *Meno*, 82b–86a (where a slave boy produces geometric theorems), and *Republic*, 514a–515d (the allegory of the present world as a cave).

[56] Plato, *Protagoras*, 321–2, perhaps gives an accurate summary of the teaching of this sophist of the fifth century BCE.

view that society is ordained by God on a classic text of pagan legal theory. Cicero maintains in his work *On Laws* that, since the pains and pleasures, the fears and sympathies, of any human society are like those of any other, the laws that humans make are not conventional, but bear witness to a universal community of interests. Since the gods have made us all participants in reason, we cannot separate law from nature, justice from desire.[57] Lactantius borrows from Cicero and others the observation that the anatomy of man bespeaks a natural affinity with heaven, and endorses the conclusion that society is founded on the moral sentiments: 'For God, who gives men life and breath, desired that all be equal, that is peers. . . . For just as he gives his own light to all . . . so he gives equity and virtue to all' (*Divine Institutes*, 5. 15).

The keynote of Lactantius' work, foreshadowing Augustine,[58] is the contrast between the kingdom of God and the Roman state, which Cicero glorifies in his *On the Commonwealth*. Our loss of paradise is a sufficient guarantee that any pagan anticipation of this kingdom will be a vicious parody. The asylum founded by Romulus is a haven of moral laxity (*Divine Institutes*, 2. 7), and even if the city owes its name to the Greek word *rhumē*, meaning 'power' (ibid. 7. 25), it is destined to restore that power to Asia when its cycle is complete:[59]

> The Roman name, by which the globe is now ruled (the spirit recoils from saying it, but I shall say it, since it is to be), shall be taken from the earth and power will revert to Asia . . . the Sibyls openly say that Rome will die, and by the justice of God, because she has hated his name, and in her enmity to justice, has killed the people who were nurtured by the truth. (Ibid. 7. 15)

The Roman could not contradict the Sibyl, since her prophecies were among the sacred treasures of his city (ibid. 1. 6, etc.). Her masterpiece, as the poet himself acknowledged, was the *Fourth Eclogue* of Virgil, which Lactantius was the earliest to interpret as a foreshadowing of Christ (ibid. 7. 26).[60] Less obvious subjects

[57] See especially *On Laws*, 1. 22–48. On the view of man inherited by Lactantius from Plato, Cicero, and the Stoics, see Wlosok, *Laktanz*, 9–47.

[58] Most of our fragments of Cicero's *On the Commonwealth* come from the first ten books of Augustine's *City of God*.

[59] For Rome as *rhumē* (strength), see *Divine Institutes*, 7. 25. 7. The origin of Lactantius' Sibylline verses is unclear, but cf. *Sibylline Oracles*, 8. 9–159.

[60] See further Courcelle, 'Les Exégèses chrétiennes'.

also suffer this apotheosis: 'He gave noxious poison to black serpents [*Georgics*, 1. 126]; that is, he [Jupiter = the Devil] sowed hatred, envy and treachery in men, that they might be as poisonous as serpents and as predatory as wolves' (*Divine Institutes*, 5. 5).

The Christian writer even finds an allusion in the *Georgics*[61] to the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea (*Divine Institutes*, 5. 10). He styles Virgil *noster Maro* at 1. 13. 12, but without saying whether he means this as a citizen of the empire or a member of the Church. Christians will inevitably find the unwritten truth in pagan literature, since they alone possess a revelation from that other world which is sought by all religions. Philosophy could no more find this world without direction than it could get to know an undiscovered city: 'It is as though we wished to discuss the character of a city of some extremely remote nation, which we had never seen, and of which we had merely heard the name' (ibid. 3. 2). We might as well imagine the antipodes, he adds (3. 24), in yet another anticipation of Augustine.[62] Cicero is the exemplar of man's ignorance in an earthly city: what did his 'canine eloquence' achieve but his own beheading (6. 18)? Juvenal, the great satirist of imperial Rome, had made this jibe a commonplace,[63] but the boast of Christianity is not only that it sees the truth more clearly, but that it has the power to make this truth effective. Cicero, for example, had declared that righteous acts should flow from nature, not from any calculation of rewards and penalties; those who know the laws of God will also know that the justice which created human nature has ordained the just requitals after death: 'Their master with his ministers will be bound, and with him equally the whole host of the impious, in the sight of angels and the just, will be burnt with perpetual fire for all eternity' (ibid. 7. 26).

In Tertullian, hell is retribution for a persecuted Church, but in Lactantius it is the flowering of justice that is at the heart of nature. The Fall ensures that justice cannot prove herself without the immortality of the soul, which Cicero, like Lucretius, was

[61] *Curvata unda*, at *Georgics*, 4. 361. The full name of Virgil (70–19 BCE) was Publius Virgilius Maro.

[62] Augustine denies the existence of the antipodes in *City of God*, 16. 9.

[63] See *Satire*, 10. 122–4. Juvenal (fl. 110 CE) became a favourite poet with Christians after his 'rediscovery' in the fourth century.

therefore wrong to question (ibid. 3. 18). A true account of nature will acquaint us with the polity of heaven, which is sure to redress the iniquities now reigning in the cities of the world.

3 *Religion and the* mos maiorum

The third, and most pernicious, charge against the Christians was that they held to a *vana et prava superstitio*—vain and depraved in this, if nothing else: that they had renounced the laws and practices of their ancestors, the Jews.[64] The Jews had taught the Christians how to answer one polemic with another.[65] All pagans are idolaters, and thus evince their ignorance of the true God, who is beyond imagination. Even without a Bible, they should be able to perceive that a recent artefact, brought into being by a mere technician, cannot be a proper object of their worship. Christian polemic takes its place beside the satires of the pagan literati, and if it pays no regard to the apologies for images that were offered by such Platonists as Porphyry and Maximus,[66] that too is quite in keeping with the manners of an age in which one flaunted the privilege of one's education by confining one's allusions and invectives to the writings of the past.

This is the case with Greek apologetic, but Tertullian, as an African beset by persecution and embroiled in tempests of ecclesiology, takes more notice of his time. He laughs at the presumption of the senate and the emperors, who bring new gods into being by legislation; and, like Minucius Felix, he draws a vivid picture of ruined monuments which, because their worshippers no longer tend them, have become a nest of birds.[67] In common with Greek apologists, he holds that the immoralities of religion are provoked by human intercourse with daemons; even after the Incarnation, these remain for him so much the masters of the world that one is present at the birth of every child in a pagan household.[68] Our apologists made less use of the Bible or of any arcane tradition. Paganism is not condemned primarily

[64] On Roman assimilation of Christianity to Judaism, see Benko, 'Pagan Charges', 1155–77.

[65] See Goodman and Rajak in Chs. 3 and 4, this volume.

[66] See Porphyry, *On Statues*, and Maximus, *Discourses*, 2. Both were Platonic philosophers from Tyre in Phoenicia.

[67] See Tertullian, *Apology*, 16; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 23–4.

[68] See esp. Tertullian, *On the Soul*, 39. 3; *idem*, *Apology*, 22; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 27; Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 405–11.

for the intrigues of the daemons or the excesses of provincial superstition; the test of a society is its literature, and Roman antiquarians had already shown the origins of mythology to be both incoherent and ridiculous.[69] This favourite recreation of the leisured class was thus the Tarpeian gate through which Lactantius and Arnobius hoped to enter unopposed.[70]

For many modern historians, Saturn is so much the presiding deity of African Christianity that any attack on him is a repudiation of Africa itself.[71] For both the authors treated here, he is a purely Roman figure, to whom, Arnobius claims, the Romans sacrificed human beings before the time of Hercules (*Against the Nations*, 2. 68). Both argue that his golden age is a fiction of the poets, though Lactantius adds that Christ has ushered in the true *Saturnia regna* ('Saturnine kingdoms') prophesied by Virgil and the Sibyl.[72] The Saturn of the Romans, however, was a mortal ruler, driven from his throne by filial enmity—an enmity that his more than human cruelty rendered equally inevitable and just (*Divine Institutes*, 1. 11, 13; 5. 5, etc.). For evidence of his character, Arnobius and Lactantius do not turn to neighbouring altars, but to myth, in which, Lactantius says, the Romans are the dupes of a lesser race: 'This evil arose from the Greeks, whose shallowness, fortified by facility and resource in speaking, has thrown up clouds of lies in incredible quantities' (ibid. 1. 15).

Arnobius, for his part, despises Rome, professing no esteem for its superannuated virtues; yet, though the authors cited are more obscure and more diverse, the whole of his controversy with the nations takes the form of an attack upon the hegemonic power. The deities whom we think most characteristic of African paganism are those to whom Arnobius turns immediately when he wants to convict the Romans of the vices that they scorn in other peoples. You laugh, he says, at the mysteries of the Persians,

[69] On antiquarianism in Rome, see Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, 233–9.

[70] Readers will recall that after the 'rape of the Sabine Women', Tarpeia, bribed with ambiguous promises, assisted the invasion of Rome by their indignant kinsmen.

[71] See Frend, *Donatist Church*, 76–86. But Rives, *Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage*, 142–50, etc., observes that the élite did not promote his cult as they did that of both Roman and other 'native' deities. On Tertullian's knowledge of his cult, see Rives, 'Tertullian on Human Sacrifice'.

[72] Cf. Tertullian, *Apology*, 10. The African Saturn, like the Greek Kronos, was an 'insatiable barbarian', but Saturn in Roman myth was the ruler of the 'Golden Age'. On *Saturnia regna*, etc., see Virgil, *Eclogue*, 4. 6, and *Georgics*, 2. 173.

yet 'It is with your connivance that the artists play obscenely with the bodies of gods . . . and so Hammon is formed and fashioned with ram's horns, and Saturn, with his hooked fork, as the guardian of the fields' (*Against the Nations*, 6. 12). Arnobius does not distinguish clearly between the empire and the city that created it. If Rome is made responsible for Hammon in his argument, that is because it is the misfortune of the conqueror to ingest the sins of all her subject races: ' "But, you say, these are not the rites of our commonwealth" . . . And how does it help your cause, that they are not yours, when those who make them up are your subjects?' (ibid. 5. 24).

Arnobius has been quoting the lurid mysteries of Attis, as described by the Greek Timotheus.[73] Lactantius is not nearly so eclectic, his touchstones being Varro, Cicero, Seneca, Ovid, Lucretius, Virgil, and the Sibyl. Lucretius' etymology, superior to Cicero's, defines religion as a kind of bondage (ibid. 5. 28, but cf. 3. 27); and Varro, that connoisseur of lost antiquities, reminds us that to be an antiquarian is to see the filth and error that pollute the very wellsprings of the cult.[74] Rooted in the acts of dead adventurers, religion is enhanced by the illusory machinations of the daemons, who have power to lie, though not to make and mar.[75] The resulting institution is despised by its intelligent votaries, and it scarcely needs a prophet to observe that being old is not the same as being true.

For Arnobius, the appeal to our moral sense is reinforced by a critique of Rome's belief in her antiquity, ironically derived from the research of antiquarians. Rather than maintain that Christianity is the faith of man in Eden, or the soul behind the flesh of Judaism, he parries the charge of novelty by reminding the Roman audience that their own paternal customs are of recent manufacture:

First we ask and inquire of you concerning this very incense . . . Etruria the progenitor and mother of superstition did not know the concept and reputation of it, as their priestly rituals indicate, nor did anyone use it

[73] Cf. Pausanias, 7. 17. 3—probably a work of the second-sophistic period, with an antiquarian interest in ancient cultic sites.

[74] On the antiquarian Varro (first century BCE), see Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 1. 6. 7–12, etc. For the most celebrated use of Varro as a stick with which to beat the Romans, see Augustine, *City of God*, 6–7 and cf. above, pp. 124–6.

[75] See esp. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 2. 14, where, although it is said at 2. 14. 14 that daemons can injure health, their power is said to be exercised chiefly over the mind. Cf. 4. 13. 16, 5. 21. 3.

during the 400 years when Alba Longa flourished, nor was its birth or origin known to Romulus himself or to Numa, that artist in the mingling of religions, as is clear from the sacred flour, with which it was customary to perform the duties of solemn sacrifice. Whence then was the use of it adopted, or what novelty has broken in to the ancient and inveterate custom, that what was for so long unnecessary now has the first place in sacrifices? (Ibid. 6. 26)

Arnobius can invoke a Roman prejudice when he gives the name 'new men' (*novi viri*) to opponents who affirm the pre-existence of the soul. Whether these be a single group or a coalition, followers of Porphyry or the scholar Cornelius Labeo,[76] the elements of their creed are very ancient, and if anything is new, it is the teaching that salvation is attainable by many ancestral paths: 'You who believe in Plato, Cronius, Numenius or whomsoever you will, we believe in Christ' (ibid. 2. 11). Or again: 'Let Etruria kill as many victims as she may, let the wise deny themselves all human things, let the mages soothe and cajole all powers' (ibid. 2. 62).

To resist the Gospel, Romans must not only deceive themselves as to the age of their religion, they must then invent a new religion according to which all teachings that are older than Christianity, including the most immoral and ridiculous, have an equal claim to truth. Their own books should have led them instead to ask what is wrong in any case with novelty. Arnobius departs from the usual practice of apologetic here, but such manœuvres are not uncommon in pagan rhetoric. The elegiac poets employ them frequently, and Cicero justified his own translation from the Old to the New Academy by observing that the new is often better than the old.[77] Arnobius distinguishes of course between capricious innovations which afflict the works of man without his knowledge or consent and the changes brought about by the omnipotent will of God, in whose essential being no novelty can occur: 'If what happens today had been necessary a thousand years ago, the most high God would have done it . . . Nothing prevented him from waiting out the necessary term of ages. His works are done according to fixed

[76] See Courcelle, 'Les Sages de Porphyre'; Mastandrea, *Cornelio Labeone*. According to the latter, Labeo flourished in the third century CE.

[77] See Horace, *Epistles*, 2. 1. 89–90 (on poetry); Cicero, *Posterior Academics*, 2. 4 (13), etc.

reasons, and what once is decreed to happen cannot be changed by any innovation' (ibid. 2. 75).

Novelty is vindicated, therefore, by the God of Latin Christendom, defined not by his nature but by his freedom. Arnobius has perhaps the most profound and philosophical understanding of this freedom among Christians of the first three centuries. Lactantius thought it laughable that gods should be male and female in mythology, since the female is notoriously weaker than the male, and thus a female god would be imperfect (*Divine Institutes*, 1. 16, etc.). He quotes the 'Hermetic' principle that God unites both sexes (ibid. 5. 8);[78] yet nowhere in his writings[79] do we find it said so clearly as in Arnobius that God transcends all human excellences or the imagination of them: 'O greatest one, O most high procreator of things invisible, thyself unseen and apprehended by no nature, worthy, worthy thou truly art . . . For thou art first cause, the place and seat of things, the foundation of all that is, infinite, ingenerate, immortal, ever alone, defined by no corporal form, uncircumscribed by any principle' (*Against the Nations*, 1. 31). And again: 'he is the fount of things, the sower of ages and times. And yet, as you say, Jupiter has father and mother, grandfathers, grandmothers, brothers' (ibid. 1. 34), etc.

So much for the polytheism frequently imputed to Arnobius.[80] A God of such transcendence might be new to many Christians, yet Arnobius still urges that his attributes are obvious to reason; Jesus we know only from the Gospels, but as to God's transcendence, there is nothing to be revealed. A scholar of both philosophy and history, Arnobius uses both to address, not Africa, not the magistrate, not a local population, but the commonwealth of learning. He argues, like his pupil, that the library of an educated Roman will suffice to reveal the vanity and corruption of that very institution which embraced them as their principal support.

[78] On his relation to the esoteric 'Hermetica' of Graeco-Egyptian provenance, see Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 213–14, 242–4, etc.; Wlosok, *Laktanz*, 115–42. On his knowledge of Greek literature, see Ogilvie, *Library of Lactantius*.

[79] One could compare from earlier sources Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 7. 1. 2; Whittaker, '*Ἐπέκεινα νοῦ καὶ οὐσίας*'.

[80] Easily exploded by Simmons, *Arnobius of Sicca*, 174–83.

CONCLUSION

Lactantius and Arnobius produced the first displays of Christian rhetoric whose style and erudition might commend them to a sophist; they did not, however, write only for display. Both, with the pride of Africans, decline to be merely Africans; on the contrary, both make clear that they are Romans, beneficiaries and purveyors of a Roman education. Yet neither employs his eloquence, as a sophist would, to claim a civic privilege since both are freemen of another city. Arnobius tells the Romans that it is they who are barbarians in comparison with this city. Lactantius—more conciliatory, because he is writing earlier—maintains that only Christians show the virtues which the poets have attributed to the pristine state of Rome.

The best way to define the special tone of our apologists is to compare them with the other half of Christendom. The most eminent of the Greek apologists—Justin, Clement, Origen[81]—maintained that sacred truths were widely current in the philosophy and oracles of paganism, but traced their presence to thefts from pagan literature, interpreted indeed by the universal tool of reason, but with little help from any innate conception of the deity. Tertullian, often regarded as a biblical fanatic, is the first to build a case for God's existence on the intuitive testimony of the soul.[82] Arnobius and Lactantius, like Tertullian, Augustine, and their great contemporary Constantine, had been superbly educated in the literature and arts of the Latin West.[83] They thus belonged to a culture which had only one metropolis. The Greek apologists do not write as members of a city-state, but either to convince their pagan neighbours that their faith is a philosophy, or else to inform the Jews that Christ, not Israel, is the heir to all the prophecies. They have no immediate quarrel with the cities of the empire, and the Church is the New Jerusalem, not the new Alexandria or Athens.[84] None the less, pagan wisdom, like the sanctuary of Zion, could be set in a typological relation to the truth which is revealed to us by the everlasting Word.

[81] See M. J. Edwards, 'Justin's Logos'; and in this volume Young, pp. 93–4, and Frede, pp. 131–55.
[82] On his treatise *On the Evidence of the Soul*, see Price in this volume, pp. 121–2.
[83] See further my essay on Constantine, Ch. 11 below.
[84] See Gal. 4, Rev. 21, etc.

Cicero would have said that this was all in the tradition of Greek philosophy, which had left the tasks of statesmanship to others, while it built ideal cities in the clouds.[85] Arnobius and Lactantius were inheritors of a state in which reality was supposed to be at one with the philosophical conception, custodians of a literature that boasted of political supremacy. Christianity was to supersede this culture, as the polity of heaven was to supersede the commonwealth. In God they had both power and truth, in Christ the eternal statesman; the empire built on rhetoric is not to be reconciled with a kingdom founded on the Gospel. Greek culture, where it matters, is an ornament of Rome; and whereas Clement and Origen held that Plato saw the truth, though incompletely, Arnobius mocks his writings, while Lactantius recalls that, by his own confession, Socrates knew nothing.[86] Where Greeks advanced the Gospel as the double consummation of philosophy and prophecy, Latin faith was more inclined to argue that the new world has displaced, and was necessitated by, the contradictions of the old.

[85] See *On the Commonwealth*, 2. 29.
[86] *Divine Institutes*, 3. 28. 17.

10

Eusebius' Apologetic Writings

MICHAEL FREDE

INTRODUCTION

Eusebius is the author of a good number of writings, some of them of very considerable length, which traditionally are classified as 'apologetic'. It is easy to see why the treatises thus classified—for example, *Against Hierocles* and *Against Porphyry*, could be called 'apologetic'. They answer questions, objections, and accusations raised against Christianity. It is not so easy to see why certain other treatises by Eusebius, not classified as 'apologetic' by patrologies like Bardenhewer's or Quasten's,[1] should not be similarly regarded as 'apologetic', given such a wide notion of apology. Thus Eusebius wrote *Questions Arising in the Gospels and their Solutions*, also entitled *On Discrepancy between the Gospels* (Jerome, *On Famous Men*, 81; *idem*, *Commentary on Matthew*, 1, 16), only extant in fragments. *On Discrepancy* came in two parts, the first, dedicated to Stephanus, dealing with the accounts of Jesus' youth. It is clear, from what seems to be a reference to this text in Eusebius' *Demonstration of the Gospel*, 7. 3. 18, that it dealt at some length with the discrepancy in Jesus' genealogy. The second part dealt with difficulties and discrepancies in the accounts of Jesus' resurrection. Now Origen criticizes Celsus (*Against Celsus*, 2. 32) for not being aware of the fact that there is a discrepancy concerning Jesus' genealogy between the Gospels, though it has been a source of criticism of Christians and a subject of discussion among Christians themselves. In fact, we know from Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, 1. 7) that Julius Africanus had

I am grateful to the editors of this volume, especially Mark Edwards, for their comments and bibliographical suggestions.

[1] See Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirklichen Literatur*, iii. 264; Quasten, *Patrology*, iii. 328.

dealt with the question in a letter to Aristides; indeed, Eusebius quotes part of Africanus' letter, and other fragments of it have been preserved elsewhere. Origen took up the problem in his *Homilies on Luke*, 28. And it was a point which Porphyry, relying, as we can see from Origen, on Jewish or pagan critics, if not also Christian authors like Julius Africanus and Origen, raised again in his *Against the Christians*.[2] As to the accounts of Jesus' resurrection, it is not surprising that both pagans and Jews would closely scrutinize and try to criticize them. Hence, it would seem that Eusebius' work *Discrepancy*, being devoted to problems which gave rise to attacks on the trustworthiness of the Gospels, raised by Jews and pagans, might, or even should, be regarded as apologetic. Eusebius, as he himself tells us (*Preparation for the Gospel*, 7. 8. 29; *Demonstration*, 1. 9. 20), also wrote a treatise on *The Polygamy and Fertility of the Patriarchs*. It is quoted by Basil (*On the Holy Spirit*, 29. 72) under the title *Difficulties concerning the Polygamy of the Ancients*. One has to wonder whether this is not a treatise defending the respectability of the patriarchs against Gnostic and pagan criticism, in which case this writing, too, should be regarded as apologetic. But once we go as far as this, it is obvious that it becomes rather difficult to draw a sharp line. It is clear, for instance, that Eusebius' *Chronicle* has a rather strong apologetic element.[3] It, after all, is meant to show, among other things, that Jewish, and hence Christian, wisdom antedates Greek wisdom, a crucial point in the debate between Christians and pagans. So, if we adopt a generously vague notion of 'apology', we might end up seeing even the *Chronicle* classified as an apologetic writing. Obviously, though, a notion which is so diffuse is also of very little help.

On the other hand, it is not clear how much is gained by making such a notion very precise, especially if there is no sign that such a precision reflects the way the ancient authors and their readers thought about these writings. What we can do, though, is to look at the ancient writers themselves, to see how they used the notion of an 'apologia'. It will turn out that we really get not one

[2] For Porphyry's possible reliance on Christian authors in *Against the Christians*, see Casey, 'Porphyry and the Origin of the Book of Daniel'.

[3] On the *Chronicle* and its motives, see now Mosshammer, *Chronicle of Eusebius*. On the importance of chronography in the debate with Porphyry, see Croke, 'Porphyry's Anti-Christian Chronology'.

notion, but a whole family of notions. The ancestor of these, no doubt, is the notion of a response to a legal charge on account of somebody's being a Christian. But grouped around this notion we find a series of derivative and extended notions. One such extended notion is the notion of a response to a criticism of one's being a Christian, which does not necessarily involve the charge of criminality, but in some way involves a serious reproach; a response to a criticism which questions, if not the legality, then the morality or respectability of being a Christian. There will then be even further extended uses, in which a writing could be called 'apologetic' if it addresses an issue or a difficulty which could be, or in fact has been, used to make a case against the Christians, but which is not—or at least not primarily—addressed for this reason.

EUSEBIUS' USAGE OF THE TERM *APOLOGIA*

Hence, in considering Eusebius' apologetic writings, I want to begin by considering Eusebius' own use of the term *apologia* and its cognates. Now, it is striking that the only work of Eusebius which he himself calls an 'apology' in its title—namely, the apology on behalf of Origen written mainly by Pamphilus, but completed by Eusebius—is not an apologetic writing even in an extended sense, since it does not involve a response to an attack on Christianity or on a Christian on account of his Christianity. What the title shows, though, is the unsurprising fact that Eusebius, following Greek usage, is willing to use the term *apologia* in a whole variety of familiar and established ways. Thus an 'Apology of Socrates' might not be just a writing purporting to tell us how Socrates responded in court to the accusations raised against him; it might easily turn into an apology on behalf of Socrates. And it is obviously in this extended but well-established sense that Eusebius published an 'apology' of Origen. The narrowest use of the term *apologia* in Eusebius we find, for instance, in the account of Apollonius' martyrdom in *Ecclesiastical History*, 5. 21. 2–5. The account is not exactly transparent, and the legal background seems unclear, but the story appears to be this: Apollonius is denounced as a Christian; the judge, however hard he tries, cannot but, following the law, condemn Apollonius to death. Apollonius in

court makes an *apologia*, and also addresses an *apologia* to the senate, which, Eusebius notes, one can still read in his *Acts of the Martyrs*. There are two uses of *apologia* involved in this account. The first refers to Apollonius' defence, or rather response, in court to the charge of being a Christian. Needless to say, this use of *apologia* is also attested in the *Acts of the Martyrs*, and comparable uses of *apologein* or *apologia* are conspicuously frequent in the Acts of the Apostles.[4] In fact, the *Acts of Apollonius* are presumably still extant, for scholars plausibly assume that the Acts transmitted as those of Apollos in reality are those of the Apollonius whom Eusebius refers to. And in these Acts, Apollonius himself, when questioned, repeatedly refers to his response as an *apologia* (cf. 4, 5, 8).

There seems to be nothing remarkable about this narrow use. *Apologia* and its cognates had been used all along in Greek to refer to somebody's defence in court. Nevertheless, there are two things we may note. In a Christian context it is understood that the *apologia* will not be a defence in response to any charge whatever, but specifically a defence in response to a charge on account of one's being a Christian. The second point to note may be less trivial. A defence in court would normally take the form of arguing that the accusation is false, or at least not sufficiently substantiated, or of arguing that, though the charge is justified, the offender should be excused, or that there are extenuating circumstances. But, if we recall Apollonius' case, the charge here is just this: that Apollonius is a Christian. And though, of course, a defence of the ordinary kind would be open to Apollonius, this, from a Christian point of view, would count as apostasy, rather than as apology. All that Apollonius as a Christian can do is to argue that the charge is perfectly justified, and that this is all for the good, as far as he is concerned. Thus it lies in the nature of the case that a Christian *apologia* in court is not an ordinary legal defence, perhaps not even a defence of any kind in the legal sense. And this has the consequence that the Christian use of the word *apologia*, even when it is used to refer to a defendant's response in court, acquires a certain ambiguity and vagueness, as, by the very nature of the case, a Christian *apologia* does not stay within the customary or even the legal limits of a defence in court, at least not

[4] See Loveday Alexander in this volume, p. 28. For the *Acts of Apollonius*, see *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. and trans. Musurillo.

an ordinary court. One might as a Christian, of course, challenge the fairness, justice, or wisdom of the law or laws under which one is accused for being a Christian. But in this case, it seems, one's only legal recourse is to the authority of the emperor, a possibility of which Christians availed themselves, as we will see.

As I said, there is presumably a further use of *apologia* involved in the case described by Eusebius, when Apollonius is said to have sent an *apologia* to the senate. To judge this use, one would have to know more about the actual case, and in particular about the legal facts relevant to it—for instance, whether Apollonius was of senatorial rank—and so I will pass it over, except to note that this is presumably the apology which Jerome, in his notice on Apollonius (*On Famous Men*, 42), refers to as an *insigne volumen* ('distinguished volume'), suggesting that it was available to him. In any case, Apollonius owes his inclusion in Jerome's work to this apology, which hence must have had some distribution, and thus has to be taken into account as a possible further source of later apologies.

We are on somewhat safer ground again when we turn to a clearly yet further extended use of *apologia*, which does not refer to a particular case actually brought, or to a particular defendant, but does involve a particular judge—namely, the emperor—as the ultimate legal authority. Perhaps in its most narrow construal it also involves actually pending cases, though it does not refer to them; and it crucially involves somebody who, though he is not himself actually accused, makes use of his right to plead before the emperor, either in person or by submitting a *libellum* on behalf of Christians that they should not be prosecuted on account of their Christianity. If we look at Eusebius' account of the so-called Apologists in the *Ecclesiastical History*, it is striking that he calls 'apologies' only those of their writings which were, at least fictitiously, addressed to the Emperor in his role as ultimate judge. He does so in the cases of Quadratus (4. 3. 1), Aristides (4. 3. 3), Justin Martyr (4. 8. 3), Melito and Apollinarius (4. 26. 1), and Miltiades (5. 17. 5).[5] But he does not, at least in this context, give the title 'apology' to a great number of other writings we traditionally classify as 'apologetic'—for instance, Theophilus' *To*

[5] The more important of these figures are dealt with by Young in this volume, pp. 82–92. On the others, Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, is a useful modern guide.

Autolycus or Tatian's *To the Greeks* or Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* or Apollinarius' *To the Greeks* and *To the Jews*, to mention just a few.

In the *Ecclesiastical History* Eusebius also repeatedly refers to Tertullian's *Apology* as an *apologia* (2. 2. 4; 3. 33. 3; 5. 5. 5). It is addressed to the *antistites* of the Roman Empire.[6] This seems standardly to be taken to refer to the governors of the Roman provinces; Eusebius (5. 5. 5) assumes that it is addressed to the Roman senate. Possibly he goes on the more than questionable assumption that the senate has some legal standing in the matter. Perhaps he is also influenced in this by the parallel of Apollonius. But Eusebius recognized yet another, much wider use of *apologia*. Whereas an apologia in the narrow sense is the defence a Christian advances when asked in court to account for himself on account of his Christianity, or at least a defence advanced on behalf of Christians before the emperor, an apologia in this wide sense is a defence a Christian advances when anybody asks him to account for himself on the basis of his Christianity or specific Christian beliefs and practices. Eusebius twice quotes (*Preparation for the Gospel*, 1. 3. 6; 1. 5. 2) from the first letter attributed to Peter (3: 15), which enjoins us 'to be ready to give an *apologia* to anybody who demands from us an account concerning the hope we have'. There is a certain ambiguity here. If we read this verse in context, it is clear that Peter is talking about Christians who suffer unjustly on account of their being Christians. It requires some interpretation to see that the text presumably does not refer just to Christians who are dragged into court because they are Christians, but quite generally to Christians who are reproached and harassed for being Christians. But the way Eusebius quotes Peter, out of context, one is immediately tempted to understand it in the sense that a Christian has to be ready to defend his Christianity not only in court in front of a judge, but in whatever context, in front of anybody who objects to Christianity. And Eusebius here seems to be relying on this larger understanding for his argument. For, having quoted this apostolic injunction, he immediately goes on to say that in response to this injunction a myriad of writings have been composed. And the way he then characterizes these writings, it seems clear that he is now referring

[6] On the audience of Tertullian, see Price in this volume, pp. 109–10.

to a much larger class of apologetic writings than just those he referred to as 'apologies' in the *Ecclesiastical History*. For he now refers to treatises in support of Christian doctrine and biblical commentaries, which offer scriptural proof for the truth of Christian doctrine. Indeed, he seems to be referring to the same class of writings he had referred to two paragraphs earlier in 1. 3. 4. There, too, he said that a great number of authors before him had devoted themselves at length to the task of vindicating the Christian message against criticism. And he listed (i) authors who wrote refutations of, and *antirrhētikoi logoi* against, treatises opposing Christianity; (ii) authors who wrote commentaries or homilies on biblical writings or particular passages therein; and (iii) authors who advocated Christian doctrines in polemical treatises. Here we seem to have at least the notion of a very wide class of writings which, in one way or another, defend Christian doctrines and practices as such against any accusation, whatever its source, tied to the use of the term *apologia* in 1 Peter 3: 15. Eusebius seems to go out of his way to emphasize the diversity among these writings, even in literary genre. And he clearly subsumes some of his own writing—for instance, the *Preparation for the Gospel* itself—under this broad category of apologetic writings. Indeed, in book 11, preface 5, he refers to the enterprise in which he is engaged in writing the *Preparation* as 'our *apologia*'. Hence it would seem that Eusebius himself is prepared to recognize even among his own writings a class of apologetic writings in the wide sense indicated, and to refer to them as 'apologies'.

There are thus two noteworthy facts about Eusebius' use of the word *apologia*. First, Eusebius sometimes, as in the *Ecclesiastical History*, uses the term restrictively to refer specifically to writings addressed to the emperor on behalf of Christians and Christianity. These, it would seem, constitute a definite literary genre, defined, on the one hand, by the legal institution of such submissions to the emperor and, on the other, by its specifically Christian purpose. But second, Eusebius also recognizes a rather extended use of the term for any writing composed in defence of Christianity—for instance, in defence of the authority of writings regarded as canonical, and hence definitive of Christianity. And Eusebius himself stresses that *apologiai*, thus widely understood, comprise writings of quite different literary genres.

If we adopt what seems to be Eusebius' own wider category, a remarkably large part of Eusebius' work is devoted to apologetics. His most important contributions to the genre are clearly the *Preparation for the Gospel* in fifteen books and the *Demonstration of the Gospel* in twenty books. Of these, the former as a whole is extant, whereas only the first ten books of the latter and parts of its fifteenth book have come down to us. It is clear from Eusebius' own indications that these two treatises are meant to form one comprehensive apology, justifying Christianity both in relation to paganism, or rather Hellenism, and in relation to Judaism. This monumental work in two parts had its predecessor in Eusebius' œuvre, it seems, in a shorter treatise entitled 'General Elementary Introduction', to which Eusebius perhaps refers at *Preparation for the Gospel*, 1. 1. 12. Apart from fragments, only books 6–9 of this treatise are extant, though, under the title *peri tou Christou prophētika ekloga* (*PG* 22, 1021–1262). Perhaps, as Schwartz suggested,[7] it is identical with the two treatises *Ecclesiastical Preparation* and *Ecclesiastical Demonstration*, which Photius meant to write about in the *Bibliotheca* (as codd. 11 and 12), though unfortunately he never got around to doing so.

The *Preparation for the Gospel* also refers (1. 3. 12) to an earlier treatise on the fulfilled prophecies of Christ, which is lost in its original form, but may have been reworked to form book 4 of an apologetic treatise entitled *Theophany* in five books, extant only in Syriac, apart from some fragments in Greek. Still extant in Greek is *Against Hierocles*, whereas an *Against Porphyry* in twenty-five books, a refutation of Porphyry's *Against the Christians* in fifteen books, is lost. In addition, we know from Photius (*Bibliotheca* cod. 13) that there was a treatise entitled *Refutation and Apology* in two slightly different versions, directed against pagan objections to Christianity. Moreover, there are the treatise on *The Discrepancy between the Gospels* and the tract on *The Polygamy of the Patriarchs*, both lost, which I mentioned earlier.

This fairly sizeable corpus of apologetic writings, as is well known, stands in a long tradition going back at least to the beginnings of the second century CE. We have to assume that it was well represented in the library in Caesarea which had been built up with such care by Origen and by Pamphilus (cf. *Ecclesiastical*

[7] Schwartz, 'Eusebios', col. 1386.

History, 6. 33. 2), whose work in this regard Eusebius obviously continued. If we want to get some measure of Eusebius' familiarity with this tradition, we just have to look at, for instance, his *Ecclesiastical History*, which, as we have noticed, mentions many apologetic writings. Only some of these have come down to us. And thus Eusebius' remarks are an invaluable source of information about this tradition. To Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, for instance, we owe the single fragment of Quadratus' writing, perhaps the oldest apology. But he also provides us with such information as that in his day Quadratus' book was still widely available, and that he had a copy of it. Similarly, he quotes from other apologetic treatises, or provides information about them. Thus the picture one gets, just on the basis of the *Ecclesiastical History*, is that this is a tradition which Eusebius is thoroughly familiar with, and hence could draw on freely for his own apologetic writings.

So the question naturally arises: what does Eusebius think he can contribute to this tradition by adding to the already existing vast body of apologetic literature, whose considerable extent he himself remarked on, a good number of further apologetic treatises, some of them of staggering length. This must be a question that Eusebius himself thought needed an answer. For, in the passage we already briefly discussed, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 1. 3. 4, it seems that Eusebius thinks that he owes us an explanation as to why, given all the apologetic literature which is already available, he is now writing the *Preparation* and *Demonstration*. He tells us that he has a distinct approach of his own to the matter, which, unfortunately, he characterizes only negatively, by telling us that his writing will not fall into one of the three classes mentioned above, under which the writings of his predecessors can be subsumed. What matters for our purposes for the moment is not what Eusebius' claim to originality may positively amount to, or whether it is justified, but the mere fact that he seems to think that he has to explain why we are getting yet another apologetic writing.

AGAINST HIEROCLES

If we doubt whether this was even a rhetorical, let alone a real, question for Eusebius, it is easy to make the question seem more

serious and urgent. If we look at Eusebius' introduction to *Against Hierocles*, we see that he thought that among all the many apologies which had been written, there was only one fairly comprehensive, more or less definitive one: namely, Origen's *Against Celsus*.[8] In *Against Hierocles*, 1, Eusebius tells us about almost all of Hierocles' objections to Christianity:

> These arguments, too, might at the appropriate time find their fitting refutation; but they already virtually have been overturned, even before anybody has written a treatise especially against them; they have been thoroughly refuted in advance in altogether eight books written by Origen directed against the work by Celsus entitled 'True Account' which is even more preposterous than [Hierocles'] 'Friend of the Truth'. The author indicated [i.e. Origen] without fail has set matters right concerning Celsus' treatise in as many books as I said; he has taken up altogether whatever anybody ever has said or will say on this subject, and has resolved the difficulty. We refer those who do love the truth and want to have precise knowledge of our doctrines to these books.

It is true that part of the reason why Eusebius refers to *Against Celsus* is presumably that he thinks that Hierocles has plagiarized his objections in part from Celsus. And it is also true, and hardly needs to be explained here in detail, that Eusebius is, and feels, thoroughly indebted to Origen. It remains the case that he commits himself to the remarkable claim that Origen has dealt satisfactorily with not only all serious past objections, but also pre-emptorily with all substantial objections which anybody is ever going to raise. So why, then, do we need Eusebius' apologetic treatises? Obviously the answer to this question is highly complex, and will vary from treatise to treatise. What I want to try to pursue here is just one aspect of the answer to the question of why in particular he wrote the *Preparation* and *Demonstration*. But, before I turn to this, I want to briefly consider two other of Eusebius' apologetic writings, *Against Hierocles* and *Against Porphyry*.

A first answer to why Eusebius wrote *Against Hierocles*[9] lies on the surface. Hierocles in some detail, relying on Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, develops the argument that Apollonius of Tyana was a truly divine man, without fail, more powerful and impressive

[8] Treated at length by Frede in this volume, in Ch. 7.

[9] On Hierocles' treatise, see also Swain in this volume, p. 177. Its date and that of Eusebius' reply are discussed in Forrat's introduction to his *SC* edition.

than Jesus, who, especially in comparison with Apollonius, is open to criticism—for instance, in the way he failed to defend himself. If, then, Apollonius is not a god, why should we think that Jesus is God (*Against Hierocles*, 1, 2, 37–9)? In *Against Celsus* Origen had briefly discussed Apollonius (6. 41) in connection with Celsus' claim that magic does not have any effect on a true philosopher.[10] Origen ridicules the irrelevance of this remark, but from his answer it would seem that Celsus had taken the view that a true philosopher, unlike Christians and unlike Jesus, will have nothing to do with magic, to which Origen responds with a reference to Apollonius. But the way Origen responds in referring to Apollonius makes it clear that Celsus himself had not already drawn the parallel between Jesus and Apollonius to argue against Christ's divinity. This is all the clearer in that we do find in Celsus (cf. Origen, *Against Celsus*, 3. 26 ff.) a rather similar argument concerning a list of persons which does not include Apollonius. We find in Celsus the argument that there are all these figures like Aristeas, Abaris, Hermotimus, and Cleomedes, who are credited with miraculous powers, but whom no Greek would regard as a god.[11] Now these figures were legendary; so it must have been tempting to improve on the argument by replacing them with the historical figure of Apollonius, especially once his reputation had spread and Philostratus' *Life* was available to document, as it were, his miraculous powers. This seems to be precisely what Hierocles did. For, to go by Eusebius' *Against Hierocles*, 2. 10 ff., he had a similar list, beginning with Aristeas, but then introduced Apollonius as somebody fairly recent and hence, presumably, as somebody whose case was well documented. Thus Origen had not yet had the chance to confront this particular argument, let alone this argument as based on Philostratus' *Life*, which had appeared only some twenty years before he wrote *Against Celsus*. Hence there was room for a treatise by Eusebius to deal with this new argument, a task he must have felt particularly well equipped for, since it involved subjecting Philostratus' *Life*, the main source for the emerging cult of Apollonius, to historical criticism.

[10] Origen is here quoting Moiragenes, whom Philostratus also attacks in the preface to his *Life*. On the sources and aims of his depiction of Apollonius, see Swain in this volume, pp. 174–96.

[11] Such points are said (perhaps fancifully) to indicate Celsus' ambivalence towards pagan religion, in Fédou, *Christianisme et religions païennes*.

Obviously, a lot more would need to be said about this, but I will address just one point. It is not clear from Eusebius' introductory chapter whether he thinks that even this particular argument in *Against Hierocles*, which he is going to focus his attack on, is entirely new, or whether Hierocles is original only in developing it in such detail and giving it such a prominent place in his overall argumentation. So the question arises as to whether Hierocles does not owe even this argument to an earlier source: not Celsus, but Porphyry's *Against the Christians*. It is clear from Jerome, *On Psalm 91* (Harnack, frg. 4) that Porphyry referred to Apollonius alongside Apuleius and the Egyptian Magi, already mentioned by, for instance, Numenius, as having worked wonders. But it is only if we assume that Macarius Magnes' *Monogenes* is based ultimately on Porphyry's *Against the Christians*[12] that we have in *Monogenes*, 3. 1 (Harnack, frg. 63) evidence that already Porphyry compared Apollonius' way of dealing with being taken to court with Jesus' meek behaviour before Pilate and his ignominious suffering. This still is not yet the full argument we find in Hierocles, but a crucial step in its direction.

Before we leave *Against Hierocles* to turn to *Against Porphyry*, though, let us briefly consider the question of what audience Eusebius envisages for his writing. I have certain doubts in general as to how clear a notion authors have of their audience. But in this particular case Eusebius' own introductory remarks perhaps provide the beginning of an answer. *Against Hierocles* is addressed to a person not named, but referred to as *philotēs*, or 'dear friend' (ch. 1) and *hetaire*, or 'companion' (ch. 5). He is perhaps a Christian. He is certainly rather educated, as Eusebius presupposes that he is thoroughly familiar with Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*. The introductory sentence strongly suggests that Eusebius' correspondent has been rather impressed by Hierocles' argument. This seems to imply that Eusebius' correspondent represents a group of persons large enough for Eusebius to feel seriously concerned, persons who are well-to-do, well educated, sympathetic to Christianity, if not actually Christians, but certainly not firm enough in their grip on, or grasp of, Christianity not to be tempted by Hierocles' arguments. Towards the end of *Against Hierocles*, Eusebius goes to surprising lengths to attack

[12] See Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirklichen Literatur*, iv. 189–95, and T. D. Barnes, 'Porphyry against the Christians', for discussion of the evidence.

fatalism (43–8). This, of course, is prompted by remarks in Apollonius' apology in the eighth book of Philostratus' *Life*, but is hardly explained by it. One rather gets the impression that Eusebius thinks of his correspondent and the group he represents as being tempted by fatalism and the associated art of astrology, if not also by other forms of divination and other superstitious practices. One would in this context also have to consider the evidence for a growing cult of Apollonius. In short, one has to wonder whether Eusebius is not addressing himself to an audience which, for all its education, held on to superstitious pagan beliefs and practices. Though this is much later and in a different place, it may not be entirely inappropriate to remember that Augustine thought that many pagans, however sympathetic to Christianity, did not want to convert because they were attached to astrology and other forms of divination (cf. Sermon 374, lines 262 ff., Dolbeau).

AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS

In the case of *Against Hierocles* we thus get some sense of how the pagan argument evolved and was refined in detail over time, an evolution which required new responses on the part of the Christians. And Eusebius' *Against Hierocles* is, among other things, such a response to a new development in the pagan argument. But matters are more complex if we turn to Porphyry's *Against the Christians*[13] and Eusebius' response to it. Not only does Porphyry know a lot more about Christianity than Celsus did, but, unlike Celsus, Porphyry already has at his disposal a good deal of fairly sophisticated Christian apologetic literature which he can exploit for arguments against Christianity, or to which he can at least adapt his arguments. It seems that we are now at a stage at which the Christians themselves

[13] The date of *Against the Christians* is unknown; the assumption that it was written in the years after 269 when Porphyry was in Sicily is ill-founded, being based on an ambiguous remark in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6. 19. 2. The source of this is presumably Porphyry's statement in *Life of Plotinus*, 11, that, on the advice of Plotinus, he left Rome to live for some time in Sicily, and hence was not present at Plotinus' death. We do not know how long he stayed in Sicily and what he wrote while there. For discussion of the view that Arnobius too is reacting to Porphyry, see Edwards in this volume, pp. 199–200.

significantly contribute to the evolution of the pagan argument by their response to it, or by their anticipation of possible pagan objections.

But let us begin with the question why Eusebius thought that he had to write *Against Porphyry* in the first place, given, for instance, that he assumes that Origen had already answered all substantial objections. An answer presumably has to begin with the trivial fact that Porphyry wrote almost a hundred years after Celsus, and that he wrote after Origen. So we would expect that his attack on the Christians would contain some new elements that Origen had not yet addressed. One such element may, for instance, have been the comparison between Apollonius and Jesus. In thinking about Porphyry's originality, though, and about how Eusebius judged it, it does seem to me to be relevant to keep in mind that Eusebius had claimed that Origen had anticipated all serious objections to Christianity, a claim, I take it, made in full knowledge of Porphyry's treatise. So we should not think that the mere fact that Porphyry, writing after Origen, may have advanced some arguments not yet addressed by Origen will suffice as an explanation of why Eusebius wrote *Against Porphyry*. More important here seems to be the fact that Porphyry did not just write after Origen, but wrote knowing Origen, knowing some of his work—indeed, it can perhaps be argued, exploiting his work.[14] Porphyry certainly made Origen a prime target of his attack against the Christians. We know too little about Porphyry's treatise to be able to reconstruct even its overall line of argument. But to judge from Eusebius' remarks in his detailed discussion of Origen in book 6 of the *Ecclesiastical History*, a crucial thrust of Porphyry's argument was this: it was directed against Scripture, arguing that the Scriptures could not possibly contain the truth, which one could then extract from them, if one approached them with the right understanding and recovered their deeper meaning by allegorical interpretations. For they were full of contradictions, written by ignorant people of questionable character, liars, and forgers. So much one could already read in Celsus. But Porphyry obviously put his enormous learning and ingenuity to showing this in detail both for parts of the Old

[14] See Sellew, 'Achilles or Christ?', for discussion of another possible attack on the school of Origen.

Testament and some of the accounts in the New Testament. And he alleged against Origen that, being a Greek, being steeped in Greek culture, being familiar with the best of Greek philosophy, the most sublime truths of Hellenicity, he had apostatized and had tried, using the Greek philosophical method of allegory, to read Greek doctrines into these worthless barbarian writings. In particular, Porphyry noted (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6. 19. 8) that Origen spent all his time with Plato, and occupied himself with the writings of Numenius and Cronius, Apollophanes, Longinus, and Moderatus, but also used the books of Cornutus and Chaeremon, from whom he learned the allegorical method. Now Jerome tells us (*Letter 70*. 4) that Origen wrote a *Stromateis* in ten books in which he compared the views of Christians and pagans and tried to support Christian doctrines by referring to corresponding texts in Plato, Aristotle, Numenius, and Cornutus. As Harnack has already observed,[15] it is difficult not to suspect that Porphyry, in the text quoted by Eusebius, is thinking of Origen's *Stromateis*.

Unfortunately, Origen's *Stromateis*, too, is extant only in some fragments. But the impression which we get from these fragments and the relevant testimonies is that Origen in the *Stromateis* at least in part dealt with a variety of difficulties in the Old and New Testaments, among them difficulties which played a role in the Christian–pagan controversy. Thus, according to Jerome, Origen dealt in both the ninth and the tenth books with problems raised by Daniel—for instance, the story of Susanna (Jerome, *On Daniel*, 4. 5 ff.; 9. 24; 13. 1). Origen's *Stromateis* may well have been in part apologetic in character. If, then, we assume that Porphyry was familiar with the *Stromateis*, we have to wonder whether Porphyry did not rely on material provided by Origen himself for his arguments against Christianity. We noted briefly above that Origen had chided Celsus for not having noticed discrepancies in the Gospels concerning Jesus' genealogy, which had been the subject of controversy among Christians and between Christians and pagans. Origen's contemporary, Julius Africanus, had discussed the matter;[16] he himself did deal with the subject (*Homily on Luke*, 28), and Porphyry returned to it. Without knowing more about Porphyry's *Against the Christians*, it is difficult to arrive at a

[15] See *Gegen die Christen*, 64.
[16] See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1. 7 and 6. 31.

firm conclusion, but we certainly have to consider the possibility that Porphyry, in criticizing the discrepancies between the different accounts of Jesus' genealogy, also relied on Origen. We also know from Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6. 31. 1, that Julius Africanus wrote a letter to Origen suggesting that the story concerning Susanna in Daniel must be a forgery, and that Origen wrote a detailed reply on the matter. In fact, both letters are still extant, transmitted as part of the *catenae* on Daniel.[17] We have seen that Origen also dealt with the question in the *Stromateis*, which Porphyry seems to have known. It, too, seems to have been a matter taken up by Porphyry, who then argued that Daniel as a whole was a forgery and involved prophecy *ex eventu*, thus undermining the claim that Scripture proved its status by its prophecies which we can see to have been fulfilled. Thus, we have to wonder to what extent Porphyry used Origen for his argument against the authenticity of Daniel. It would also be worthwhile to pursue the question of whether, and to what extent, Porphyry relied on Origen's *Against Celsus*.

However that may be, a further crucial fact about Porphyry's attack is that, whereas Celsus was obviously an unknown, insignificant philosopher who only received a rather belated answer because Origen quite reluctantly acceded to Ambrosius's wish, Porphyry was the most distinguished philosopher of his day, a man of great learning, moreover, whose views could not easily be overlooked and dismissed out of hand. There is a further fact to which I will return later: Porphyry's philosophical views were surprisingly similar to Origen's and Eusebius', and to those of like-minded Christian authors. Eusebius himself, for instance, relied on Porphyry's writings, and quoted from them extensively. And Porphyry certainly did not at all fit the image of the idolatrous pagan whom Christians liked to paint in polemics against paganism. So there was further reason to take Porphyry seriously as an opponent. But even setting this point aside, it should be obvious why Eusebius thought that Porphyry's treatise needed to be answered, even if in his view it contained little of substance which Origen had not already addressed. Given Porphyry's enormous reputation, given that he represented the most advanced stage of pagan criticism, perhaps in this relying

[17] See De Lange's *SC* edition.

on, and taking into account, Origen's arguments, an answer was needed.

Eusebius may have believed this all the more so, as Methodius had already written a short refutation, in not more than one or two books, which Eusebius would have regarded as inadequate. Jerome (preface to *Commentary on Daniel*) tells us that it was a refutation only 'in part', presumably meaning that Methodius responded only selectively to Porphyry's arguments. But, given Methodius' extant remains, and given in particular his vehement opposition to Origen and the kind of Christianity which Origen represented—namely, one decisively influenced by Platonism or even, as Methodius saw it, a Christianity adulterated by pagan philosophy—it is difficult to imagine that Eusebius, who did not even care to mention Methodius in the *Ecclesiastical History*, thought that Methodius' response to Porphyry was adequate.

However this may be, Augustine's *Letter 102*, can serve as evidence that a strong need was felt for an adequate response. As Augustine tells us in the *Retractations*, a friend, whom he wanted to convert to Christianity, had sent him six questions which needed to be answered, especially since some of them, the friend claimed, had been raised by Porphyry. So Augustine set out to answer them in *Letter 102*. It seems that the mere fact that they had been posed by none other than Porphyry made it appear particularly urgent to respond to them. So Eusebius, in writing *Against Porphyry*, will have tried to address this need. And again, one can easily see why Eusebius would think that he, rather than, say, Methodius,[18] was particularly qualified to respond to such a learned work by a philosopher as Porphyry's *Against the Christians*, but also why he would feel that he owed it to Origen to respond to an attack specifically singling out Origen and the kind of understanding of Christianity he represented.

But from Augustine's response we can also see, at least, in part what kind of audience Eusebius may have had in mind. Eusebius must have meant to address at least a group of highly educated persons who were sympathetic to Christianity, but impressed by the kinds of argument Porphyry had to offer, and who, for this reason, either would not convert or would remain wavering in their commitment to Christianity. It must have been a group of

[18] For the writings of Eusebius' contemporary, Bishop Methodius of Olympia, see the edn of the *Opera* by Bonwetsch.

persons whom Eusebius could expect to be able to afford to acquire a twenty-five-volume work, to have the leisure to read or at least consult it, and to have the education to follow and appreciate its detailed argument. But for reasons which perhaps become more apparent when we consider the *Preparation* and the *Demonstration*, I am also inclined to think that Eusebius thought that a Christian, even if he was firmly committed to Christianity, ideally had to have an answer for the questions Porphyry had raised, because Christianity was not a matter of mere—let alone blind—faith, but ideally a matter of a careful consideration and critical evaluation of all the available evidence, including the difficulties raised by Porphyry.

PREPARATION FOR THE GOSPEL

With this we can finally turn to the *Preparation* and to the aspect of Eusebius' motivation in writing it which I want to consider more closely. As I mentioned above, Eusebius, at least in part, is justifying the writing of the *Preparation* and the *Demonstration* by claiming that he here follows an approach of his own to apologetics. And this he explains in part by saying that he is not, like many of his predecessors, going to write a polemical treatise. One can, I think, readily see why he finds this inappropriate. Origen did write a polemical treatise against Celsus. This seemed unproblematic, because Origen at least started out thinking that Celsus was an Epicurean. One did not have to be a Christian to think that Epicureanism involved a blindness to reality which would make it impossible for an Epicurean to have access to the world of the intellect.[19] Origen would not have written a treatise like this against Numenius or against Plotinus. Plotinus did attack the Gnostics, and he seems to have had reservations about Christians. But it would have been impossible to write a polemical treatise against him. There would have been place for disagreement, but it

[19] For other attacks on the Epicureans as outsiders to classical culture, see Cicero, *Against Piso*, and Plutarch, *Against Colotes*. As the latter indicates, Epicureans were noted for their intemperate attacks on other philosophies (cf. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, book 1). Christians are associated with Epicureans in Lucian's *Alexander, or False Prophet* as well as in Plotinus' treatise against the Gnostics, *Enneads*, 2. 9.

would have been difficult to reproach Plotinus for his views or his practice. For similar reasons, Eusebius now finds it inappropriate to write a polemical treatise against paganism or Hellenicity. We remember that, according to Eusebius, Porphyry accused Origen of apostasy. If we look at Eusebius' wording, the contrast which Porphyry draws between Origen and Ammonius, who is supposed to have been originally a Christian, insinuates that Origen converted to Christianity, though this is not actually said (cf. *Ecclesiastical History*, 6. 19. 8). But Eusebius obviously, for a variety of reasons, finds the accusation of apostasy deeply disturbing, so he takes it literally and calls Porphyry a liar, pointing out that Origen had Christian parents and was raised Christian. But I take it that Porphyry may not have meant to deny this and that, in any case, he primarily had something else in mind.[20] Porphyry raised the question of why a Greek, an educated Greek, a Greek who had more or less the same philosophical views about the sensible and intelligible world and, in particular, about God as the Platonists had, would abandon Hellenicity and embrace barbarian Jewish Scriptures. I want to distinguish two elements in this question, though I think that Porphyry would not have accepted this as a real distinction. There is, first, the problem of why a Greek, somebody steeped in Greek culture and tradition, would espouse Judaism. There is, second, the problem as to why somebody who in his theoretical pursuits has grasped the highest principles, the essence, as it were, of Hellenicity, could in practice follow and believe in the foreign stories of the Scriptures. This, roughly, is the accusation Porphyry makes against Origen according to Eusebius in the *Ecclesiastical History*, thus to go on to show that the Scriptures are not worthy to be espoused, and that the attempts of Origen and others to make the Scriptures come out right by learned and ingenious interpretation are entirely misplaced.

Now, almost at the outset of the *Preparation* (1. 2. 1–4), Eusebius introduces a pagan who, as Eusebius puts it, 'quite reasonably' (*eikotōs*, 1. 2. 1; cf. 1. 2. 5) raises, among others, the question of why Christians give up their Greek heritage to espouse disreputable Jewish mythologies (1. 2. 3). This does seem to be the question of Porphyry that we have just been considering.

[20] For discussion of this passage and its implications, see now M. J. Edwards, 'Ammonius, Teacher of Origen'.

Having raised the question of why Christians apostatize from Hellenism to Jewish Scripture, the pagan, in 1. 2. 4, goes on to ask why Christians do not then stay with Judaism, but, in a way, apostatize again, by refusing to follow Jewish law and custom. We can be fairly confident that his was a question, too, which had been raised by Porphyry. For it was a point which Celsus had already made, that Christianity in its origins involved a revolt against Judaism (cf. Origen, *Against Celsus*, 3. 5; 5. 33), and it must have been a well-known Jewish complaint that Christians claimed Scripture for themselves, but refused to follow the Law. Now, given these two questions, the pagan, as reported by Eusebius, can set out his question as a question concerning identity: what are Christians? Greeks or barbarians—that is, Jews? They seem to be neither one nor the other.[21] For they give up Hellenicity to embrace Jewish Scripture, but then refuse to follow Jewish Law.

Eusebius seems fully to accept the question thus put by Porphyry. In fact, it will structure Eusebius' discussion in the *Preparation* and the *Demonstration*. In the former he will argue that Christians espouse Jewish Scripture, because its wisdom is older and superior to Greek wisdom. And in the latter he will argue that Jewish Scripture itself announces the Incarnation, the Redemption, and the Resurrection, and that these prophecies have been fulfilled in Jesus, whom the Jews nevertheless did not accept. That Eusebius fully accepts the question—in fact, seems to assume that it is *the* question Christians face—makes a polemical response to it completely inappropriate. For a convincing answer to this question is, as Eusebius sees it, constitutive of the identity of Christianity. But it is by no means obvious why Eusebius should accept the question in the first place. It is only because he has a certain attitude towards Hellenicity that it can seem so crucial to Eusebius. It is instructive in this regard to compare Celsus and Porphyry and the respective responses of Origen and Eusebius. Both Celsus and Porphyry accuse Christians of accepting Jewish Scripture, but of revolting against Judaism, as not wanting to identify themselves as or with Jews. But Celsus, looking at earlier Christianity, presents Christians as being of Jewish origin (Origen, *Against Celsus*, 5. 33), whereas Porphyry,

[21] The Greek–Jew–barbarian paradigm had, of course, already been criticized by Christians. See Young in this volume, pp. 102–3.

looking at Christianity in the third century and thinking of men like Origen, presents Christians as being of Greek origin. Origen responds to this very cautiously. In *Against Celsus*, 3. 7, he argues that if Christianity had been the result of a revolt (*stasis*) within Judaism, which countenances killing under certain circumstances, Jesus would not have forbidden killing under any circumstances. In 5. 33 he is more forthcoming. He admits that Jesus came forth from the Jews, but says that he formed a church to which all nations are called and thereby come under a law which is not the law of the Jews—for instance, in that Christians reject belligerence both in the literal and in the spiritual sense. Eusebius, like Origen, emphasizes that all nations are called (*Preparation*, 1. 2. 8), that Christianity puts an end to hostility among nations (1. 4. 3 ff.); but, unlike Origen, he turns this into the claim that the Christians are a new host, collected from many nations, Greeks by race or *genos* and Greeks in their way of thinking. He goes out of his way not to say, as Origen did, that the traditional laws and customs of the Jews have been replaced by a new law, but that it is the traditional laws and customs and theology of the Greeks which no longer hold for Christians (1. 5. 11–14). In a striking way, he is eager to accept the charge of Porphyry that Christians have deserted Hellenism.

One has to be extremely cautious in one's interpretation of this striking fact. But I am inclined to think that it reflects, among other things, Eusebius' in some ways extremely positive, though ambivalent, attitude towards Hellenism. He is perfectly clear and unambiguous in his view that Hellenism ultimately is inadequate, and has to be superseded by Christianity. But he certainly does not reject paganism and Greek culture as entirely alien in the way Tatian had done.[22] It seems as if Eusebius, before rejecting Hellenism, had to go out of his way to first claim it as also his and, more generally, Christians' patrimony, as if to insist that the Greek tradition and Greek culture were as much part of his heritage as they were that of his pagan opponents. And it is precisely for this reason that Porphyry's question becomes the central question.

Now, at least for Porphyry, Greek philosophy, and in particular Greek theology, are definitive of Hellenicity and the Greek

[22] On Tatian, see Young in this volume, pp. 85 and 93.

tradition. For this reason, it is particularly puzzling for him that Origen should have Greek philosophical views, but reject Hellenism for Christianity. It should be noted that Eusebius, in his characterization of Porphyry's attack on Christianity in the *Ecclesiastical History*, makes a point of saying (6. 19. 5) that Porphyry attacked not Christian doctrines, but rather the Scriptures and their interpreters, like Origen. But he reports (6. 19. 7) Porphyry as complaining that Origen in his doctrines, as opposed to his life, was thoroughly Hellenic, and that he read these Hellenic doctrines into foreign myths. More specifically, Porphyry says that Origen's views concerning things in general, but in particular concerning the divine, are Hellenic. Porphyry explains this (6. 19. 8), as we saw, by claiming that Origen spent all his time with Plato, and occupied himself with the writings of men like Numenius, Longinus, Moderatus, and other Pythagoreans. The suggestion clearly is that Origen's theoretical views even in theology are perfectly acceptable, but that they have their source not in Scripture, but in Plato and Platonism. So this is what Porphyry thinks about Origen's philosophy.

Eusebius' view of Plato, Platonism, and, hence, Porphyry's philosophy, roughly speaking, is precisely the reverse. Eusebius has little to complain of in Platonism, in particular Platonic theology and metaphysics. But he thinks that this theology and metaphysics is not rooted in Hellenism, that it cannot be arrived at, as Porphyry and other Platonists thought, by reconstructing the true account of things by allegorical interpretations of Homer, Hesiod, and ancient Greek myths, since these are not an appropriate object for allegorical interpretation. To the extent that the Greeks arrived at the truth, it was rather because, for instance, they in some way borrowed from Moses and Jewish Scripture, which in any case was much more ancient and hence venerable than Plato's writings.

But this view of Eusebius is embedded in a larger view, which similarly, roughly speaking, is the inverse of a larger view we find in Platonists like Celsus or Porphyry. And so before Eusebius, in books 11–13 of the *Preparation*, turns to Plato and Platonism, his first ten books set out this larger view. Now Platonists like Numenius, Celsus, or Porphyry do not believe that the true account of things, the true philosophy or theology, is one which we owe to Plato, who discovered these deep truths. They assume,

rather, that Plato's importance lies in the fact that he still understood, and was able to articulate, an ancient account, and that he somehow encoded this account, and his understanding of it, in the dialogues. But the account goes much further back, to the beginnings of Hellenicity and beyond. It can be recovered to some extent by the appropriate interpretation of Homer, Hesiod, and ancient myths. But it has also left its traces in the traditional beliefs of the other ancient nations—not just the Greeks, but also the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and the Phoenicians, whose views can therefore be used to reconstruct the true account. There is a certain amount of disagreement about the relative age of these nations, and about who borrowed from whom to make up for lost parts of the true account.[23] In particular, there is a radical disagreement as to whether the Jews are an ancient nation, and whether they dispose of authentic ancient wisdom, or whether Judaism is a corrupted form of, among other things, Egyptian wisdom. In the latter case, Jewish Scripture is clearly not an adequate object of allegorical interpretation.

Eusebius' argument in *Preparation*, 1–10, must be understood as responding to this sort of view. It proceeds in two steps. In books 1–6 it tries to expound the traditional Greek belief system—in particular, traditional Greek theology. Eusebius argues that, far from being based on an original true account going back to times immemorial, it evolved historically, involved large-scale borrowings from barbarians, in particular the Egyptians, was devoid of rationality, in many regards crude, primitive, and abominable, not the kind of material one could reasonably assume to contain some deeper hidden truth.[24] Throughout the argument Eusebius again and again argues that surely the Christians are justified to reject this tradition. Triumphantly, in a chapter entitled 'How Plato Thought of the Theology of the Ancients' (2. 7. 1–9), he quotes Plato as saying in the *Republic* (377e–378d) that if one wants to follow law and custom, one has to have these beliefs about the divine beings for which there is no proof and which are not even plausible. So Plato himself is supposed to acknowledge the irrationality of traditional Greek theology as being a matter of mere faith and custom. Moreover, he quotes Plato as going on to

[23] See Millar, 'Porphyry', esp. 255–61.

[24] Cf. the arguments of Arnobius, as discussed by Edwards in this volume, pp. 217–19.

say that the stories about the gods—for instance, about Kronos and Zeus—are unspeakably awful.

In a second step, in books 7–10, Eusebius argues for the superiority of Jewish beliefs and customs and the Jewish way of life, in particular for the superiority of Jewish theology, and, crucially, for its being much more ancient. The detailed account of Mosaic theology drawn from Scripture in 6. 9–22, in particular 11–22, which is an essential part of the proof that Judaism is superior to traditional Greek or pagan belief, makes it look very much, though not perhaps entirely, like a form of Platonism; but this does not trouble Eusebius, given that his chronology puts Moses safely ahead of Plato. With the background having thus been filled in in great detail, we in books 11–15 can turn to Greek philosophy, and in particular, in books 11–13, to Plato and Platonism. But before we turn to what Eusebius has to say about Plato, we should take note of Eusebius' strategy in structuring his discussion in this way.

Eusebius had set out to show that Christians just did what reason demanded when they, though Greeks in culture and thought, abandoned Hellenism for Jewish Scripture. Now we might have thought, given the views of Porphyry and other pagans at the time, that this involved showing that Christians had every reason to abandon Hellenism, including what Porphyry and similarly minded pagans regarded as definitive of Hellenism: namely, the true account—that is, Platonic philosophy. But Eusebius in his argument separates traditional Greek belief and Platonism. He denies that Platonism is just an articulation of the original true account, reflected by Homer, Hesiod, and traditional Greek belief. And he can argue that in this sense the Christians are quite right in abandoning traditional Greek belief and practice in favour of Jewish Scripture. This leaves it quite open what we are to think of Platonic philosophy, as if it were not, in the mind of his pagan opponents, a crucial—if not *the* crucial—part of the Greek heritage.

For Eusebius' view on Platonism we have to wait till book 11, when we have already rejected Hellenism, as it is understood by his pagan opponents, if we have followed Eusebius' argument so far. Book 11 starts by reminding us that we argued in book 10, on the basis of what pagans themselves, like Numenius, say, that the Greeks had nothing to contribute to wisdom themselves except

their enormous argumentative skill and their elegant language, and that they said what they said, borrowing from others, not least from the Jews. It now remains to be shown, Eusebius continues (10. 1. 3), how Greek philosophy, if not on every point, then at least on many points, agrees with the teachings of the Jews, which are chronologically earlier. And this doctrinal comparison is best made, Eusebius says, if we take Plato's philosophy as the standard. For Plato is thought to be superior to all other Greek philosophers (11. 1. 3). Here we will have to note, Eusebius goes on (11. 1. 5), that though what Plato says for the most part is true, there are some points on which even Plato is not quite right, as will be indicated when the occasion arises. Tellingly enough, Eusebius immediately reassures us that he does not do this for polemical reasons (*diabolē*)—but because it is his task in this apology to show that barbarian philosophy—that is, Jewish wisdom—is superior to Greek philosophy. So it is not just Greek traditional belief, but also Greek philosophy and even Platonism, which is to be rejected, though the latter only on those few points on which it deviates from the truth as revealed by Scripture.

Now this still leaves Eusebius, one might think, with a serious problem. If Platonism is substantially correct, we might still want to know why we have to reject Hellenism and turn to Jewish Scripture. Eusebius' answer is already indicated by his second heading in *Preparation*, book 11: 'That the philosophy in accordance with Plato in its most important details follows the philosophy of the Hebrews.' So Platonism is substantially true, not because it encapsulates ancient Greek wisdom, but because it adopts Jewish wisdom, passing it off, though, as ancient Greek wisdom. This is precisely the reverse of Porphyry's complaint against Origen: Christian doctrine is substantially true, not because it draws on Jewish Scripture, but because it adopts Platonism, passing it off, though, as ancient Jewish wisdom arrived at by an interpretation of Jewish Scripture. So, Eusebius implies, it is Platonism itself which is ultimately dependent on Jewish Scripture. This is more an insinuation than an actual claim, since Eusebius, in making his claim, carefully chooses an ambiguous term like *epakolouthein*, which might signify no more than that Plato came after Moses chronologically, but strongly suggests that somehow Plato followed Moses in his views.

This is not a new thought. It is to be found in Clement, in

Origen, and elsewhere.[25] But Eusebius is more enterprising. And this shows the great attraction which Plato and Platonism have for him, an attraction which makes it impossible for him to adopt a polemical stance against Plato, Platonism, or even Platonist paganism. For when Eusebius in 11. 8. 1 turns to an explanation of how it comes about that Plato, in his doctrine of the intelligible realm, follows Moses and the prophets, rather than Greek mythology, Plato's having learnt about Jewish doctrine orally (perhaps, for instance, in Egypt) is just one of three possibilities he considers. He is also willing to consider the possibility that Plato found out the truth for himself, or even the possibility that Plato was somehow divinely inspired. In any case, there is a crucial aspect of Hellenicity which Eusebius does not want to reject: namely, Platonic philosophy. Eusebius, like his predecessors, could have taken the position that even this was borrowed from the Jewish tradition. But he refuses to do so unequivocally. Again, his identification with a purified Greek culture seems to come through.

With this we can return to Eusebius' claim at the beginning of the *Preparation* that in writing this and the *Demonstration* he is following an approach of his own to apologetics, which justifies his adding further to the already large apologetic literature. Under the influence of Porphyry, Eusebius comes to see the main question which Christians face as the question of why they should abandon Hellenism in favour of Jewish Scripture, and why, having espoused Jewish Scripture, they do not follow Jewish Law. This is a real question which Christians would have to face and would need to have a reasoned answer to, even if it were not raised by their opponents. Hence, in answering this question, polemics are quite inappropriate; and this all the more so if, as Eusebius sees it, Christians in a way are apostates from Hellenism, whose doctrine is quite close to Platonism, which perhaps is divinely inspired. To answer this question, it will also not do to write a treatise of the first of the three categories under which Eusebius subsumes earlier apologetic writings. It is not a matter of refuting one's opponents, of showing that their accusations are ill-founded, or

[25] See Justin, *First Apology*, 44–5; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 5. 89, 5. 140, etc. The whole of 5. 89–140 is a correlation of Greek with biblical ideas. While Origen presupposes the greater antiquity of Moses, he tends to argue, in *Against Celsus*, books 6–7, that the antiquity of opinions is less important than their truth.

even fall upon themselves. For Porphyry's basic questions are not ill-founded; they are perfectly appropriate. Nor is Platonism an appropriate object of refutation, even if not all of Plato's views are beyond criticism. Nor can Plato, or Numenius, or Plotinus, or Porphyry be accused of idolatry, superstition, or other abominable beliefs and practices. Nor is the question posed by Porphyry to be answered just by scriptural exegesis, to mention the last of the three categories under which Eusebius categorizes earlier apologies. The answer to Porphyry's question requires something else, something new.

The *Preparation* and the *Demonstration* jointly address what is perhaps the fundamental question concerning the identity of Christians to which a Christian ideally should have an answer. And this answer does not lie in an appeal to faith or authority, or in a polemical response. It had been a standard objection against Christians, reflected for instance by Marcus Aurelius,[26] that Christians are supposed to believe blindly what they are told. In the *Preparation* Eusebius is concerned to respond to this objection right from the outset (cf. 1. 1. 11). He seems to think that the answer to Porphyry's question is a matter of proof. If one knows all the historical evidence, if one knows how to evaluate it according to the highest standards of Greek historical and philological scholarship, if one has mastered Greek philosophy, then one can show that Scripture is philosophically superior to, but at least as good as, Plato, and in any case more ancient, and one can show that the prophecies of Scripture have been fulfilled in Jesus. A rational person of sufficient learning and philosophical insight, a truly critical mind, precisely somebody who has reached the heights of Greek education, should be able to see that the reasonable thing to do is to espouse Christianity.

Formally, in both the *Preparation* and the *Demonstration*, Eusebius is addressing Theodotus, bishop of Laodicea in Syria (*Ecclesiastical History*, 7. 32. 23 ff.). He is responding to both pagan and Jewish queries. But Jews and pagans do not seem to be the audience he mainly has in mind. Eusebius himself says (*Preparation*, 1. 1. 12) that the *Preparation* will be appropriate for recent converts from paganism, whereas the *Demonstration* will be fitting for Christians already confirmed in their faith, to

[26] See *Meditations*, 11. 3, for a conventional sneer at Christian irrationality; Grant, 'Five Apologists', on Marcus' significance in Christian history.

provide them with a better, more perfect understanding of the divine mysteries. But the Christian audience which Eusebius is addressing must be a rather elevated one. It must be Christians who cherish their Greek culture. And it must be an audience which is inclined to believe in the fundamental correctness of Platonism, but is also ready to be persuaded that this Platonism is already to be found in the Bible long before Plato. Obviously not all Christians shared Eusebius' view that the Bible, properly interpreted, yields a form of Platonism. Just as Origen had been criticized by pagans like Porphyry for reading Platonist theology with Scripture, so he had also been criticized, and was going to be criticized by Christians like Marcellus of Ancyra (cf. Eusebius, *Against Marcellus*, 1. 4. 24) or Methodius for importing alien pagan doctrines into Christianity. So Eusebius' apology is an apology from a rather specific and controversial Christian point of view. And this may account for the fact that the second part of the *Demonstration*, apart from fragments, has not come down to us.

11

The Constantinian Circle and the *Oration to the Saints*

MARK EDWARDS

The editors have chosen to end this volume with the *Oration to the Saints* ascribed to Constantine, because the reign of that emperor (306–37 CE) produced a decisive change in the situation of the Christian apologist and the character of his audience, whether real or nominal. It could no longer be pretended that the first aim of the writer was to defend the legal status or the morals of Christians; it was now his expressed intention to convert the pagan world, though it could hardly be supposed that this conversion depended chiefly on his literary success. Constantine declared himself a Christian in 312, denouncing the persecutors and expressing a private wish that Christianity would become the common faith of all his subjects.[1] His successors maintained his policy with more zeal, and by 400 it was pagans who were obliged to be discreet in the exercise of their religion.[2] If we can speak of apologetic writings after Constantine, we can only mean that such writings offer an intellectual defence of Christianity, not that they were written to obtain relief from jeopardy or distress.

With the exception of Lactantius, who was Constantine's contemporary, apologists had hitherto said little of themselves, and where a personal motive is recorded, as with Arnobius, the propensity to self-effacement seems to be all the greater.[3] In the *Oration*, however, it is obvious from the outset that the orator is

[1] On the laws, see e.g. A. H. M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe*, 136–7; Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church*, i. 41–214. Constantine, in making his religious legislation an act of piety, is responding to such persecuting edicts as that of Maximinus Daia, in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 9. 9. 13–14.

[2] On subsequent legislation, see Salzman, 'Evidence for the Conversion of the Roman Empire'.

[3] See Ch. 9 above.

Constantine, that his audience is the clergy, and that his cardinal aim is thus to define his own relation to the Church. Even if the *Oration* were a forgery, and these properties were therefore purely formal, its uniqueness would commend it to the literary historian, and its contents would shed light on the new conditions under which Christians were addressing both the world and one another in the fourth century. In this essay, however, I shall argue that, of all the apologetic texts discussed in the present volume, this is the one whose audience, date, and venue can be identified with confidence, and that its author is the only one whose life we are not obliged to reconstruct primarily from his written works.

Such conclusions are, of course, of interest to the biographer of Constantine, but not to him alone. If Constantine is the author of the speech, its motives and effects can be divined with greater accuracy than those of a fictitious or pseudonymous composition. We can at least hope to identify the circumstances that prompted its delivery, the personal designs that were advanced by the author's homage to the religion of his audience, and the works by other hands which might be expected to betray his influence. Moreover, we should be able to guess what literary genres would have served the author as models. If he were Eusebius (for example), he could have turned to the Socratic, or perhaps the Philostratean, *apologia*;[4] but as he was Constantine, we find instead that there are predictable affinities with the Latin panegyrics which he commissioned to mark and vindicate decisive moments in his rise to power.

The *Oration to the Saints* is an appendix to Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*,[5] and, if it was composed for a particular occasion, it would have lasted about two hours. The orator and audience are identified in the rubric: 'Constantine Augustus to the Assembly of the Saints'.[6] It is mentioned only once before, in the *Life of Constantine* (4. 32):

[4] See in this volume Swain, pp. 189–92, and Frede, pp. 231–5.

[5] The text used here is that of Heikel.

[6] The omission of the title *Nikētēs* (Victor) seems to me, as to other scholars, a sure indication that it was composed before the defeat of Licinius, after which Constantine regularly assumed this title except when writing to foreign potentates (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 4. 32). While Ehrhardt, 'Maximus', observes at n. 22 that the title Victor is employed before 324, this hardly proves that it could be ignored in domestic policy after this date.

The King used to prepare his compositions in the Roman tongue, and translators who were commissioned for this task turned it into the Greek language. As an example of the translated speeches, I shall append to the present exercise the one which he himself entitled 'Of the Assembly of the Saints',[7] having dedicated the work to the church of God, so that no-one may suppose that my testimony about his words is a mere conceit.

For those who are unfamiliar with the speech, I begin with a summary of its contents. Then I shall attempt to determine whether it was composed in Greek or Latin; next, whether its intent was exoteric or esoteric—that is, written to convert the unbelieving, to pacify a dispute among believers, or to illustrate the piety of the author. I shall undertake to show that it was a Latin speech, conceived without any reference to internal controversies, and therefore could indeed be the work of Constantine, provided that he wrote it not long after his conversion, and delivered it in Rome. In support of this conclusion, I shall show that the insecurity of his tenure in the first years of his reign supplies the motive for his writing a speech which at a later time would have been made otiose by his success. Finally, I shall demonstrate that the theological arguments which Constantine borrowed from Lactantius in support of his royal ambitions were adopted after his conquest of the East by Greek apologists, who thus became not only his political beneficiaries, but his literary heirs.

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

The orator commences by declaring that it is now the anniversary of the Passion. After this, his speech falls into three divisions, each with its own apologetic subject. The first part puts the case for monotheism: the pagan gods, with their diverse births and characters, cannot maintain the harmony of the cosmos, and their immoralities prove that they are either living demons or dead mortals. The notion that the world came into being through some automatic process is absurd, since an almighty and benevolent creator would be needed to appease the eternal conflict of the

[7] The title is slightly different in Eusebius, as the following quotations show—perhaps an indication (if any is needed) of the freedom of the speech from editorial interference.

elements. Plato had an inkling of the truth, but no philosopher has fully understood how the world is governed by the Father through the offices of the second god, his Son.

Next he extols the majesty and voluntary abasement of this Son in his incarnation. A god in human form, replete with virtue and inalienable wisdom, Christ has opened up the path to heaven by his teaching. Having manifested his philanthropy by his willingness to suffer, he imitates his Father's magnanimity[8] by waiving his revenge for a certain interval, during which he enlightens every nation with the brilliance of his resurrected glory. His life and vindication were foretold by the Hebrew prophets, but the most persuasive arguments for pagans are a Sibylline acrostic which predicts the Day of Judgement, and the *Fourth Eclogue* of Virgil, which celebrates the birth of an unnamed infant as the prologue to a returning age of gold.

Finally the speaker declares his personal adherence to the Saviour. He apostrophizes Decius, Valerian, and Aurelian, the three persecuting emperors of the third century,[9] and cites himself as witness to the calamitous effects of the Great Persecution initiated by his predecessor Diocletian in 303.[10] He claims that those successors of Diocletian who have perished most conspicuously were those who had compounded their defiance of the imperial constitution with the oppression of the Church. He ends with the praise of Christ, whose wise and merciful dominion he will never cease to acknowledge and proclaim.

A LATIN SPEECH

The *Oration* was composed in Latin, according to the unambiguous statement of Eusebius: 'The King used to prepare his compositions in the Roman tongue.'[11] Eusebius, who always

[8] For *magnanimitas*, the Latin equivalent of *megalopsukhia*, see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4. 39.

[9] Decius' persecution occurred in 251 CE, was halted by Valerian in 254, but broke out again in 257/8. Aurelian reigned from 270 to 272, and is alleged to have intended a persecution.

[10] The first of Diocletian's edicts against the Christians was issued in February 303 CE, eighteen years after Diocletian's accession. It appears to have been enforced everywhere; what Constantine knew of the three later edicts remains uncertain.

[11] See *Life of Constantine*, 4. 32, as above. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 629–

flattered Constantine, would not invent a detail which would be bound to lower his hero in the eyes of many Greeks. Constantine no doubt acquired some Greek when he resided in the Asian province of Bithynia before 305;[12] but at court he would have spoken Latin, and Lactantius, who taught rhetoric in that province, never tried to write in any other tongue than his native one. Like Augustine, Constantine would not have felt the need for a fluent mastery of any other language at the age when these are acquired with most facility,[13] and, according to Eusebius, he addressed the Eastern bishops at the Council of Nicaea through an interpreter in 325 CE.[14] It may therefore be inferred that even at this date he was unwilling or unable to sustain a long oration in the Greek tongue.

None the less, many scholars have maintained that the *Oration to the Saints* was written in Greek.[15] The weakness in their position is that they tend to find their evidence in those passages which would have been most cogent and familiar to a Latin-speaking audience: namely, the appeals to the *Sibylline Oracles* and the *Fourth Eclogue* of Virgil. None of the Greeks who wrote on behalf of Christianity had cited Virgil; to cite him as a prophet was beyond the thought of any Latin author before the emperor's contemporary, Lactantius.[16] Sibylline declamations (that is, poems attributed to a female prophet of great longevity and authority[17]) are adduced by Greek apologists—indeed, for Athenagoras, they are almost the only poetry worth remembering—but these are of the theological kind that preach the unity and transcendental attributes of God.[18] Our author takes for granted that the Sibyl's role was to prophesy future happenings, and in this he agrees with

52 maintains that Constantine spoke in Greek. T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 74, shows that even Constantine's references to Plato required only a modest education.

[12] See Lactantius, *Deaths of the Persecutors*, 18. 6, with further information in T. D. Barnes, 'Imperial Campaigns', 184.

[13] See Bonner, *Augustine of Hippo*, 394–5.

[14] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3. 13; cf. 4. 8 for the letter to Sapor.

[15] Not only Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, but also those like Davies, 'Constantine's Editor', and Hanson, 'The *Oratio ad Sanctos*', who believe it to be a Greek forgery.

[16] See Ch. 9 above on Lactantius and Arnobius.

[17] On *Sibylline Oracles* and their origin, see Potter, *Prophets and Emperors*, 72–93.

[18] See Justin, *First Apology*, 20. 1 and 44. 12; Athenagoras, *Embassy*, 30. 1.

Virgil, with Lactantius, and with the sacred books consulted by the Roman Senate on critical occasions.[19] These facts once acknowledged, we may allow ourselves to hope that the sporadic inconsistencies which are said to entail Greek authorship of this speech can be adequately explained on the assumption of a Latin archetype.

As for the Sibylline verses, there is no doubt that they were first composed in Greek. They form the acrostic *Iesous Christos Theou Huios Soter Stauros* ('Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour Cross'); the first five words are a standard Christian motto, often represented by the Greek word *ΙΧΘΥΣ* ('fish'). The Latin version reproduced in Augustine's *City of God* achieves no more than an incomplete transliteration of these characters, and does not translate the lines which make up *Stauros*.[20] There is nothing to preclude a Greek quotation of the oracle in a Latin work, for Lactantius quotes a handful of these lines without preserving the acrostic;[21] it would, however, be a decisive proof that the author was not the Western emperor if he were found to have invented any part of the acrostic for himself. Suspicion falls on the seven lines which contain the last word, *Stauros*. The absence of these verses in Augustine's Latin rendering might be traced to many causes—casual omission, an excusable fatigue in the translator, or a feeling that the secret of the Cross was not germane to an apologetic treatise. On the other hand, the poem is complete without these verses, and the fact that they appear in a longer oracle, which now stands as the eighth book in the Sibylline collection, is no proof that they antedated Constantine.[22] Unlike *Christos*, *Theou Huios*, and *Sōter*, *Stauros* is not one of Jesus' titles, and cannot be included in the symbol of the fish.

The origin of the final stanza has, in fact, little bearing on the authorship of the speech, since even a Latin monoglot would be free to employ a Greek collaborator. It might be said that a Latin speech entails a Latin audience, who would not be able to follow a long Greek poem in recitation. But surely even Greeks would be incapable of deciphering the acrostic at one sitting, and these

[19] See Virgil, *Eclogue*, 4; on Maxentius and the Sibyllines, see below.

[20] *City of God*, 18. 23, producing *IESVCS CREISTOS TEV DNIOS SOTER*.

[21] See *Divine Institutes*, 7. 20. This work shows that it was permissible to quote a modicum of Greek in a Latin text.

[22] The lines now appear as *Sibylline Oracles*, 8. 217–50.

arguments tell us only that the present text is a published version, not the speaker's copy. After all, we know that the texts which Cicero, the greatest Latin orator, submitted to the admiration of the reading public were by no means literal transcripts of the words that he spoke in court.[23]

No setting for these verses could be more apt than the *Oration to the Saints*, ascribed to Constantine and delivered, if the opening paragraph means what it appears to say, on the day that commemorates the death of Christ: 'Light more splendid than day and the sun, the prelude to the resurrection and recomposition of bodies which have travailed in time past, the sanction of the promise and the road which leads to eternal life, the day of affliction is here' (*Oration*, 1). To convene a group of prelates for a secular oration on Good Friday was a victory over custom, already worthy of the ruler who later styled himself 'Victorious' (*Nikētēs*).[24] When we hear him speaking of that day as one of brilliant salvation, we must remember that the Church of the early centuries was inclined to see the Cross as more an interlude than an instrument in the victory of Christ. His passion was interpreted dogmatically as a ransom to the Devil, homiletically as a call to martyrdom, liturgically as the origin of purifying virtue in the sacraments, and symbolically as the extension of his arms to embrace the nations.[25] Nevertheless, a more prominent place in the history of salvation was often given to Christ's teaching, his temptations, or his rising from the dead. Justin owed his conversion to philosophy, Paul to an encounter with the resurrected Jesus; but Constantine would seem to have been the first Christian who could trace his faith directly to a vision of the Cross. According to the story told in Latin by Lactantius within a few years of the event, it was in 312, while preparing for a battle against his one remaining rival for the Western throne, that Constantine received a promise of victory 'in this sign';[26] he

[23] See esp. Dio Cassius, 40. 54, on the poor success of Cicero's speech defending Milo.

[24] I have not yet seen any force in another scholar's (unpublished) argument that the day is Easter Sunday. Constantine's language is of course unusual, like his faith in victory through the Cross; whatever the usual difficulties in convening a group of prelates on Good Friday, they would vanish at the behest of Constantine. On Nikētēs, see n. 6 above.

[25] See Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, 2. 13; Origen, *To the Martyrs*, 12; Ignatius, *Ephesians*, 18. 2; Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 25. 3.

[26] See n. 72 below.

adopted it at once as his *insignium*, and within a few hours was master of the capital. We do not know how long it took this tale to reach the East, for our earliest witness is Eusebius, in the *Life* that he published after the emperor's death.[27]

Everything but the language of the Sibylline oracle therefore points to Constantine, and to a Western audience. It goes without saying that Virgil, represented here as the mouthpiece of the Sibyl, would be less well known in the East than the West, where he was regarded as the poet laureate of imperial Rome, and even African apologists could call him *noster Maro*.[28] If his most famous eclogue is indebted, as some have argued, to a Hellenistic oracle in the Sibylline collection,[29] it would be almost inexplicable that a Greek should choose to comment, not on the oracle itself, but on the Latin imitation, which would be known to very few members of his audience. The translation of the verse is loose, but so is the speaker's commentary, most of which is equally applicable to the Latin classic and the Greek periphrasis. Only at the end does the annotation seem to rest on the same defective grasp of Latin that has impaired the Greek translation of the poem:

> Seeing thy gentle mother's smile, begin
> To know her, for she bore thee many months.
> They parents have not smiled on thee by day,
> Nor hast thou touched the bed or nuptial couch.

For how could his parents have smiled upon this one, who was their God, unqualified power, without a form . . . and who is unaware that the Holy Spirit has no experience of the bed? (*Oration*, 21)

The exegesis fits the Greek text well enough, but not the manuscript reading of the Latin:[30]

> incipe, parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem;
> matri longa decem tulerunt fastidia menses.
> incipe, parve puer; cui non risere parentes,
> nec deus hunc mensa, dea nec dignata cubile est.
>
> (*Eclogue 4*, 60–3)

[27] See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3. 18 (paschal controversy), 45–7 (Helena).
[28] See Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 1. 13. 12, and remarks in my essay on Lactantius and Arnobius in this volume, Ch. 9.
[29] See Tarn, 'Alexander Helios', citing *Sibylline Oracles*, 2. 350 ff.
[30] See Coleman, *Virgil*, 148–9.

It should be observed, however, that these verses in the Latin have been thought by many scholars to cry out for emendation, and even Quintilian, writing in the first century, reads the third line differently.[31] It is therefore not improbable that Constantine was working with a different text; and I submit that this can be reconstructed by the simplest of conjectures, a change in the punctuation of the manuscript:

> incipe, parve puer, cui non risere parentes,
> nec deus hunc mensa, dea nec dignata cubile est.

Elsewhere we meet with trivial discrepancies between the annotations and the Greek form of the eclogue, which disappear when the Latin is consulted.[32] Paradoxical though it seems, the strongest evidence that the speaker knew his text in Latin is a misquotation:

> *αὖθις ἄρ' αἰώνων ἱερὸς στίχος ὄρνυται ἡμῖν* (p. 182, 4 Heikel)
> (Again the sacred line from ages past is rising for me)

Here the recollection of the minor poem has been waylaid by one of Virgil's characteristic echoes of himself in the *Aeneid*:

> Magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo (*Eclogue*, 4. 6)
> (The great line/order of the ages is born from the beginning)
>
> . . . Maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo. (*Aeneid*, 7. 44)
> (A great line/order of things is born for me.)

Latin result: Magnus ab integro saeclum mihi nascitur ordo.
(The great line/order of ages is born from the beginning for us/me.)

We may, if we will, believe that both the *Aeneid* and the *Fourth Eclogue* had been translated into Greek, and that the Latin had been rendered so precisely as to entail the same confusion. But even then, a Latin-speaking orator was more likely to have fallen prey to the treacherous resemblance, as the very familiarity of the passages would tempt him to recite without a book. As we might expect, then, the comments on Virgil's poetry bespeak a Latin author, and no doubt a Latin audience. We have also seen that the language of the Sibylline acrostic tells us little, but the addition of

[31] Despite the extant text, Coleman, *Virgil*, 149, maintains that Quintilian's comment implies *qui non risere parenti*. In mine, *hunc* denotes the boy.

[32] See e.g. Kurfess, 'Der griechischer Übersetzer', 99–100.

the word *Stauros* rather vindicates than vitiates the claim of the Emperor Constantine to the speech whose superscription bears his name.

A LATIN THEOLOGY

The theology of the speech has been a subject of perennial dispute among historians, who believe that it has some relevance to the speech's purpose, date, and authorship.[33] I hope I have shown elsewhere that this is not the case, that the speaker takes no sides in any ecclesiastical quarrel, and that no theological statement in the speech should be regarded as too tendentious or extreme for any particular occasion.[34] Only one passage is of any interest for the history of apologetic, and only for three corollaries—that it indicates the provenance of the speaker, that it makes perfunctory use of pagan sources, and that, in the mouth of Constantine, it adumbrates the parallel that he wished to draw between himself and God:

> Plato describes as the First God the one who is above being, rightly so doing, and subordinated this one to a second; and distinguished two beings numerically, the perfection of both being one, but the being of the second receiving its subsistence from the first. For he (*sc*. the first) is the artisan and governor, being clearly above the universe, while the other, in obedience to his mandates, brings back to him the cause of the constitution of the universe. Thus, according to the accurate account, there would be one God who takes care of all things, having by his Word (*logos*) put all in order; but the Word himself is God and the child of God. (*Oration*, 9, p. 163, 18–31 Heikel)

It was the custom of Eastern Christians in this period to affirm a triad (*trias*) of 'hypostases', namely, Father, Son, and Spirit. Some described all three as 'God', and some believed, like Arius, that the Father alone is truly God, while the other two have similar attributes by derivation.[35] The conflict between these views persisted even after the Council of Nicaea in 325, when,

[33] See most recently Davies, 'Constantine's Editor'.
[34] See M. J. Edwards, 'Arian Controversy'.
[35] I rely here chiefly on Arius' letters to Eusebius of Nicomedia (Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1. 5) and Alexander of Alexandria (Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1. 15).

under the auspices of Constantine as the Eastern sovereign, Arius and his doctrines were condemned.[36] The apologists of the second century tended to ignore the Holy Spirit, and taught that Christ was the emanation and expression of the Father, as a word is the expression of one's thought.[37] By the time of Constantine, however, such beliefs were out of fashion, and the term *logos*, if applied to Christ at all, denoted his relation, not to the Father, but to the world.[38] In the West, by contrast, there was little change in doctrine between Tertullian and Lactantius. The latter still ignores the Holy Spirit, and treats the Son as the instrument of the Father's mediation: 'God himself, the artisan and founder of all, before he set to work on this brilliant work, the world, brought forth a holy and incorruptible spirit, which he called his Son' (*Divine Institutes*, 4. 6. 1).

The conventions of apologetic writing are observed in the *Oration* by its allusions to philosophy, which, unusually for an author of this period, are cursory, vague, and wholly second hand. A Greek would have been aware that neither Plato nor his followers had used the term *logos* to designate the hegemonic principle in nature; a professional Latin writer would at least have named a dialogue or attempted a quotation.[39] In the light of modern scholarship,[40] the most probable explanation of our author's infelicity is that, being a busy amateur, he had read the Latin commentary on the *Timaeus* by Chalcidius, but mistook it for its source.

Constantine, however, made no mistake in dwelling on the undivided sovereignty of the Father. In later times the implied subordination of the Son could have smelt of heresy (though not strongly);[41] but in the time of Constantine it was orthodox enough, and in any case, granting him to have been the author,

[36] On Constantine's influence, see Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History*, 1. 8.

[37] See Athenagoras, *Embassy*, 10; Tatian, *Oration to the Greeks*, 5 and 18; Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 61.

[38] As presumably in Arius' confession to Constantine in 327, where the term *logos* is used. For the first statement that Christ is the *endiathetos logos* of the world, see Hippolytus, *Refutation*, 10. 33. 1—a Western document, but written in Greek *c*.230. Eusebius, *Against Marcellus*, 1. 17. 7, condemns the term *endiathetos*, which Marcellus used to mean 'indwelling in God'.

[39] Compare Arnobius, *Against the Nations*, 2, on the 'new' Platonists.

[40] See T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 74, on the date of Chalcidius, who probably made use of the second-century Platonist Numenius.

[41] See M. J. Edwards, 'Arian Controversy'.

there is more than theological meaning in it. From 313 to 324, he shared the Roman government reluctantly with his Eastern colleague Licinius, and I shall argue that the unity of kingship is a leading theme of the speech because the author was aspiring to sole possession of the empire. This theory accounts for another peculiarity: that, unlike the rhetoricians of the Latin Church, he evinces no hostility to the capital, but turns his whole discourse into an encomium on the Christian Church in Rome.

THE ROMAN VENUE

All that we can learn of the author's secular and Christian education, all that we can guess about the intended destination of his words, conspires to vindicate Eusebius. The appeal to Virgil presupposes Latin; the theological statements follow Western orthodoxy. Since Eusebius does not seem to have tampered with the theology of the sermon,[42] we need not doubt his statement that it was written first in Latin, then translated into Greek by an anonymous secretary of the emperor Constantine.

In reading other apologetic works, we can only guess at the distinction between the implied and intended audience, or between the intended audience and the eventual readership. A treatise dedicated to a persecuting magistrate will be written as though the whole of the pagan world could overhear it; yet the silence of posterity will suggest that it found no reader outside the Church. In the present case, we need not doubt that Constantine could reach whatever audience he wished, and that his own name would have lent his work more dignity than that of any pretended addressee. The audience which the text implies is therefore the audience and occasion of its original performance; among its many claims on our attention, this apology may have been the first to be openly delivered as a speech.

I have said above that a Latin speech implies a Latin audience, and if Constantine is the author, it is obvious that the aftermath of his entry into Rome would have provided the best occasion for such a eulogy of himself and his religion. None the less, it is possible to imagine other settings, since the present version is

[42] See ibid. and n. 38 above.

(after all) in Greek. As it has been usual to propose an Eastern city as the theatre for this speech, we cannot spare ourselves a short itinerary before joining a recent commentator in his journey back to the imperial city.

In the *Life of Constantine* three cities are distinguished as the objects of his favour: Nicomedia, the capital and his residence for a period of his youth; Jerusalem, where he built a church in memory of his mother's excavations; and Antioch, which Eusebius styles the metropolis of Eastern Christendom.[43] Both Nicomedia and Jerusalem have been set aside by the tacit unanimity of scholarship, no doubt because the first had been notoriously hostile to Christians,[44] and the second was too remote to have taken part in any trial of strength between the rival despots. Neither, then, would have had the opportunity for that reckless demonstration of support described in chapter 22:

> Even the great city is conscious of it, and gives praise with reverence; and the people of the most dear city approve, even if they were deceived by unsafe hopes into choosing a protector unworthy of it, who was suddenly overtaken in a manner befitting his atrocities . . . However, at some time a war of surpassing savagery, a war without a treaty, was foretold to you by tyrants, O godly piety, and to all your most holy churches . . . But you, coming forward, gave yourself up, relying on your faith in God. (*Oration*, 22)

It is not clear whether the great and the dearest city are a single place or two. The identity of the first should be established by the recurrence of the epithet in chapter 25:

> For the whole army of the aforesaid king, subject to the authority of some good-for-nothing who had seized the Roman Empire by force, once the great city had been delivered by God's providence, was exterminated by many wars of all kinds. (Ibid. 25)

To take the human cipher first, there can hardly be two claimants for this role of good-for-nothing. The successor of Diocletian in the East had been Galerius, who carried on the persecution of

[43] Jerusalem in *Life of Constantine*, 3. 25; Nicomedia at 3. 50. 1; Antioch at 3. 59–60.

[44] The fierce persecution of Hierocles is recorded by Lactantius in *Deaths of the Persecutors*, 16. 4 and *Divine Institutes*, 5. 2. The arguments advanced here would also apply against Byzantium and Antioch, in favour of which see Piganiol, 'Dates Constantiniennes', and Hanson, 'The *Oratio ad Sanctos*'.

Christians, but repealed it on his deathbed in 311. His realm was then disputed by Licinius and Maximinus Daia, the first of whom was a tolerant monotheist, while the latter was a fanatical persecutor of the Church. Both (unlike Galerius) could be regarded as usurpers,[45] but only Maximinus lost his troops through the attrition of continuous warfare rather than by a sudden revolution. Since his army is said to have been totally destroyed, we may suppose that he is dead. The great city which is said to have been freed from him is evidently the prize of some great conflict, where his title was uncertain. One city fits all these premisses: in 313 Licinius, having vanquished Maximinus in the field, expelled him from his desperate asylum in Nicomedia, provoking an immediate, prudent suicide.[46] Logic and analogy support us here; for the rest of this long chapter has been devoted to the marvels which foretold the end of Diocletian's pagan tyranny in Nicomedia, and the capital of Bithynia is singled out for greatness by Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine*.[47]

Thus chapter 25 declares that the great imperial city of Nicomedia has now been liberated from the tyrant Maximinus. It was reasonable for Constantine to celebrate this victory, for shortly before he had made an alliance with Licinius at Milan, and the two had jointly produced an 'edict' which announced the toleration of Christianity. But in that case, the 'great city', which is occupied by Licinius, cannot be the 'most dear city', which his Western colleague purports to be addressing in this speech. If the speech was delivered soon after 313, while Constantine was still a friend of Licinius, there was only one metropolis that had such a claim upon him. Not only was Rome the matriarch of Latin-speaking cities, she was also the scene of Constantine's first victory as a champion of Christ. It was on the eve of battle at the Milvian Bridge that the conqueror saw his vision; Maxentius, his opponent, had consulted the Sibylline books, to be misled by their

[45] Licinius was initially appointed ruler (Augustus) of the West, but failed to unseat either Constantine or Maxentius. Maximinus was the appointed successor to Galerius in the East, but declared himself emperor before his death in order to pre-empt Licinius.

[46] See *Deaths of the Persecutors*, 47–9.

[47] *Life of Constantine*, 3. 50. 1, though admittedly only for its metropolitan status in Bithynia and the splendour of its church. The arguments advanced here against Antioch would also apply to Byzantium and Nicomedia, neither of which came within Constantine's dominion before 324, or left any record of a popular demonstration in his favour.

characteristic ambiguity.[48] No time could have been so propitious to the invention of a new stanza for the oracle than the aftermath of Constantine's occupation of the city, which, according to Eusebius,[49] he cemented by a pompous exhibition of the Cross.

It was difficult at first to portray Maxentius as a violent persecutor, for his record extended only to the banishment of two contentious aspirants to the papacy.[50] Pious defamation was supported by the discovery or invention of correspondence between Maxentius and the prince of Satan's legions, Maximinus,[51] whose exemplary destruction, if we are right to believe Eusebius, is recorded in the twenty-second chapter of the *Oration*: '. . . who was suddenly overtaken in a fitting manner worthy of his atrocities, which it is not right to recall, least of all for me as I speak with you and strive with all solicitude to address you with holy and reverent speech. . . . What profit was there for you in this atrocity, O monster of impiety?' (*Oration*, 22). Thus the reverent Constantine contrasts himself with one who, having wasted his imperial patrimony, had now received his death-blow from Licinius. He represents Maximinus as the temporary guardian of Rome, because he hopes to persuade those citizens still loyal to the memory of Maxentius that his policy and power had been dependent on this Herod of the East. Dying in mental agony, and imploring absolution from the avenging Saviour, Maximinus left a brand of infamy on all his former allies,[52] so that, even in this distant province, the victor can present his rival's death as a concomitant of the same divine event. The Roman Church would now at least be eager, if barely able, to remember its spontaneous recognition of the invader at the time of his approach: 'There were some in Rome who delighted in the magnitude of these public evils, and field was prepared for battle. But you, coming forward, gave yourself up, relying on

[48] Endorsing the argument of Drake, 'Suggestions of Date'. Lactantius, *Deaths of the Persecutors*, 44. 8, states that Maxentius was told that battle would overthrow the enemy of Rome. For our purpose, it suffices that this was believed, whether true or false.

[49] See *Life of Constantine*, 1. 40. 2, and cf. 1. 31. 2 and 1. 41. 1.

[50] See T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 38 and nn. 105–6.

[51] See Drake, 'Suggestions of Date', 344, citing Lactantius, *Deaths of the Persecutors*, 43.

[52] See Lactantius, *Deaths of the Persecutors*, 49; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 9. 10. The chapter headings to the *Oration* indicate that Maxentius is the tyrant overthrown in ch. 22.

your faith in God' (ibid.). Writing many years later, Eusebius can revise the past more thoroughly than the orator, declaring that all the citizens of Rome came forward with congratulations:

> The whole senate as one, along with those who were eminent and distinguished otherwise, received him with blessings and insatiable joy, as though released from prison; they were joined by the whole Roman populace, their eyes and very souls rejoicing, men together with women and their household staff in thousands, crying with unstinting acclamations that he was their redeemer and benefactor. (*Life of Constantine*, 1. 39)

An encomium pronounced at Rome in 321 acclaims the bloodless victory of Constantine, and says that all the other Italian towns received news of it with corporate displays of jubilation. Constantine is portrayed as a true Augustus, who adorns his faded capital, restores her civic magistrates, and binds the monster Furor, while fulfilling Virgil's precept to abase the proud and spare his beaten enemies. His special love for Rome, which had enhanced his indignation towards Maxentius, is said to have been augmented by the painful march that brought him to her gates.[53] In 313 spontaneous parades in Rome and Italy are recalled by a Gallic orator, and even when a panegyrist renders thanks for benefits conferred on another city in 312, he can only say that Flavia Aeduorum is almost comparable to Rome.[54]

Constantinian propaganda therefore made it known that he did everything for love of the metropolis. The fact that Rome is named without periphrasis in the twenty-second chapter is no objection to its being equated with the 'dearest city';[55] the motive for the sobriquet was flattery, not concealment, and such blandishments can lose their force only by repetition. Latin at least will tolerate such elegant variation: the panegyrist of 313 calls Rome the 'sacred city' in his exordium before he interjects its proper name.[56]

[53] See *Panegyrici Latini*, 4 (10). 11. 2; cf. 5 (8). 2–3.
[54] Ibid. 5 (8). 1. 1, 2. 1, etc.
[55] As Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 778 n. 16, contends.
[56] See *Panegyrici Latini*, 10 (2). 1. 1 and 2. 1.

THE POLITICAL OCCASION

We may conclude that, while it was the capture of Rome that made this oration possible, and Maxentius' death that made it necessary, it was only with the fall of Maximinus that the emperor found his voice as the protector, judge, and spokesman of the Church. Up till then, though Constantine's career had made his piety more conspicuous than his honour, it had never been a Christian piety. He had let himself be credited with a vision of Apollo, and had heard with equanimity that temples grew like flowers beneath his tread.[57] Not only was it necessary, therefore, to defend his usurpation to the pagans; he had also to show the Christians that he knew what god had given him the day. He addressed the larger world through his panegyrists, who informed it that Maxentius was a tyrant, that the city itself had clamoured to be free of him, and that the worst of his atrocities was to draw his people up with such poor generalship that Constantine was forced to drive them all into the Tiber.[58] These eulogists discreetly endear their subject to all nations by ascribing his success to an anonymous divinity, whom some would take for Jupiter and Christians for the bearer of the Cross.[59]

Like Arnobius' treatise, this *Oration* is a public deposition by a convert.[60] He demonstrates the vigour of his present faith by turning upon the errors of his past: 'And would to God that I had been given this revelation a long time ago, if indeed that man is blessed who is established from his youth in the knowledge of God' (*Oration*, 11). Encomiasts had adorned the pagan Constantine with the customary virtues of a general, finding room for clemency (or at least the intention of it) in the bloodiest of his triumphs.[61] Yet, as the pagan deities disappear from the panegyrics, so does clemency. The reason is apparent from this speech, which shows that even toleration after victory was felt to require excuse:

[57] See ibid. 6 (7). 21. 4 and 22. 6, delivered in 308. Repudiation of Apollo might suffice to explain the repudiation of Daphne at *Oration*, 18, where Hanson, 'The *Oratio ad Sanctos*', sees an allusion to a shrine near Antioch.

[58] See *Panegyrici Latini*, 12 (9). 16 and 4 (10).

[59] Contrast the reticence of ibid. 4 (10), delivered in 321, with the allusion to *tuum numen* ('thy Godhead') at 6 (7). 23. 3, delivered in 308.

[60] See Ch. 9 above.

[61] See *Panegyrici Latini*, 6 (7). 5. 3 and 10. 4 for his clemency.

Away with you, impious ones (for this is permitted you on account of your incorrigible error) to the sacrifices and immolations of your temples, your feasting and carousing, professing to offer worship in the exercise of pleasure and dissipation, and feigning sacrifice while you are in thrall to your own pleasures. (Ibid.)

Eusebius states that Constantine abolished sacrifice, but he is not borne out by the Theodosian Code or by his own accounts of chance discoveries which moved the indignant Constantine to move against the most immoral cults.[62] None the less, the tolerance of Constantine would seem to have waned as his power increased, together with his piety, both of which are more openly displayed in the decrees that he enacted after the conquest of the East in 324. This paragraph bespeaks an early stage in the development of Constantine's religious policy: perhaps a date of 314, the year of his first Church Council, would explain a tone so redolent of victory and a temper so consistent with the 'Edict of Milan'.[63]

THE CONSTANTINIAN CIRCLE

The *Oration to the Saints* is thus a product of political circumstances which were never to be repeated; but this is not to say that it has no model as a Christian manifesto. The eloquence of the persecuted faith had reached its apogee in Lactantius, who resided in Bithynia during Constantine's seclusion there, but fled before the tide of persecution. He was sure enough of Constantine to celebrate his alliance with Licinius in his treatise *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, and to insert a dedication in the

[62] See Salzman, 'Evidence for the Conversion of the Roman Empire'. In support of the case for Constantine's abolition of sacrifice, see Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, 2. 15; Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 2. 45; against it are the subsequent decree of Constantius (341), the absence of the Constantinian document in the Code, and Libanius' statement that Constantine made not a single change in the form of worship (*Oration*, 30. 6). It is possible that a Christian emperor, fearful of conspiracy, would restrict pagan assemblies without sharing the desire of his successors to make a Christian empire.

[63] Notwithstanding T. D. Barnes, *New Empire*, 65, there seems to be no impossibility in supposing a visit to Rome during Eastertide of this year. On the Synod of Arles, see ibid., 58–9. The so-called Edict of Milan (Lactantius, *Deaths of the Persecutors*, 48), whatever its destination and status, is the first document attesting liberty of Christian worship throughout the empire.

book of his masterpiece, the *Institutes*.[64] Both these works instructed the imperial neophyte in the arts of rhetoric; the more distant predecessors whom he names as persecutors are the ones whose deaths Lactantius also treats as a manifestation of God's wrath:[65]

I ask you now Decius . . . you hater of the Church, you who exacted retribution from those who lived in holiness, how do you fare after life? . . . Falling on the Scythian plains with all your force, you made the famous name and power of Rome contemptible to the Getae. But as for you Valerian . . . taken prisoner and led in chains with your very purple and all your royal attire, and finally, having been flayed and hung on the orders of the Persian king Sapor, you presented an eternal spectacle of your own misfortune. And you Aurelian, fire of all iniquities, how conspicuously, cut down in the midst of your mad career through Thrace, you filled the furrows of the road with your impious blood. (*Oration*, 24)

Lactantius' *Institutes* are a compendium of arguments which are rarely unprecedented, yet had not been used together or with such elaboration. Heikel's annotations show how much the great commander has in common with his satellite.[66] Both observe that beings who suffer mortal pangs can neither be immortals nor produce them; both calculate that if the gods could reproduce, they would by now have overrun the universe; both maintain that gods are either deified men or demons, and extend ironic credence to the poets' tales of folly in the latter. Both, as we have seen, adopt the Sibyl as a pedagogue and Virgil as a prophet; both proceed from the virgin birth to the doctrine of a double generation. The similarities cannot be accounted for by chasing every point to a separate origin; the two men share a faith, a sense of history, and a reservoir of proof. We should not conclude, however, that the eloquence of Constantine is in every case an echo of his protégé's. We have seen that he turns the Sibylline acrostic to his own purposes; and he differs from Lactantius in equating its composer with the Sibyl who inspired the song of

[64] See Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 5. 1.
[65] Cf. Lactantius, *Deaths of the Persecutors*, 4–6.
[66] Thus *Oration*, 156, 20 f. may be compared with *Divine Institutes*, 1. 13–1. 18; *Oration*, 168, 7 ff., with *Divine Institutes*, 1. 16. 5 and 4. 7. 1 (generation of gods); *Oration*, 165, 7 f., with *Divine Institutes*, 1. 11. 24 (poets and theology). It may be worth observing that the locution 'Mother of God' at *Oration*, 11, is alleged as a Latinism by Wright, 'Constantine and the Mother of God'. On the other hand, Ison, '*Pais theou*', sees the title 'child of God' as a concession to pagan usage.

Virgil.[67] Lactantius is more accurate, but Constantine the more astute; the scholar wrote to edify the nations, while the politician spoke to flatter Rome.

In flattering Rome, he hoped, as we have seen, to confirm himself, and perhaps this can be seen in his cosmology. No one, East or West, had added such persuasive colours as Lactantius to the platitudes that nature requires a demiurge, that the conflict of the elements admits no peaceful outcome, and that all would turn to chaos were it not for the arm of providence and the wisdom of an omnipresent mind.[68] Those Greeks who held that God controlled the universe through daemons drew analogies with the government of Persia; Celsus, as a Roman, brought the likeness home to the Antonines;[69] Christian monotheism would entail a different Emperor, as it supposed a different God. Even if the modern application escaped Lactantius, it would hardly have been obscure to Constantine:

> There is one set over all existent things, and everything is subjected to his sole rulership . . . If there were not one but many authorities over these innumerable things . . . what pity would there be, what providential oversight of God with regard to humanity. Unless indeed the one who was more humanely disposed to the one who had no relation to him prevailed by violence. (*Oration*, 3)

The hypothesis that the *Oration* was composed around 314 explains why Constantine says nothing of Galerius, whom Eusebius and Lactantius both agree to have been the cause of Diocletian's persecution in 303.[70] His silence may be intended to flatter Licinius, who wished to be perceived as the legal ruler of the East. Since he was not merely the successor but the creature of Galerius, who had made him the Western emperor, Licinius would have resented any allusions to the crimes of his precursor, most of all by the colleague forced upon him from the West. Lactantius' secret history of the persecution might have been encouraged in the Latin-speaking provinces, but Constantine had to reckon on translation into Greek.

[67] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 7. 24, contrasts the Cumaean and Erythraean Sibyls.
[68] See esp. *Divine Institutes*, 1. 3.
[69] See Ps.-Aristotle, *On the World*; Origen, *Against Celsus*, 8. 35.
[70] The position ably defended by T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 15–27.

The two men differ also in their manner of reciting history. Lactantius, where his narrative is not confirmed by others, is accredited by his own vivacity. No biographer fails to tell of Constantine's nocturnal flight from the intrigues of Galerius, Maximian's vain attempt to strip the purple from Maxentius, or the victory of Licinius over forces twice as numerous as his own.[71] Many prefer his story of the vision at the Milvian Bridge to the emperor's own account, professed on oath to Eusebius.[72] The historian certainly has more to learn from him than from Constantine's *Oration*, even when it purports to be giving personal testimony:

> What good did it do this man [Diocletian] to have waged war against our God? I suppose that of passing the rest of his life in fear of the thunderbolt, Nicomedia tells it, and the witnesses are not silent, of whom I happen to be one. . . . His palace and house were destroyed by the visitation and the dispensation of fire from heaven. And the outcome of these things was indeed foretold by people of intelligence . . . and openly they spoke with freedom to one another: 'What is this madness? . . . For the divine is justly indignant with the wicked'. (*Oration*, 25)

Any discourse attributed to a multitude is fantasy. Constantine has availed himself of the ancient writer's privilege of casting his own appraisal of events into direct speech. Here the anonymity of the speakers makes them capable of anachronistic clarity; equally false to history is Constantine's remark that Diocletian lost his house to 'fire from heaven'. This is not, as some modern readers hold, an attempt to put the blame on lightning for the fire which Diocletian and Galerius had imputed to the disaffected Christians;[73] we see a forerunner of this conflagration in an equally anomalous allusion to the fall of Babylon: 'And Daniel, after the dissolution of the Assyrian state, when it was destroyed by the launching of thunderbolts, crossed over to Cambyses, the King of the Persians, by the providence of God' (ibid. 17).

Constantine's strange history of the Mesopotamian kingdoms is derived from the Book of Judith, from ecclesiastical chronicles, and from biblical typology.[74] The thunderbolts, however, are not

[71] Lactantius, *Deaths of the Persecutors*, 24, 28, and 47.

[72] For comparison of Lactantius, *Deaths of the Persecutors*, 44. 4, and Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 1. 27–32, see Alföldy, *Conversion of Constantine*, 17–24.

[73] As T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 24, may wish to imply.

[74] e.g. the description of Cambyses as a second Nebuchadnezzar in Eusebius' *Chronicle*; Hippolytus' remarks on the outstretched arms of Daniel (*On Daniel*, 3. 24).

apocryphal, but borrowed from a different part of Scripture, being the remnants of the artillery that put an end to Sodom and Gomorrah.[75] For Constantine, the turning-points of history are not discrete occurrences, but one divine catastrophe repeated many times. While Lactantius cultivates the Roman taste for unique, vivid anecdote, Constantine is the harbinger of a paradigmatic method which was to throw up new examples in the course of a generation. In his letter to Serapion, the Alexandrian Patriarch Athanasius (298–373) likens the death of the heretic Arius to that of Judas Iscariot,[76] while in the *Life of Constantine* Eusebius has little more to tell of his hero's wars than that Maxentius fell like Pharaoh, and that the same unavailing mercy was extended to Licinius that David showed to Saul.[77]

To make one man the inventor of a genre would be rash; but it would not be absurd to think that the exceptional career of Constantine supplied new themes, new modes of speech, and new incentives to historical and apologetic writing. His reasoning in the *Oration*, that the universe could not come into being by chance collisions, and that the elements need a single mind to rule them, may seem trite enough to us; but the earliest of the other Greek apologies which use it *in extenso* are Athanasius' *Against the Nations* and Eusebius' *Tricennial Oration*, both published in the reign of Constantine.[78] As we have seen, the arguments on behalf of a cosmic monarchy may have been advanced by Constantine as a tacit commendation of his own desire to assume the sole hegemony of the empire. Once he had achieved this, his encomiasts could say openly that he exercised the delegated sovereignty of God:

> My present speech wishes to make known the facts and causes of your godly works, praying to expound your mind and be a mouthpiece of your godly soul, and teaching everything that is right and proper for the instruction of everyone who wishes to have an account of the God who is our Saviour. (*Tricennial Oration*, 11)

As its name implies, the *Tricennial Oration* was delivered in 336, one year before the emperor's death, and thus cannot be

[75] Gen. 19: 24; cf. 2 Kgs. 1: 10; Luke 9: 54.

[76] Athanasius, *Letter*, 54 to Serapion, a tale that grew in the telling, as did that of Judas' death between Matt. 27: 5 and Acts 1: 18.

[77] See *Life of Constantine*, 1. 38 (Maxentius and Pharaoh); 2. 5 (Licinius consults magicians like Saul).

[78] See Athanasius, *Against the Nations*, 36–8; Eusebius, *Tricennial Oration*, 6; Bolhuis, 'Die Rede Konstantins'.

earlier than the *Oration to the Saints*. Any agreements, therefore, either in substance or in idiom, which were not yet commonplaces in the literature of the Church, would seem to put Eusebius in the debt of his royal friend. Every Christian writer was obliged to hold that God is the cause of everything, that Christ is his Word and Wisdom in creation, and that man is their *magnum opus*; and so, predictably, say both Eusebius and Constantine.[79] Not every Christian writer, on the other hand, had affirmed that God directs the course of nature as a driver steers his chariot, instanced the procession of days and nights as a signal proof of his solicitude, or reserved a special mockery for the notion that the world rose automatically from uncreated elements; yet so do both Eusebius and Constantine.[80] For Eusebius it is not only God, but Constantine, who guides the turbulent chariot of the world; and whereas Christ is said by Constantine to have resumed his hearth, or *hestia*, with the Father, Eusebius notes that Constantine restored the sacred *hestia* of Jerusalem.[81] Constantine had attributed the extremes of *philanthrōpia* and *megalopsuchia* to the Saviour; Eusebius writes of Constantine as one who steers the car of earth as God steers that of heaven, and edifies the nations by his philanthropic laws.[82] Constantine says twice that Christianity is the one straight road to heaven; Eusebius, discerning both the proverb and its context, says that Constantine himself has pointed out the 'royal road'.[83]

Eusebius knew well enough that in many cases he was giving back to Constantine the Hellenistic epithets which the emperor had been discreet enough to apply to God. A great theme of this eulogy is that everything depends on the nod, or *neuma*, of the deity through that of his royal delegate. The senatorial formula, that Maxentius was overthrown with divine assent (*divinitatis nutu*), was translated by Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine*; a Latin panegyric of 307 assures the emperor Maximian, then the associate

[79] Cf. *Tricennial Oration*, p. 206, 28, and Constantine, *Oration to the Saints*, p. 183, 5 Heikel for chariot image, applied to Constantine at 201, 17 ff.

[80] See chiefly Eusebius, *Tricennial Oration*, pp. 227 ff. Heikel.

[81] Constantine, *Oration to the Saints*, 155, 7, and Eusebius, *Tricennial Oration*, p. 221, 15 Heikel.

[82] Constantine, *Oration to the Saints*, 167, 3, 169, 21, 167, 29; Eusebius, *Tricennial Oration*, 201, 17 ff., 200, 12.

[83] *Oration to the Saints*, 175, 8, 176, 2 and Eusebius, *Tricennial Oration*, p. 216, 3 Heikel.

of Constantine, that his *nutus* rules the elements of nature.[84] In the *Tricennial Oration* the word *neuma* is used most frequently of God, and more obliquely of his ambassador, so the flattery of the one will be compatible with piety as regards the other.[85]

Eusebius is often called an Arian, because he holds that the Logos is inferior to the Father as the statue of an emperor is inferior to the man.[86] The principle which lurks in this analogy, or rather this conflation of analogies, is that the emperor is to the human world what the Father is in heaven. When panegyrists told a pagan monarch that the elements obeyed him, they flattered him with power, but could not tell him how to use it. This was possible only for a theology that regarded man as the image of his maker. Constantine, when he vows himself to the service of the Deity at the end of his speech, implicitly compares himself with the second god, the Logos, who is perfectly obedient to his Father.[87] As we have seen, Eusebius, being both courtier and dogmatic theologian, drew this moral openly in his *Tricennial Oration*. The emperor is a peer of Christ, since one is the Father's pre-existent image, while the other is his image in the cosmos.[88] Not only God's transcendence, but his character, is therefore manifested in the ruler; but, since it is God's will, and not man's nature, that imparts the image, rulership is a special dispensation, not a goal that others could pursue.

The analogy would be harder to sustain if it were thought that the glorious image had been lost or defaced in man through the fall of Adam. In 313 a pagan orator had alluded to the corruption of the arts by quoting Virgil.[89] The *Georgics* spoke of men in their iniquity beating ploughshares into swords; Constantine, when he exercised his clemency in the taking of a multitude of prisoners, had ingeniously commanded that their weapons be converted into fetters. When Constantine delivered the *Oration to the Saints*, he gave an account of human progress which omitted any notion of a

[84] *Panegyrici Latini*, 7 (6). 12. 8.

[85] Eusebius, *Tricennial Oration*, pp. 198, 12; 215, 11; 254, 18 Heikel (of God); 217, 14 (of Constantine).

[86] Such insinuations go back to Athanasius, *On the Synods*, 17. Eusebius favours the *eikon* ('image') language affirmed against Marcellus by the Councils of Antioch (341) and Sirmium (351 and 357), but largely eschewed by the Cappadocian theologians whose theology dominated the second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 381.

[87] Cf. Phil. 2: 5–12; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Homilies*, 15. 1.

[88] Cf. Eusebius, *Tricennial Oration*, 11. 11 ff.; *idem*, *Theophany*, 1. 4.

[89] *Panegyrici Latini*, 12 (9). 12. 3, citing *Georgics*, 1. 508.

corporate delinquency; in the *Tricennial Oration*, Eusebius admits the deterioration of the species, but attributes it to repeated acts of sin without alluding to the primordial transgression of an Adam or an Eve.[90]

Eusebius merits more consideration than we are able to bestow upon him here. Biographers of Constantine have found him a reluctant friend, since, though his *Life* and his *Ecclesiastical History* abound in documents, their narratives are in many places incoherent, lacunose, or wantonly obscure. The reason is that, being a pioneer in four domains of literature—the history, the biography, the political encomium, and the chronicle—he entered each with the instruments and instincts of an advocate, whose clients were the Christian faith, the Church, the emperor Constantine, and finally—as the prize of notoriety—himself. If we ask what made him so prolific, we can say that, first of all, he matched extraordinary gifts with the resources of the Caesarean library.[91] Secondly, all Christian essays using a new technique—including those of commentary, chronology, and dogmatic exposition[92]—might be called apologetic in so far as they purported to be written against some enemy of truth. Thirdly—and we should not lose sight of this—he had assisted Constantine in a revolution which could not have failed to animate both new and old experiments in writing. The composition of triumphant histories was now a Christian duty, and to praise the God of heaven was to justify the king. This was to be expected, but it was less to be expected that the king himself would have done so much to guide apologetic into the service of the throne.

Since his own days, Constantine has been unjustly flattered and uncritically dispraised. Few deny his competence as an autocrat, yet many have refused to be convinced of his religion. Our study shows at least that his Christianity was more than a veneer. The *Oration to the Saints* reveals an emperor who was able to give more substance to his faith than many clerics, and an apologist whose breadth of view and fertile innovations make it possible to rank him with the more eminent theologians of his age.

[90] See *Tricennial Oration*, p. 212 ff. Heikel; on the absence of a Fall in Constantine's speech, see Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 653.

[91] See T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 65–81.

[92] See e.g. Origen's *Commentary on John*, Tertullian's *Against Marcion*, Hippolytus' *Chronicle*, Irenaeus' *Against the Heresies*, Tertullian's *Against Praxeas*.

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We here list editions and English translations of the apologetic texts covered in this book. We have not sought to include the pagan texts which are referred to incidentally in the course of the book.

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CSEL = *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna/Leipzig/Prague).
GCS = *Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller* (Berlin/Leipzig).
SC = *Sources Chrétiennes* (Paris).
ANF = *Library of the Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Edinburgh, repr. Grand Rapids, Mich.).
FC = *Fathers of the Church* (Washington).
LCL = *Loeb Classical Library* (London/Cambridge, Mass.).
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