

Jewish Polemic against Christianity in the Second Century

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§1. Introduction

The rise of Christianity, from its very beginning until it came to dominate the Roman Empire at the end of the fourth century, is a fascinating subject. For this writer, in particular, the apologetic and polemic activity which accompanied this growth is especially interesting. In view of the mass of material available in this broad area, let us restrict our discussion in this paper to the Jewish side of the Christian-Jewish polemic, and to one century only, the second.

The materials which come to us directly from Jewish hands relevant to this restricted topic are rather scanty. They are also rather obscure due to the severely concise style and technical vocabulary employed by the rabbis, and have been modified to some extent by later Christian censorship. We also have some information on this subject from Christians, which, though some may suspect it as being biased, is at least more intelligible and extensive than the Jewish material. It is also fortunate that we have information from a Pagan source which, while not free from bias either, does not seem to be either pro-Christian or pro-Jewish.

In the following section, the particular sources available in each category – Jewish, Christian and Pagan – will be discussed, noting such matters as authorship, sources of information, date, problems of interpretation and reliability, and the types of Judaism involved. In the succeeding sections, the information on Jewish polemic as derived from these sources will be presented, following an order of the decreasing breadth of attestation, namely (1) polemical material found in Jewish, Christian and Pagan sources (§3), (2) materials in two such sources (§4), and finally (3) materials found only in a single such source (§5). A final section will attempt to summarize these findings, draw some tentative conclusions, and make suggestions for further study.

§2. Sources of Polemical Material

Jewish Sources.

Apart from some apocalyptic literature which has been worked over by Christian hands, about the only extant Jewish literature from the second century is that transmitted, compiled and later written down by the rabbis. This material is principally commentary (in the form of discussion) on the legal passages of the Torah (called *halakah*), with a smaller amount of hortatory, devotional and illustrative material (called *haggadah*) mixed in. These rabbinic discussions have been compiled in two different ways, topically and textually.

The oldest topical compilation of rabbinic material which is still extant is the *Mishnah*, compiled by Rabbi Judah the Prince about AD 200.¹ Some similar materials left out of the *Mishnah* were collected in the same topic order early in the third century under the title *Tosefta*.²

Later rabbis, both in Palestine and Mesopotamia, continued discussion on these legal topics and on the *Mishnah* itself, and eventually their work was compiled under the title *Gemara* and added

¹ H. L. Strack, *Introduction to Talmud and Midrash* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1931; reprinted New York: Atheneum, 1969), 118; hereafter SITM.

² SITM, 75.

to the *Mishnah* to form the *Talmud*.³ The Palestinian or Jerusalem *Talmud* was completed early in the fifth century, but it is shorter than the Babylonian *Talmud* and, as far as Jewish religious obligation is concerned, is not considered as authoritative.⁴ The Babylonian *Talmud* is about three times larger and was not completed until the middle of the sixth century.⁵ Both *Talmuds* contain some early material left out of the *Mishnah* and *Tosefta*, and this is designated *Baraitha*.⁶

The *halakah* and *haggadah* were also compiled textually, that is, grouped according to the location in Scripture to which they (more or less) refer. Such a compilation is called a *Midrash*. The extant *Midrashim* are scattered over many centuries, but the earliest are almost as old as the *Mishnah*, dating from the early third century.⁷ Among the early *Midrashim*, which are mostly *halakah*, the most important are *Mekilta* on Exodus, *Siphra* on Leviticus, and *Siphre* on Numbers and Deuteronomy.⁸ Later *Midrashim* contain much more *haggadah*. The most important of these is the *Midrash Rabbah*, actually a collection of *Midrashim* on the Pentateuch and the *Megilloth* (the scrolls of Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs and Lamentations), dating from the fifth to the twelfth centuries.⁹

In extracting information from the rabbinic literature concerning Jewish polemic against Christianity, it will be necessary to pay attention to the age of the material. Information from the *Mishnah* and *Tosefta*, and any *Baraitha* from the *Talmud*, can reasonably be considered as from the second century. Other material ascribed by name to second-century rabbis will be used also, but, since this material was probably transmitted orally for a longer time, there is more danger of error.

Next we have the problem of recognizing references to Jesus and Christianity, since the former term appears only rarely and the latter not at all. Several other terms are thought by some to refer to Jesus, namely "Balaam," "Ben Pantera," "Ben Stada," and "a certain person" (*peloni*). We shall examine these as they occur.

Christianity is certainly referred to occasionally in the rabbinic literature under the name *minuth*, while an individual Christian is called a *min* (plural *minim*). However, these terms (usually translated "heresy" and "heretic," respectively) are somewhat broader than "Christianity" and "Christian," and are at first restricted to Jewish heretics.¹⁰ In earlier periods a *min* may be a Samaritan (*Midrash Rabbah*, Lev 13.5); through the first century AD, a Sadducee (*Mishnah*, Ber 9.5).¹¹ According to the Jerusalem *Talmud* (Sanh 10.5), there were twenty-four different kinds of *minim* at the destruction of the temple (AD 70). Broyde suggests that during the Christian era, *minim* were usually Jewish Christians or Gnostics, or perhaps even non-Jewish Christians.¹²

³ SITM, 65-74.

⁴ SITM, 65, 68-69.

⁵ SITM, 71.

⁶ R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: 1903; reprint Clifton, NJ: Reference Book Publishers, 1966), 21; hereafter HCTM.

⁷ SITM, 206-09.

⁸ HCTM, 24.

⁹ See relevant articles in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

¹⁰ Isaac Broyde, "Min," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 8:594.

¹¹ Daniel Sperber, "Min," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 12:1-3.

¹² Broyde, *op. cit.*, 595.

Sperber suggests that the term was applied to non-Jews in second century Palestine, namely "Bible-reading heathen," "antinomian Gnostics," and "heathen Christians."¹³ We shall attempt to discuss this further as we look at the passages involved.

Christian Sources.

Among Christian writings, there are three known works which seem to fall in the second century and which present Jewish arguments against Christianity. Let us examine each of these in what is probably the order of their composition.

Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus. This work, no longer extant, was known both to Celsus and to Origen, and therefore it must have been written prior to Celsus' *True Account*, which is usually dated about AD 178. The comments of Origen and Celsus, preserved in Origen's *Against Celsus*, are as follows (Origen speaking):

After this, from all works that contain allegories and relations, respectable in style and phraseology, he [Celsus] picks out the inferior parts, that might increase the grace of faith in the simple multitude but could not mover the more intelligent, and then observes, "Of this sort is a disputation between one Papiscus and Jason which I have met with, worthy not so much of laughter as of pity and indignation." It is no part of my plan to refute things of this sort; anyone can see what they are, especially if he has patience enough to listen to the books In it is described a Christian arguing with a Jew from Jewish scriptures, and showing that the prophecies concerning the Christ are applicable to Jesus; the other replying to the argument vigorously and in a way suitable to the character of a Jew.¹⁴

The *Dialogue* was later translated into Latin by another Celsus, otherwise unknown. Although his translation has also been lost, a letter has been preserved under the title *To the Bishop Vigilius concerning Jewish Incredulity* (falsely ascribed to Cyprian) which describes the *Dialogue*.¹⁵

That noble, memorable and glorious result of the discussion between Jason, a Hebrew Christian, and Papiscus, an Alexandrian Jew, comes into my mind; how the obstinate hardness of the Jewish heart was softened by Hebrew admonition and gentle chiding; and the teaching of Jason, on the giving of the Holy Ghost, was victorious in the heart of Papiscus. Papiscus, thereby brought to a knowledge of the truth, and fashioned to the fear of the Lord through the mercy of the Lord Himself, both believed in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and entreated Jason that he might receive the sign [of baptism].¹⁶

¹³ Sperber, *op. cit.*, 3.

¹⁴ Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.52; hereafter OAC.

¹⁵ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (3 vols.; Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1950-60), 1:196; Adolf Harnack, "Aristo of Pella," *The New Schaff0Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 1:283.

¹⁶ Cited in Spencer Mansel, "Aristo Pellaeus," *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, ed. by William Smith and Henry Wace (London: John Murray, 1877), 1:161.

Besides these references, Jerome mentions the *Dialogue* twice, each time indicating a point contained in it. In his Commentary on Galatians, he notes that it speaks of one who is hanged being accursed of God.¹⁷ In discussing the Hebrew of Genesis, he notes that this *Dialogue* cites Gen 1:1 as reading in Hebrew "In the Son, God created the heaven and the earth."¹⁸

The only extant source giving an author for the *Dialogue* is Maximus the Confessor (7th century), who says:

I have also read the expression "seven heavens" in the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Jason*, composed by Aristo of Pella, which Clement of Alexandria, in the sixth book of his *Hypotyposes*, says was written by St. Luke.¹⁹

As it appears from this that Clement in the third century did not know who wrote the *Dialogue*, it is unlikely that Maximus did four centuries later. If Maximus should be right, however, then the *Dialogue* may have been written as early as the 130s, since Aristo is mentioned by Eusebius, the *Chronicon Pascale* and Moses Chorensis as writing about Hadrian and Bar Kochba.²⁰

Thus although the *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus* is not extant, we are told that it is an argument between a Hebrew Christian and an Alexandrian Jew, in which the former uses the Old Testament to argue that its Messianic prophecies apply to Jesus, and that the Jew, though obstinate and arguing vigorously, is finally converted and asks for baptism. The *Dialogue* mentions seven heavens, that one who is hanged is accursed of God, and that Gen 1:1 in Hebrew is "In the Son" rather than our "In the beginning." This last point may indicate some knowledge of one of the *Targumim*, which reads "with (in) wisdom,"²¹ and which could easily be understood by Christians as "in the Son."

Several scholars, using this sort of information, have examined later Christian works against the Jews and have suggested that some of these depend on this *Dialogue* to a greater or lesser extent. For instance, Harnack once argued that the fifth century Latin *Dialogue of Simon and Theophilus* so depended, though he later changed his mind.²² Conybeare agrees with Harnack's earlier view, and he also feels that the Greek *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* and *Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus* also depend on *Jason and Papiscus*, and that the former of these two is probably very similar.²³ We shall continue our discussion of the relation of *Jason and Papiscus* to *Timothy and Aquila* below.

Dialogue with Trypho. Moving onto more solid ground, let us consider Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*. Here we have a document with reasonably certain authorship and date. Justin is

¹⁷ Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians*, 2.3.13.

¹⁸ Jerome, *Hebrew Questions in Genesis*, 2.507.

¹⁹ Maximus, Comm. On Ps.-Dionysius, *De mystica theologica*, 1; see Mansel, *op. cit.*, and Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. and ed. by G. Vermes and F. Miller (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973), 1:38.

²⁰ Mansel, *op. cit.*

²¹ Louis Ginzberg, "Aristo of Pella," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 2:95.

²² A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos* (Cambridge: University Press, 1935), 29-30.

²³ Frederick C. Conybeare, ed., *The Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and of Timothy and Aquila* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), xxxix, lii, liii.

mentioned as the author as early as Eusebius,²⁴ and the *Dialogue* has a similar style to his *Apologies* even though the subject matter is different.²⁵ As Justin was martyred when Junius Rusticus was prefect of Rome (163-67),²⁶ the *Dialogue* could not have been written later than 167. As Justin makes reference to his (1st) *Apology* in *Dialogue* 120.5, the *Dialogue* must have been written second. But the *Apology* was almost certainly written between 151 and 155,²⁷ therefore the *Dialogue* must have been written between 151 and 167.

However, the actual debate pictured in the *Dialogue*, if genuine, must have occurred substantially earlier. Justin describes himself as arguing with a group of Jews led by Trypho. This Trypho has fled the "war which broke out recently."²⁸ Elsewhere Justin mentions the Jews discussing the "war in Judaea,"²⁹ and twice he speaks as though Hadrian's edict forbidding Jews to approach Jerusalem (AD 135) were already in force.³⁰ Thus the discussion pictured in the *Dialogue with Trypho* is set shortly after the Bar Kochba War (AD 132-35), surely no later than about AD 140.

Although it is possible to suggest that Justin's Trypho is a purely fictitious character, this does not seem to be necessary. Of course, if one assumes that Trypho is supposed to be the Rabbi Tarphon seen in the *Talmud*, then it is certain that Justin never argued with him, for Trypho does not know enough to be that sort of rabbi, nor is he sufficiently anti-Christian to match Tarphon's reputation.³¹ But Trypho is a rather common name for the period, and it appears that this Trypho is a layman who has studied Greek philosophy and is familiar with the Old Testament in Greek, but who does not know Hebrew.³² Thus Trypho would be an educated Hellenistic Jew from Palestine.

Even if the reality of Trypho is denied, it is clear that Justin has substantial knowledge of some variety of Hellenistic Judaism which is closer to that of the rabbis than that of Philo.³³ As Lukyn Williams says:

The more the *Dialogue* is studied the deeper becomes the impression of the general accuracy of Justin's presentation of Judaism, as well as the width of his knowledge of it. The treatise in fact implies a very much closer intercourse between Christians and Jews in the middle of the second century than has been commonly accepted.³⁴

²⁴ Eusebius, *Church History* 4.18.6-8.

²⁵ Leslie W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 22.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁸ *Dialogue with Trypho* 1.3; hereafter DT.

²⁹ DT, 9.3.

³⁰ DT, 16.2; 92.2.

³¹ A. Lukyn Williams, ed., *Justin Martyr: The Dialogue with Trypho* (London: SPCK, 1930), xxv.

³² *Ibid.*, xxxi.

³³ Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 52; see also Willis A. Shotwell, *The Biblical Exegesis of Justin Martyr* (London: SPCK, 1965).

³⁴ Williams, *Dialogue with Trypho*, viii.

Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila. This dialogue is known to us in two Greek manuscripts and a fragment, of which one has been published by Conybeare.³⁵ As yet no English translation has been printed. The authorship and date of this *Dialogue* are a matter of dispute, but it appears that the work comes from Egypt while Greek was still being spoken there.³⁶

In its present form the *Dialogue* cannot be older than the fifth century, as it speaks of the debate having taken place before Cyril, archbishop of Alexandria (412-44).³⁷ Likewise it contains references to Deity which suggest post-Nicene terminology.³⁸

On the other hand, the *Dialogue* contains a twenty-two book Old Testament canon, which includes only one "unattached" apocryphal work (Judith), and the writer explicitly rejects Tobit, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon as apocryphal.³⁹ He does refer to Baruch and to Bel and the Dragon, but apparently he considers these a part of Jeremiah and Daniel, respectively.⁴⁰ This would seem to suggest an earlier stage than that represented by our extant Greek OT codices (4th century) and the Augustinian canonical lists.

The New Testament canon in *Timothy and Aquila* is also significant. The Acts is grouped with the Catholic Epistles, there are fourteen Pauline epistles (presumably Hebrews is included) and the Revelation is not mentioned (unless grouped with the Catholic Epistles).⁴¹ Williams therefore suggests that the work comes from the eastern church, probably Egypt, and not later than about 200.⁴²

In quotations that appear to be from the Gospels, some of the readings have textual affinities with the Western family and the Old Syriac manuscripts in particular. This likewise favors the view that these materials are not likely to be much later than the second century.⁴³

Williams also feels that the attitude expressed in the *Dialogue* toward the OT translation of Aquila (about 130) indicates that this translation has been made relatively recently.⁴⁴ In all fairness, however, the *Dialogue* also makes reference by name to the translators Symmachus and Theodotion (both probably late second century).⁴⁵ In summary, it appears safe to say that the *Dialogue* contains a substantial amount of material from the second century, but that it has evidently been somewhat modified subsequently.

Just how these diverse elements are to be reconciled is also a matter of dispute. Williams opts for the basic work having been composed about 200, with the title and epilogue added later,

³⁵ Conybeare, *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*. We will abbreviate the *Dialogue* as TA.

³⁶ Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 71.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 67; TA, 75v.

³⁸ TA, 75v, 107r. (r and v indicate recto and verso of the numbered sheet)

³⁹ TA, 77v.

⁴⁰ TA, 84r, 95r.

⁴¹ TA, 78r.

⁴² Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 68.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 71; TA, 115v.

⁴⁵ TA, 77r.

probably late in the fifth century.⁴⁶ Similarities between *Timothy and Aquila*, *Athanasius and Zacchaeus*, and *Simon and Theophilus* he reluctantly assigns to a hypothetical collection of OT Messianic testimonies, with *Anthanasius and Zacchaeus* having possibly used an earlier form of *Timothy and Aquila*. He is strongly opposed to deriving these from *Jason and Papiscus*.⁴⁷

Conybeare, on the other hand, feels that *Timothy and Aquila* is rather close to *Jason and Papiscus* (much closer than *Athanasius and Zacchaeus* or *Simon and Theophilus*), perhaps shortened, with an introduction and a few scattered details added later. Thus the disputants throughout *Timothy and Aquila* are merely called "the Christian" and "the Jew," in which Conybeare finds an echo of Origen's description of *Jason and Papiscus*.⁴⁸

The general description of *Jason and Papiscus* given by Origen and the two men named Celsus is consistent with *Timothy and Aquila*. Thus (see above, under *Jason and Papiscus*) in both the Jew is evidently Alexandrian; the Christian uses the Old Testament to argue that the Messianic prophecies apply to Jesus; and the Jew, though obstinate and arguing vigorously, is finally convinced and seeks baptism from the Christian. However, one might question whether the later Celsus' representation of Papiscus as a Hebrew Christian fits the Christian in *Timothy and Aquila*. For the latter says:

"And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is interpreted, God is with us," but that you may know this, that half is Syriac and half Hebrew. For the "emma" means "with us" in Syriac, but the "nuel" means "God" [!]⁴⁹

Still, if Justin's Trypho is a real Palestinian Jew and does not know Hebrew, it is possible that Timothy may be Papiscus and a Hebrew (i.e., Judaeo-) Christian without knowing it either.

Turning to the specific details which were said to have been in *Jason and Papiscus*, there are several problems. First, there is no reference to seven heavens in *Timothy and Aquila*, nor is the interpretation "in the Son God created" offered. Still, *Timothy and Aquila* does start the argument with a discussion of Genesis and creation, and it is possible that *Timothy and Aquila* is a shortened version of *Jason and Papiscus* in which these particular details were in the material removed. Conybeare feels that the "drift of argument" in *Timothy and Aquila* still reflects some such view of Gen 1:1, and Williams is inclined to agree.⁵⁰

The reference to "the one who is hanged is cursed of God" does occur in *Timothy and Aquila*, although this is a natural Jewish objection to the Christian claim that the Messiah has been crucified and therefore cannot bear too much weight. A reference by Eusebius to Aristo of Pella speaking of Hadrian's decree banishing the Jews from Jerusalem⁵¹ does not occur in *Timothy and Aquila*, but it is not clear that Eusebius was referring to the work *Jason and Papiscus* anyway.

⁴⁶ Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 71.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁴⁸ Conybeare, *Timothy and Aquila*, liii.

⁴⁹ TA, 82v.

⁵⁰ Conybeare, *Timothy and Aquila*, lv; Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 73.

⁵¹ Eusebius, *Church History* 4.6.

Timothy and Aquila does make reference to other features of Hadrian's activities, so a longer *Jason and Papiscus* might have had such a reference also.

In any case, as *Timothy and Aquila* either (1) may itself be from the second century, or (2) may use a number of second century materials, we shall include it in the Christian sources of Jewish polemic.

Pagan Sources

The only pagan source from the second century which explicitly presents a Jewish polemic against Christianity is the *Alethes Logos* (we shall translate it *True Account*) by a Middle Platonist name Celsus, usually thought to have been written about AD 178.⁵² This Celsus is otherwise unknown unless he is the Celsus to whom Lucian dedicated a work.⁵³ As Smith and Wace list a dozen men named Celsus in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, this suggestion must remain speculative.

Celsus' *True Account* is not extant in the usual sense of the word. However his attack on Christianity was apparently sufficiently effective that the scholar Origen was prevailed upon to prepare an answer. As a result, large sections of Celsus' work are preserved in Origen's refutation, *Against Celsus*.⁵⁴

From Origen we learn that the *True Account* consisted of two main parts preceded by an introduction. Celsus' introduction attacks Christianity as encouraging secret associations which were illegal in the Roman Empire at that time. He also condemns Christianity as dependent upon and inferior to Judaism, which Celsus also considers contemptible. These attacks are presented and answered by Origen in book 1, chapters 1 to 27. The first main part of Celsus' *True Account* is that which concerns us – Jewish attacks upon Christianity. Celsus presents these in dialogue form, first having a Jew argue successfully against Jesus Himself (*Against Celsus* 1.28-71) and then having the Jew argue with Jewish Christians (book 2). In the second main part, Celsus presents his own objections to Christianity, which are given and answered by Origen in books 3-8.

As Origen has taken the trouble to read and answer Celsus' *True Account* for the benefit of a friend troubled by it, it seems unlikely that he would distort Celsus' arguments, as this might cause his work to fail in its purpose. What parts of the *True Account* he may have ignored is a question which must await the discovery of the work itself.

Equally important, however, is the question of the authenticity of Celsus' Jew. As he argues both with Jesus and Jewish Christians, it is hardly likely that the confrontation is historical. But is the Jew even voicing authentic Jewish objections to Christianity? Origen himself had some doubts

⁵² M. R. P. McGuire, "Celsus," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 3:382.

⁵³ John Rickards Mozley, "Celsus (1)" in *A Dictionary of Christian Biography*, ed. William Smith and Henry Wace (4 vols.; London: John Murray, 1877), 1:435.

⁵⁴ Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 79, thinks almost 7/8^{ths} are preserved, and McGuire about 9/10^{ths}, but this seems to be scarcely credible. Much of the *True Account* is in the form of dialogue, yet Origen mentions only the opposing side of the conversation; moreover, it does not appear that he gives us all of that.

on this score, and Origen had had some contacts with Jews himself. For instance, Origen notes (1) that Celsus' Jew uses the Gospel accounts (2.11, 34), (2) that he seems too well versed in Greek literature (2.34), (3) that he equates the Logos with the Son of God (2.31), (4) that he denies the resurrection (2.57, but cp. 2.77), and (5) that he seems rather ignorant of OT Messianic prophecy (2.79).

But the objections would not be conclusive unless we must suppose that the Jew is a well-trained representative of rabbinic Judaism. As we shall see later, there is also evidence from both Jewish and Christian sources that some Jews were acquainted with the Gospels. Certainly Philo was well-trained in Greek literature, and Trypho claims to have studied under a Greek philosopher (DT, 1.2), so objections (1) and (2) cannot be decisive. But objection (3) would rule out Philo as a Jew; (4) would rule out the Sadducees; and (5) would probably rule out many Jews who lived in the second century (It would certainly rule out many Jews and Christians in this century!). Therefore, while it is most likely that Celsus has invented this particular individual, he probably represents one or more Jews with who Celsus has had contact.

Williams feels that hints in the *True Account* make it "almost certain" that the work comes from Rome,⁵⁵ so perhaps Celsus' Jew is one who would have been found in second century Rome. As regards the level of education of such a Jew, Williams' conclusion is probably valid:

That indeed Celsus ever came into contact with Jews of great learning may well be doubted. The objections to Christianity which he quotes are quite ordinary, such as any Jew might have adduced. But he puts them so well, and gives so many, that his treatise may well have served as a storehouse from which the rank and file of educated, though not learned, Jews, drew argument against Christians.⁵⁶

Thus, in the sources which we shall consider, we have polemic against Christianity from Palestinian Jews, but also from Jews scattered abroad in Egypt, Asia Minor and Rome. We have polemic by Jews thoroughly trained in the Old Testament and in the oral traditions built up around it, but also by Jews with a more liberal or classical education. Probably, as we are dealing with literary materials only, the polemic will be rather more informed than that of the average second century Jew.

§3. Very Well-Attested Polemical Material

Let us now examine the particular Jewish arguments brought forth against Christianity as they occur in the sources we have been discussing. In this section we shall consider arguments found in all three sources – Jewish, Christian and Pagan. Later we shall examine arguments attested by two or even by only one of these.

As it is difficult to decide how closely arguments should resemble one another to be identified, I have actually sorted the material into rather broad categories. The reader may see for himself the

⁵⁵ Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 79n1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

variety within each category while some semblance of organization is preserved for the purpose of the presentation.

God is One.

A central concern of Jewish polemic against Christianity involved the concept of deity. The Christian claims that (1) God is not one in the strictest sense, (2) the Messiah is somehow God, and (3) God has become man, were rigorously opposed by the Jews. This general concern occurs in all three sources, but the opposition to the specific claims usually occurs only in two. We shall see this as the discussion proceeds.

Attacks on the Christian claim that God is not a unity in the narrow sense do not occur in the extant Celsus. It is not likely that he was unaware of such attacks, but the particular Jew he pictures may have had a broader view of the matter than we find in rabbinical Judaism. Thus, at one point Celsus' Jews agrees that the Logos is the Son of God.⁵⁷ This Jew, then, may have held something like a Philonic theology, in which there are some sort of lesser beings called God. However, we should not overlook the fact that Celsus' theology (a Middle Platonism) is more polytheistic than either rabbinical Judaism or traditional Christianity, and that Celsus is seeking to show that Christianity is dependent on Judaism. Therefore, references to the fact that Christianity is closer to his own view than Judaism is might tend to weaken his argument for Christianity's inferiority to Judaism.

The rabbinic literature has a number of passages arguing the unity of God against Scripture-quoting antagonists. I think it is safe to assume that many such opponents were Christians, although the possibility that some were Jewish Gnostic (if such ever existed) or pagan polytheists cannot be ruled out. A passage from the *Gemara* attributed to R. Johanan (mid 3rd century)⁵⁸ is a little late, but we cite it in full because of its interest and because it is partly paralleled in a Christian source:

In all the passages which the *Minim* have taken (as grounds) for their heresy, their refutation is found near at hand, thus: "Let *us* make man in *our* image (Gen 1:26) – "And God created (singular) man in His own image" (Gen 1:27); "Come, let *us* go down and their confound their language (Gen 11:7) – "And the Lord came down (singular) to see the city and the tower (Gen 11:5); "Because there were revealed (plural) to him God" (Gen 35:7) – "Unto God who answereth (singular) me in the day of my distress (Gen 35:3); "For what great nation is there that hath God so nigh (plural) unto it, as the Lord our God is (unto us) whensoever we call upon Him (singular)" (Deut 4:7); "And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, Israel, whom God went (plural) to redeem for a people unto himself (singular)" (2 Sam 7:23); "Till *thrones* were placed and *one* that was ancient did sit" (Dan 7:9).⁵⁹

The same argument is summarized in the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*:

⁵⁷ OAC, 2.31.

⁵⁸ HCTM, 255ff.

⁵⁹ BT, Sanh. 38b.

The holy Scriptures teach us to worship one God only And throughout all the prophets and in the historical books and in general everywhere it teaches us to worship one God and not two.⁶⁰

Gen 1:26 is also dealt with in *Timothy and Aquila*, but in a slightly different way. Here the Jew asserts that God is speaking to the angels when He says "Let us make man in our image."⁶¹ Later the Jew alludes to God Almighty and the Holy Spirit in Genesis 1 and claims that these terms refer to one and the same being, as may be seen in Deut 6:4, "the Lord is one," and Isa 44:6, "there is no God besides me."⁶²

Earlier rabbinic sources also refer to the creation of man as evidencing the oneness of God. The *Mishnah* says man was created "solitary" so that the *Minim* "might not say there are several Powers in heaven."⁶³ The *Tosefta* emphasizes that man was created last so that the *Minim* might not say there was a companion with Him in the work.⁶⁴ This latter remark is similar to one in *Timothy and Aquila*, where the Jews, speaking of Gen 1:26, says, "He wasn't speaking to the son, for he was not yet around then."⁶⁵

Another passage used in this controversy is seen in the *Gemara*:

A certain *Min* said to R. Ishmael ben R. Jose, "It is written (Gen 19:24), 'And the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord.' It ought to have been 'from himself.'" A certain fuller said (to R. Ishmael), "Let him alone; I will answer him. For it is written (Gen 4:23), 'And Lamech said to his wives, Adah and Zilah, hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech.' It ought to have been 'my wives.' But the text reads so, and here also the text reads so." He (R. Ishmael) said, "Where did you get that?" "From the saying of R. Meir."⁶⁶

Although R. Ishmael lived on into the third century, R. Meir is definitely from the second.⁶⁷ The passage used by the *Min* is also used by Justin in his *Dialogue with Trypho*.⁶⁸

As for the Christian contention that the Messiah is somehow God, the rabbinic polemic against *Minim* offers no response. I have not had an opportunity to examine all the rabbinic Messianic discussions, but R. Akiba is rebuked by R. Jose the Galilean (early 2nd century)⁶⁹ for assigning one of the thrones in Dan 7:9 to David (probably the Messiah) and one to God. Rather, one is for justice and one for grace.⁷⁰ Similarly, noting Nebuchadnezzar's remark that the fourth person in

⁶⁰ TA, 76r.

⁶¹ TA, 79r.

⁶² TA, 80r.

⁶³ M, Sanh. 4.5.

⁶⁴ T, Sanh. 8.7.

⁶⁵ TA, 97v.

⁶⁶ BT, Sanh. 38b.

⁶⁷ SITM, 112, 117.

⁶⁸ DT, 56.12, 127.5.

⁶⁹ SITM, 113.

⁷⁰ BT, Hag. 14a.

the furnace looked like a son of God (Dan 3:25), Reuben (probably ben Aristobolus, mid 2nd century)⁷¹ said:

In that hour, an angel descended and struck that wicked one upon his mouth, and said to him, "Amend thy words: Hath He a son?" He (Nebuchadnezzar) turned at said (Dan 3:28), "Blessed by the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who" – it is not written, "hath sent his son," but – "hath sent his angel and hath delivered his servants who trusted in him."⁷²

We find somewhat more information on the Jewish polemic against a divine Messiah in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*. Trypho speaks of Justin's claim – that the Messiah is divine and eternally pre-existent, yet became a real man and suffered – as "strange" and "foolish."⁷³ Instead he says:

... all of us Jews expect that Messiah will be man of merely human origin, and that Elijah will come and anoint him.⁷⁴

He argues that the Messiah cannot be divine because Isa 42:8 tells us that God will not give His glory to another, and because Isa 11:1-3 indicates that the Messiah needs the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵

Much of the above would also be thought to count against the idea of God becoming man, a point on which Celsus is more vocal. Speaking to Jesus, Celsus' Jew says:

Such a body as yours could not have belonged to God. The body of God would not have been so generated as you, O Jesus, were The body of a god is not nourished with such food ... does not make use of such a voice ... nor employ such a method of persuasion.⁷⁶

This is certainly not an exegetical polemic, as (more or less) is found in the previously cited sources. To many, it would sound more like paganism than rabbinical Judaism. However, not only Celsus, but Philo (and presumably, other Jews) had adopted features of Middle Platonism. But Justin and Trypho seem to feel that the angels who visited Abraham (Genesis 18) must have eaten his food in some peculiar way,⁷⁷ apparently reflecting a view similar to Celsus' that angels cannot have human bodies.

Certain Passages Messianic?

In the rabbinic material we have no *Minim* arguing Messianic prophecy with the Jews. However, there are a number of passages in which the rabbis argue about the Messiah, which are

⁷¹ HCTM, 302-03.

⁷² JT, Shab. 8b.

⁷³ DT, 48.1.

⁷⁴ DT, 49.1.

⁷⁵ DT, 65.1, 87.1.

⁷⁶ OAC, 1.69-70.

⁷⁷ DT, 57.

conveniently collected by Edersheim.⁷⁸ One such is that involving R. Akiba and R. Jose, mentioned above (page 12). Another, mentioned by Herford,⁷⁹ involves a rabbinic interpretation of Psalm 110:

R. Zechariah said, in the name of R. Ishmael (2nd century), "The Holy One, Blessed be He, sought to cause the priesthood to go forth from Shem (rabbinic thought identified him with Melchizedek). For it is said (Gen 14:18), 'And he was priest of God Most High.' As soon as he put the blessing of Abraham before the blessing of God (Gen 14:19), He caused it to go forth from Abraham Abraham said to him (Melchizedek), 'Do they put the blessing of the servant before the blessing of his owner?' Immediately it was given to Abraham, as it is said (he cites Ps 110:4), 'Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek')."⁸⁰

This could easily be a put-down for the type of argument we have in the book of Hebrews. Justin, too, mentions this passage, but he says the Jews "dare to expound this Psalm as spoken of King Hezekiah."⁸¹ So apparently some Jews referred it to Abraham, some to Hezekiah.

In the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, the Jew denies that there is any prophecy about a "son."⁸² He understands the second Psalm to refer to Solomon, pointing out that before his birth, God said, "I will be to him a Father and he will be to me a son." (2 Sam 7:14).⁸³

Celsus' Jew, on the other hand, has no objection to a coming "Son of God" prophesied among the Jews.⁸⁴ In fact, this is one of the points that makes Origen suspect that Celsus' Jew is a fake. For in Origen's experience (Alexandria and Caesarea), he has often been opposed by Jews who maintain that there is no OT prophecy about a "Son of God."⁸⁵ Here again, I suspect that we are dealing with varieties of Judaism rather than incompetence or deliberate falsification on Celsus' part. Again, Celsus' emphasis is not exegetical. The main thrust of his argument is that Jesus does not satisfy the Messianic prophecies, a subject we shall postpone until the next section.

Isa 7:14 is mentioned in Justin and *Timothy and Aquila*.⁸⁶ In both places the Jew argues that the proper translation is "young woman" rather than "virgin." Quoting the remark of Trypho in full:

The passage is not "Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son," but "Behold the young woman shall conceive and bear a son," and so on, as you said. Further, the whole prophecy stands spoken of Hezekiah, with respect to whom events are proved to have taken place in accordance with this prophecy.

The Birth of Jesus

⁷⁸ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (3rd ed., 2 vols.; New York: Longmans, Green, 1886; reprinted Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), Appendix IX.

⁷⁹ HCTM, 338.

⁸⁰ BT, Ned. 32b.

⁸¹ DT, 33.1.

⁸² TA, 79r, 102v.

⁸³ TA, 83r.

⁸⁴ OAC, 1.49, 50, 61.

⁸⁵ OAC, 1.49.

⁸⁶ DT, 67.1; TA 111r.

The subject of Jesus' birth is a matter of polemic in all three sources also, though here we encounter the problem of recognizing references to Jesus in the rabbinic literature. Consider the following remark by R. Simeon ben Azzai (early 2nd century).⁸⁷

I have found a roll of pedigrees in Jerusalem, and therein is written, "A certain person is illegitimate, born of an adultress," to confirm the words of R. Joshua"⁸⁸ (late 1st, early 2nd century).⁸⁹

Herford claims that this refers to Jesus,⁹⁰ and cites also a *Gemara* associated with R. Eliezer (a contemporary of R. Joshua).⁹¹

They asked R. Eliezer, "What of a certain person as regards the world to come?" He said to them, "Ye have only asked me concerning a certain person." "What of the shepherd saving the sheep from the lion?" He said to them, "Ye have only asked me concerning the sheep." "What of saving the shepherd from the lion?" He said, "Ye have only asked me concerning the shepherd." "What of an illegitimate person, as to inheriting? What of his performing the levirate duty? What of his founding his house? What of founding his sepulcher?" (They asked these questions) not because they differed on them but because he never said anything which he had not heard from his teacher from of old.⁹²

Here also Herford argues that Jesus is in view, pointing out that this R. Eliezer was accused by a Roman court of *Minuth* (therefore probably of Christianity) early in the second century.⁹³ At this distance, we cannot be certain whether these passages are intended to refer to Jesus.

Celsus' Jew does charge Jesus with being illegitimate. He was

... born in a certain Jewish village, of a poor woman of the country, who gained her subsistence by spinning, and who was turned out of doors by her husband, a carpenter by trade, because she was convicted of adultery; that after being driven away by her husband, and wandering about for a time, she disgracefully gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate child ...⁹⁴

Further on, Origen gives the citation from Celsus' *True Account* in more detail:

⁸⁷ SITM, 114.

⁸⁸ M, Yeb. 4.13; BT, Yeb. 49b.

⁸⁹ SITM, 111.

⁹⁰ HCTM, 43-45.

⁹¹ SITM, 111.

⁹² BT, Yom. 66b.

⁹³ HCTM, 46-47; BT, A. Z. 16b-17a.

⁹⁴ OAC, 1.28.

When she was pregnant she was turned out of doors by the carpenter to whom she had been betrothed, as having been guilty of adultery, and that she bore a child to a certain soldier named Panthera.⁹⁵

As for this name Panthera, there are definite rabbinic materials from the second century which call Jesus "Jeshu ben Pantiri" (or Pandira),⁹⁶ which suggests that Celsus' material here reflects an authentic Jewish outlook. Likewise there is a fourth century rabbinic remark about Balaam which might also reflect Celsus' story. Commenting on Joshua 13:22 (the death of Balaam):

R. Johanan said, "At first he was a prophet, but subsequently a soothsayer." R. Papa observed, "This is what men say, 'She who was a descendant of princes and governors, played the harlot with carpenters.'"⁹⁷

Another line of polemic was to compare Jesus' birth with pagan stories. Both Trypho and Celsus use this tactic. Trypho says:

Among the tales of those whom we call Greeks it is said that Perseus has been born of Danae, still a virgin, by him that they entitle Zeus flowing down upon her in the form of gold. And in fact you (Christians) ought to be ashamed of saying the same sort of things as they, and should rather say that this Jesus was man of human origin And do not dare to assert marvels, that you be not convicted of taking folly like the Greeks.⁹⁸

Celsus' Jew, speaking to Jesus, says:

The old mythological fables, which attributed a divine origin to Perseus, and Amphion, and Aeacus, and Minos, were not believed by us (Jews). Nevertheless, that they might not appear unworthy of credit, they represented the deeds of these personages as great and wonderful, and truly beyond the power of man. But what have you done that is noble and wonderful either in deed or in word? You have made no manifestation to us, although they challenged you in the temple to exhibit some unmistakable sign that you were the Son of God.⁹⁹

A third type of polemic against the virgin birth of Jesus is found in only one source, the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*. There the Jews claims that the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew says Joseph begot Jesus.¹⁰⁰ No Greek manuscripts preserve such a reading, but the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript is similar, reading, "Joseph to whom was betrothed Mary the virgin, begot Jesus who is called the Christ,"¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ OAC, 1.32.

⁹⁶ T, Hull. 2.22-24; JT, A. Z. 40b-41a.

⁹⁷ BT, Sanh. 106a.

⁹⁸ DT, 67.2.

⁹⁹ OAC, 1.67.

¹⁰⁰ TA, 93r.

¹⁰¹ Krut Aland, et al, eds., *The Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1968), 2n4.

Jesus a Magician

The claim that Jesus' miraculous activity was merely magical is a widely reported Jewish polemic. Justin accuses the Jews of such a charge:

Yet when they saw these things come to pass they said it was a display of magic art, for they even dared to say that He was a magician and deceiver of the people.¹⁰²

Celsus brings up the subject several times. The first time, the Jew only concedes for the sake of argument that Jesus did miracles:

Well, let us believe that these (miracles) were actually wrought by you ... (the Jew then compares Jesus' miracles to the tricks of magicians) Since, then, these persons can perform such feats, shall we of necessity conclude that they are "sons of God," or must we admit that they are the proceedings of wicked men under the influence of an evil spirit?¹⁰³

Later he argues against the Christians' claim that the miracles indicate Jesus' deity:

Jesus in your Gospels warns about those who will follow doing similar miracles but being wicked. How then are his works evidence of his divinity?¹⁰⁴

Elsewhere, however, Celsus' Jew seems to concede some spectacular works on Jesus' aprt, as he speaks of his teaching as that of "a wicked and God-hated sorcerer."¹⁰⁵

The rabbinic materials also seem to picture Jesus as a magician, although only one early source is clear-cut. A *Baraita* says:

On the eve of the Passover Yeshua was hanged. For forty days before the execution, a herald went forth and cried, "He is going to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf." But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of Passover.¹⁰⁶

Several other passages speak of a Ben Stada, who was a magician, who brought magic from Egypt, was tried, convicted, stoned and hung at Lydda on the eve of Passover.¹⁰⁷ Herford follows later rabbinic tradition in identifying Jesus with Ben Stada,¹⁰⁸ but the mention of Lydda

¹⁰² DT, 69.7.

¹⁰³ OAC, 1.68.

¹⁰⁴ OAC, 2.49.

¹⁰⁵ OAC, 1.71.

¹⁰⁶ BT, Sanh. 43a.

¹⁰⁷ T, Shab. 10.11, 11.15; JT, Sanh. 7.16; BT, Sanh. 67a, Shab. 104b.

¹⁰⁸ HCTM, 345.

suggests a possible confusion between Jesus and someone else. Bruce suggests that Ben Stada may have been the Egyptian charlatan mentioned in the book of Acts (21:38) and by Josephus.¹⁰⁹

The Mosaic Covenant

Polemics which can be classified under this heading are found in all three sources, though the nature of the polemic is somewhat diverse. The rabbinic sources tend to emphasize the continuation of Israel as the covenant people in spite of the disasters under the Romans:

R. Joshua b. Hanina (early 2nd century)¹¹⁰ was once at the court of Caesar (probably Hadrian). A certain unbeliever (*Epikuros*, or in some mss, *Min*) showed him (by pantomime): "A people whose Lord has turned His face from them." He (Joshua) showed him (in reply): "His hand is stretched out over us."¹¹¹

When Caesar privately asks R. Joshua for an explanation of both signals, he responds correctly. The heretic, however, does not understand Joshua's reply, and he is taken out and killed. A similar argument is reported between R. Gamaliel (late 1st, early 2nd century)¹¹² and a *Min* who claims that God has performed *Halizah* (cp. Ruth 4:7-8) against Israel, thus rejecting her. Gamaliel responds that any *Halizah* in which the man removes the shoe from the woman is invalid.¹¹³

Another rabbinic passage seems to answer a taunt that Christians are now the new chosen people:

A certain *Min* said to Beruria (wife of R. Meir), "It is written (Isa 54:1), 'Sing O barren that didst not bear.' Sing, because thou didst not bear." She said to him, "Fool, look at the end of the verse, for it is written, 'For more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.' But what is meant by 'O barren that didst not bear, sing'? The congregation of Israel, which is like a woman who hath not borne children for Gehenna, like you."¹¹⁴

Celsus, on the other hand, has his Jew attack the Christians for ceasing to observe the Mosaic Law. Origen summarizes the argument:

They have forsaken the law of their fathers, in consequence of their minds being led captive by Jesus ... they have become deserters to another name and to another mode of life.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ F. F. Bruch, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 58; Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.261; *Antiquities* 20.169ff.

¹¹⁰ SITM, 111.

¹¹¹ BT, Hag. 5b.

¹¹² SITM, 110.

¹¹³ BT, Yeb. 102b.

¹¹⁴ BT, Ber. 10a.

¹¹⁵ OAC, 2.1.

Celsus' Jew later charges them with being "apostates from the law of your fathers,"¹¹⁶ although elsewhere he admits that a range of observance exists among Christians: some not keeping the law "under a pretense of explanations and allegories," some keeping the laws but "interpreting them in a spiritual manner," and others observing the law of Moses "without any such interpretation."¹¹⁷

In addition, Celsus' Jew charges his Jewish Christians with inconsistency:

How is it that you take the beginning of your system from our worship, and when you have made some progress you treat it with disrespect, although you have no other foundation to show for your doctrines than our law?¹¹⁸

Our Christian sources mention both of these aspects found separately in the Jewish and pagan sources. In *Timothy and Aquila* the Jew says:

All the nations which are under heaven know that the Lord God of our fathers established a covenant at Horeb by means of blood: And the Lord God said, "Whoever breaks this My covenant, he shall surely die, because he has broken My covenant." ... Yet you say now that the Lord has broken His covenant?¹¹⁹

Most of the emphasis, however, is on the fact that the Christians are not keeping the law. Trypho says:

You, saying you worship God, and thinking yourselves superior to other people, separate from them in no respect, and do not make your life different from the heathen, in that you keep neither the feasts nor the Sabbaths, nor have circumcision, and moreover, though you set your hopes on a man that was crucified, you yet hope to obtain some good from God, though you do not do His commandments.¹²⁰

The Jew in *Timothy and Aquila* likewise charges Christians with disobedience because they mix with Gentiles.¹²¹ Other specific violations which Trypho lists are violating the sabbath¹²² and eating food offered to idols.¹²³

Scripture

Another widespread charge of the Jews against Christians was that they distorted Scripture. There are three such charges: (1) that Christians misinterpret Scripture; (2) that they add false

¹¹⁶ OAC, 2.4.

¹¹⁷ OAC, 2.3.

¹¹⁸ OAC, 2.4.

¹¹⁹ TA, 113v.

¹²⁰ DT, 10.3.

¹²¹ TA, 114r.

¹²² DT, 27.1.

¹²³ DT, 35.1.

books to what we would call the Old Testament; and (3) that they write they own false books of Scripture.

In an implicit way, the first charge has already been amply shown in the arguments over interpretation noted above. Trypho makes this explicit as he responds to Justin:

God's statements indeed are holy, but your explanations are artificial, as is clear from those you have given, or, rather, are even blasphemous.¹²⁴

Possibly, rabbinic references to *Gilyon*, which will be discussed below, indicate a Christian practice of marginal notes which give their own interpretations of certain OT passages. If so, these may account for certain Old Testament readings not found in our extant manuscripts which Justin charges have been deleted by the Jews.¹²⁵

The charge that Christians add false books to what we call the Old Testament only occurs in *Timothy and Aquila* in any explicit way:

As you have wished, you Christians have distorted the Scriptures, for you have named many titles from different books, which are not contained in the Hebrew but in the Greek only, and therefore, I want to know why this is? Have not you Christians always truly, as you wished, distorted the Scriptures?¹²⁶

The rabbinic materials make no such explicit claim, but there are occasional references to books of the *Minim*. In one such passage, R. Tarfon (early 2nd century)¹²⁷ says of them:

May I bury my son if I would not burn them (the books) together with their Divine Names if they came to my hand. For even if one pursued me to slay me, or a snake pursued me to bit me, I would enter a heathen temple, but not the houses of these (*Minim*), for the latter know (of God) yet deny (Him), whereas the former are ignorant and deny (Him).¹²⁸

That Christians write their own false Scriptures (NT) is clearly charged by Celsus' Jew, who speaks of "your Gospels."¹²⁹ He claims that the Christians' "own books" are sufficient to refute Christianity, "you fall upon your own swords."¹³⁰ He further charges that they have multiplied such books in an attempt to answer objections to Christianity:

Certain of the Christian believers, like persons who in a fit of drunkenness lay violent hands upon themselves, have corrupted the Gospel from its original

¹²⁴ DT, 79.1.

¹²⁵ DT, 71.2.

¹²⁶ TA, 115v.

¹²⁷ SITM, 113.

¹²⁸ BT, Shab. 116a.

¹²⁹ OAC, 2.49.

¹³⁰ OAC, 2.74.

integrity to a threefold, and fourfold, and many-fold degree, and have remodeled it, so that they might be able to answer objections.¹³¹

A similar attitude is seen in the rabbinic literature. R. Meir makes a pun on the Gospel (Greek, *euangelion*) by calling it *Awen Gilyon*,¹³² Hebrew for "book of falsehood."¹³³ On the same page, we read:

The *Gilyon* and the books of the *Minim* may not be saved from a fire, but they must be burnt in their place.¹³⁴

It is not clear whether the compilers of the *Talmud* understood the term *Gilyon*. The word means "roll" or "scroll," but it is also used for the margins or unwritten portions of the scroll. Some have suggested *Gilyon* is shorthand for "Gospel."¹³⁵ In this passage, *Gilyon* might mean" (1) the margins of "good" books, which are used for heretical notations; (2) the margins of heretical books, which happened to contain Scripture quotations; or (3) a special class of heretical books, the Gospels.

§4. Less Well-Attested Polemical Material

Continuing our discussion of the Jewish polemical materials, we turn now to categories which are not attested in all three sources. In some of these, only the pagan attestation will be lacking, and it is probably safe to consider such material virtually as well-attested as that in the previous section, since both antagonists are agreed. Material lacking Christian attestation is probably also real second-century polemic as Celsus' *True Account* has come to us only through Christian hands and should be considered independent of the rabbinical material.

Material not having rabbinical attestation is more problematical, as one could claim that the other sources have seen Christian tampering. However, we should remember that the rabbinic literature is not intended to preserve a record of Jewish-Christian debate, not to be read by non-Jews, nor (apparently) to serve as apologetic literature for Jews themselves. On the other hand, the pagan and Christian sources are written in the form of Jewish-Christian debates and therefore may contain materials accidentally missing from rabbinical literature. Furthermore, the rabbinic literature does not span the whole spectrum of Jewish theological diversity in the second century, and therefore materials attested only by pagan and Christian sources may give valuable anti-Christian argumentation by non-rabbinic Jews.

Jesus Not the Messiah

An important Jewish charge against Christianity which is not explicitly mentioned in the rabbinic literature (though almost certainly a part of their response to Christianity) is that Jesus is not the Messiah predicted by the Old Testament prophets. This general charge may be subdivided into

¹³¹ OAC, 2.27.

¹³² BT, Shab. 116a.

¹³³ HCTM, 163.

¹³⁴ BT, Shab. 116a.

¹³⁵ See HCTM, 115n1.

three particular attacks: Jesus is not the Messiah because (1) Christian interpretations of OT passages are invalid; (2) Elijah has not yet come; and (3) Messiah is a king but Jesus did not rule.

The first charge is found both in the *Dialogue with Trypho* and in Celsus' *True Account*. Commenting on Isa 40:1-17, which Justin alleges to have been fulfilled by John the Baptist, Trypho responds:

All the words of the prophecy which, Sir, you adduce, are ambiguous, and contain nothing decisive in proof of your argument.¹³⁶

Celsus' Jew similarly charges that the "prophecies referred to the events of his (Jesus') life may also suit other events as well."¹³⁷ Then he goes further and rebukes Jesus, claiming that other persons fit these predictions:

Why should it be you alone, rather than innumerable others, who existed after the prophecies were published, to whom these predictions are applicable?¹³⁸

Later he says "countless individuals will convict Jesus of falsehood, alleging that those predictions which were spoken of him were intended of them."¹³⁹

The second charge, that Jesus is not the Messiah because Elijah has not yet come, is found only in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, where Trypho says:

But Messiah, if indeed He has ever been, and now exists anywhere, is unknown, and does not even know Himself (to be Messiah) at all nor has any power until Elijah shall have come and anointed Him and shall have made Him manifest to all. But you people, by receiving a worthless rumor, shape a kind of Messiah for yourselves, and for His sake are now blindly perishing.¹⁴⁰

Further on, Trypho puts the charge more explicitly:

All of us Jews expect that Christ will be man of merely human origin, and that Elijah will come and anoint Him. But if this man (Jesus) seems to be the Christ, one must certainly acknowledge that He is man of merely human origin. But as Elijah has not come I declare that He is not even Christ.¹⁴¹

Although this charge is not given in the rabbinic literature, several of these details concerning Messiah and Elijah are mentioned there.¹⁴² Likewise the New Testament witnesses to this very objections, "Why do the scribes say Elijah must first come?" (Mark 9:11; Matt 17:10).

¹³⁶ DT, 51.1.

¹³⁷ OAC, 1.50.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ OAC, 1.57.

¹⁴⁰ DT, 8.4.

¹⁴¹ DT, 49.1.

¹⁴² See Williams' notes at DT, 8.4.

The third charge is attested by both Justin and Celsus. Trypho says:

These and suchlike passages of scripture compel us to await One who is great and glorious and takes over the everlasting kingdom from the Ancient of days as Son of man. But this your so-called Christ is without honor and glory, so that He has even fallen into the uttermost curse that is in the law of God, for He was crucified.¹⁴³

Celsus' Jew speaks vigorously to the same point:

The prophets declare the coming one to be a mighty potentate, Lord of all nations and armies. Nor did the prophets predict such a pestilence (as Jesus).¹⁴⁴

Elsewhere he says that if Herod had tried to kill the baby Jesus to keep him from succeeding to the throne, why didn't Jesus reign when he grew up?¹⁴⁵ In a slightly different vein, the Jew points out that the "son of God" was to come "as the Judge of the righteous and punisher of the wicked,"¹⁴⁶ implying that Jesus has done nothing of the sort.

Jesus Not God

Again we consider a general line of polemic not explicit in the rabbinic literature. In view of the rabbinic polemic regarding the oneness of God, it is clear that they would agree that Jesus is not God. However, the arguments below are not cast in the rabbinic mold and probably reflect other Jewish outlooks. These arguments are mostly from Celsus, though a brief sketch in *Timothy and Aquila* touches some of the points. Basically, it is argued that Jesus is not God because (1) God cannot and will not suffer; (2) God would not react to His enemies as Jesus did; and (3) Jesus' divine foreknowledge is fictional.

The Jew in *Timothy and Aquila* puts the first charge as follows: since Jesus was hungry and thirsty, since he was tempted by Satan, later betrayed, whipped, crucified and buried, he can hardly be God. "Would God indeed endure these things from men?"¹⁴⁷

The charges made by Celsus' Jew, which we listed above (page 13), that God could not become man, are applicable here. He agrees with the Jew in *Timothy and Aquila* that God *would not* suffer:

What god, or spirit, or prudent man would not, on foreseeing that such events were to befall him avoid them if he could? Whereas he (Jesus) threw himself headlong into those things which he knew beforehand were to happen.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ DT, 32.1.

¹⁴⁴ OAC, 2.29.

¹⁴⁵ OAC, 1.61.

¹⁴⁶ OAC, 1.49.

¹⁴⁷ TA, 80.

¹⁴⁸ OAC, 2.17.

Moreover, Celsus' Jew goes further and suggests that God *cannot* suffer:

If he had determined upon these things, and underwent chastisement in obedience to his Father, it is manifest that, being a God, and submitting voluntarily, those things that were done agreeably to his own decisions were neither painful nor distressing.¹⁴⁹

Celsus (or his Jewish stand-in) seems to be unaware of Docetism as he remarks:

For you do not even allege this, that he *seemed* to wicked men to suffer this punishment, though not undergoing it in reality. But on the contrary, you acknowledge that he openly suffered.¹⁵⁰

The second charge, that God would not react to His enemies as Jesus did, the Jew in Celsus' *True Account* makes as follows: If Jesus was a God, why did he flee his enemies, both as a baby in Egypt and later during his ministry? Why did he allow his followers to desert and betray him? Why did he allow himself to be taken prisoner?¹⁵¹ The Jew in *Timothy and Aquila* also alludes to Jesus fleeing when Herod killed John the Baptist and to his allowing himself to be betrayed.¹⁵²

Regarding the third charge, Celsus' Jew is suspicious that Jesus' foreknowledge is an invention of his disciples.¹⁵³ Since Jesus is alleged to have known in advance both of his betrayer and his denier, and since he revealed to each of them what they would do, why didn't they "fear him as a God and cease, the one from his intended treason and the other from his perjury?"¹⁵⁴ Celsus' Jew also argues that Jesus' foreknowledge involves him in the guilt of the men who did such wicked acts against himself.¹⁵⁵

Jesus Hung as Accursed of God

This charge is seen quite clearly in the Christian sources. It may be alluded to in the rabbinic and pagan sources, but the case is not clear. One of the few things that we know about the *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus* is that Deut 21:23, "He who is hanged is accursed of God," was discussed therein,¹⁵⁶ although we do not know whether this was a Jewish charge. However, *Timothy and Aquila* definitely has the remark in the mouth of the Jew:

You speak well, not wanting the truth! For Moses himself said: "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." See, then, who you are deifying!¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁹ OAC, 2.23.

¹⁵⁰ OAC, 2.16.

¹⁵¹ OAC, 1.66, 2.9.

¹⁵² TA, 80.

¹⁵³ OAC, 2.13, 15.

¹⁵⁴ OAC, 2.18, 19.

¹⁵⁵ OAC, 2.20.

¹⁵⁶ Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians* 2.3.13.

¹⁵⁷ TA, 100v.

So, too, the *Dialogue with Trypho* has the Jew allude to this verse several times.¹⁵⁸ One of these is cited above (page 23). We give another here:

We doubt whether the Christ was crucified with such dishonor, for he that is crucified is said in the Law to be accursed, so that with regard to this it is hardly possible that I can be persuaded. It is clear that the Scriptures proclaim that the Christ is liable to suffering, but whether it is to be by a form of suffering that is accursed by the Law ...¹⁵⁹

Celsus' Jew, as noted previously, seems to be of a Philonic sort, who has no objection to the Logos as Son of God. However, he objects strenuously to identifying this one with a "most degraded man, who was punished by scourging and crucifixion."¹⁶⁰ Since the term "accursed" is not used, all that can be said here is that this passage may reflect the Jewish view of crucifixion as a supreme curse.

The rabbis are certainly aware of the passage (Deut 21:23), but there is no real evidence that they apply it to Jesus. We have noted above (page 17) the reference that says Jesus was hung on the eve of Passover. There is another passage which cites Deut 21:23 and definitely connects it with crucifixion:

R. Meir (2nd century) used to say, "What is the meaning of (Deut 21:23), 'For a curse of God is he that is hung'?" (It is like the case of) two brothers, twins, who resembled each other. One ruled over the whole world, the other took to robbery. After a time the one who took to robbery was caught and they crucified him on a cross. And everyone who passed to and from said, 'It seems that the king is crucified.' Therefore it is said, 'A curse of God is he that is hung.'¹⁶¹

Jewish Rejection of Jesus

Another polemic against Christianity was that the Jews, who were looking for the Messiah, had rejected the claims of Jesus. This is not used in the rabbinic literature, where no mention is made of Jesus' Messianic claims, but it appears in both Christian and pagan sources. In *Timothy and Aquila*, the Jew remarks:

If our fathers had known and understood concerning this Jesus that he is God, would they have laid hands upon him? They all knew him to be God, didn't they? ... Look, from the divine Scriptures our fathers did not know him as God.¹⁶²

Celsus' Jew also speaks strongly to this point:

¹⁵⁸ DT, 32.1, 89.1, 90.1.

¹⁵⁹ DR, 89.1.

¹⁶⁰ OAC, 2.31.

¹⁶¹ T, Sanh. 9.7.

¹⁶² TA, 132v.

How should we, who have made known to all men that there is to come from God one who is to punish the wicked, treat him with disregard when he came? ... Why did we treat him, whom we announced beforehand, with dishonour? Was it that we might be chastised more than others?¹⁶³

Further on, he resumes the objection:

What God that appeared among men is received with incredulity, and that, too, when appearing to those who expect him? Or why, pray, is he not recognized by those who have been looking for him?¹⁶⁴

He closes with a snide remark, "Did Jesus come into the world for this purpose, that we should not believe him?"¹⁶⁵

Disciples Disreputable

This charge is found in both rabbinical and pagan sources, but not in Christian. A *Baraita* in the *Talmud* gives a long word-play on the subject:

Jesus had five disciples – Matthai, Neqai, Netzer, Buni, and Thodah. They brought Matthai (before the judges). He said, "Must Matthai be killed? For it is written (Ps 42:2), 'Mathai shall (when shall I) come and appear before God.'" They said to him, "Yes, Matthai must be killed, for it is written (Ps 41:5), 'Mathai shall die and his name perish.'" They brought Neqai. He said to them, "Must Neqai be killed? For it is written (Ex 23:7), 'The Naqi (innocent) and righteous thou shalt not slay.'" They said to him, "Yes, Neqai must be killed, for it is written (Ps 10:8), 'In secret places doth he slay Naqi.'" They brought Netzer. He said, "Must Netzer be killed? For it is written (Isa 11:1), 'Netzer (a branch) shall spring from his roots.'" They said to him, "Yes, Netzer must be killed, for it is written (Isa 14:19), 'Thou are cast forth out of thy grave like an abominable Netzer.'" They brought Buni. He said to them, "Must Buni be killed? For it is written (Ex 4:22), 'B'ni (my son) thy first born, Israel.'" They said to him, "Yes, Buni must be killed. For it is written (Ex 4:23), 'Behold I slay Bincha thy son) thy first born.'" They brought Thodah. He said to them, "Must Thodah be killed? For it is written (Ps 100:1), 'A Psalm for Thodah (thanksgiving).'" They said to him, "Yes, Thodah must be killed, for it is written (Ps 50:23), 'Who sacrificeth Thodah honoureth me.'"¹⁶⁶

This passage does not actually state why the disciples are disreputable, but it does picture them as convicted and put to death. Except for Matthai, none of the names are those of Jesus' disciples, though Thodah has been compared to Thaddeus, Neqai to Nicodemus, Buni to

¹⁶³ OAC, 2.8.

¹⁶⁴ OAC, 2.75.

¹⁶⁵ OAC, 2.78.

¹⁶⁶ BT, Sanh. 43a.

Boanerges, and Netzer to Nazarene.¹⁶⁷ Some of the passages cited in favor of the disciples seem to be Messianic proof-texts, however. Probably the names are those terms associated with Jesus which most easily lend themselves to the word-game.

Celsus' Jew is more specific. First he rebukes the disciples for their actions when Jesus was crucified:

Those who were his associates while alive, and who listened to his voice, and enjoyed his instructions as their teacher, on seeing him subjected to punishments and death, neither died with him nor for him ... but denied even that they were his disciples ...¹⁶⁸

Elsewhere he speaks of Jesus as "having gathered around him ten or eleven persons of notorious character, the vary wickedest of tax gatherers and sailors."¹⁶⁹

Christianity Worse than Paganism

In the rabbinic and Christian sources the Jews indicate that Christianity is worse, or more dangerous, than paganism. Earlier (page 20), we cited R. Tarfon's remark that he would enter a pagan temple to escape death, but not the house of a *Min*.¹⁷⁰ In the *Tosefta* we are told:

Flesh which is found in the hand of a Gentile is allowed for use, in the hand of a *Min*, it is forbidden for use Slaughtering by a *Min* is idolatry, their wine is wine offered (to idols), their fruits are not tithed, their books are books of witchcraft, and their sons are bastards. One does not sell to them, or receive from them, or take from them, or give to them; one does not teach their sons trades, and one does not obtain healing from them, either healing of property or healing of life.¹⁷¹

An illustration of this last extreme is found in the *Talmud* where R. Ishmael's nephew Ben Dama has been bitten by a snake and seeks to justify bringing in a Christian¹⁷² healer, Jacob of Kefar Sekaniah. Ben Dama dies before he completes his argument, and his uncle rejoices that he died before he was able to sin, for the "teaching of *Minim* ... draws, and one may be drawn after them."¹⁷³

The *Dialogue with Trypho* also illustrates this charge. Trypho laments the fact that Justin has turned from Greek philosophy to Christianity:

I admire your zeal for the Divine, but it were better for you to continue to hold the philosophy of Plato or some other learned man, practicing the while endurance

¹⁶⁷ HCTM, 92-93; Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 63.

¹⁶⁸ OAC, 2.45.

¹⁶⁹ OAC, 1.62.

¹⁷⁰ BT, Shab. 116a.

¹⁷¹ T, Hul. 2.20-21.

¹⁷² BT, A. Z. 17a.

¹⁷³ BT, A. Z. 27b

and self-control and temperance, than to have been completely led away by false speech, and to follow men of no account. For while you remained in that mode of philosophy and lived a blameless life, a hope was left you of a better fate, but when you have forsaken God, and placed your hope on a man, what kind of salvation yet remains for you?¹⁷⁴

Elsewhere he mentions the fact that "our teachers" have made a law that Jews should not argue or converse with Christians.¹⁷⁵

It is not hard to see why this particular charge is not found in Celsus. For no matter what the Jews whom Celsus knew thought about the relative merits of paganism and Christianity, Celsus himself was a pagan, and a major thrust of his *True Account* is to show Christianity worse than Judaism!

Gospel Ethics Not Practised

Trypho speaks highly of the ethical principles found in Christian scripture, but he does not think they are capable of being observed:

I know too that the commands given you in what is called the Gospel are so admirable and great, that I suspect that no one can keep them. For I took some trouble to read them.¹⁷⁶

Except for the commendation, the *Talmud* presents a similar charge, though more indirectly, through stories. In the first:

A certain *Min* said to R. Haninah (probably early 3rd century),¹⁷⁷ "we are better than you. Of you it is written, 'For Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom' (1 Kings 11:16); whereas you have been with us many years, yet we have not done anything to you!" Said he to him, "If you agree, a disciple will debate it with you." Thereupon R. Oshaia debated it with him and said to him, "The reason is because you do not know how to act. If you would destroy all, they are not among you (some Jews are outside the Roman Empire). Should you destroy those who among you, then you will be called a murderous kingdom!" Said he to him, "By the Capitol of Rome! With this care we lie down and with this we get up."¹⁷⁸

Herford argues that this *Min* knows too much Old Testament for a pagan and is too anti-Semitic for a Jewish-Christian; therefore he must be a Gentile Christian.¹⁷⁹ I find this difficult to believe in view of the oath at the end of the quotation.

¹⁷⁴ DT, 8.3.

¹⁷⁵ DT, 38.1.

¹⁷⁶ DT, 10.2.

¹⁷⁷ SITM, 119-20.

¹⁷⁸ BT, Pes. 87b.

¹⁷⁹ HCTM, 249.

The other story obviously involves a Christian, and the characters lived early in the second century:

Imma Shalom, R. Eliezer's wife, was R. Gamaliel's sister. Now a certain philosopher lived in his vicinity, and he bore a reputation that he did not accept bribes. They wished to expose him, so she brought him a golden lamp, went before him, and said to him, "I desire a share be given me in my (deceased) father's estate." "Divide," ordered he. Said he (R. Gamaliel) to him, "It is decreed for us, 'Where there is a son, a daughter does not inherit.'" He replied, "Since the day that you were exiled from your land the Law of Moses has been superseded and another book given, wherein it is written, 'A son and a daughter inherit equally.'" The next day, he (Gamaliel) brought to him a Lybian ass. Said he (presumably the philosopher-judge) to them, "Look at the end of the book, wherein it is written, 'I came not to destroy the Law of Moses nor to add to the Law of Moses,' and it is written therein (Law of Moses) 'A daughter does not inherit where there is a son.'" Said she to him, "Let thy light shine forth like a lamp!" Said R. Gamaliel to him, "An ass came and knocked the lamb over!"¹⁸⁰

§5. Slightly-Attested Polemical Material

In this chapter we conclude our catalog of charges brought against Christianity by second-century Jews. Here we list polemics attested only by a single source (as before, counting the Christian sources as a single source for this purpose). As it happens, the examples we find are from Christian or pagan rather than Jewish sources.

Jesus Cannot Be a True Prophet

One interesting charge, which occurs only in the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, is that Jesus cannot be a true prophet because prophecy has ceased. Citing Zechariah 13:3-4, the Jews claims that

The Lord God commanded through Zechariah concerning a prophet, that one should no longer prophesy.... Therefore, the Holy Spirit having said through the prophet that in those days there will be no prophet, how shall we say concerning this Jesus, that he was a prophet?¹⁸¹

Jews Do Not Need Christ

In the *Dialogue with Trypho*, the following remark is made by Trypho. It is probably intended to be ironic rather than serious:

¹⁸⁰ BT, Shab. 116b.

¹⁸¹ TA, 132v.

Let Him be recognized of you who are of the Gentiles, as Lord and Christ and God, as the Scriptures signify, seeing also that you have acquired the name of Christians from Him. But as for us, who are worshipers of the God who made even Him – we do not need to confess Him or worship Him.¹⁸²

Jesus' Spectacular Baptism Poorly Attested

Only Celsus mentions this charge. When his Jew questions Jesus, he says:

When you were bathing beside John, you say that what had the appearance of a bird from the air alighted upon you.... What credible witness beheld this appearance? Or who heard a voice from heaven declaring you to be the Son of God? What proof is there, save your own assertion, and the statement of another of those individuals who have been punished along with you?¹⁸³

Origen, responding to Celsus' *True Account*, is especially suspicious of this last sentence:

The Jews do not connect John with Jesus, nor the punishment of John with that of Christ. And by this instance, this man who boasts of universal knowledge is convicted of not knowing what words he ought to ascribe to a Jew engaged in a disputation with Jesus.¹⁸⁴

Indeed, this charge looks more like someone arguing with the Gospel account than one dealing with the historical events on the basis of independent testimony. But this may well be the case for Jews far removed from Palestine.

Jesus Himself Gained Few Adherents

Here again we have a charge from Celsus alone, though he seems to feel it is based on facts admitted by Christians:

Is it not the height of absurdity to maintain that, if, while he himself was alive, he won over not a single person to his views, after his death any who wish are able to gain over such a multitude of individuals?¹⁸⁵

Elsewhere Celsus' Jew is represented as saying that Jesus did not even gain over his own disciples during his lifetime.¹⁸⁶ Presumably, Celsus' attack again depends on the Gospel account of the disciples' betrayal, flight and denial mentioned earlier (page 27).

¹⁸² DT, 64.1.

¹⁸³ OAC, 1.41.

¹⁸⁴ OAC, 1.48.

¹⁸⁵ OAC, 2.46.

¹⁸⁶ OAC, 2.39.

Why Were the Post-Resurrection Appearances to So Few?

Another polemic found in Celsus alone deals with Jesus' post-resurrection appearances:

If Jesus desired to show that his power was really divine, he ought to have appeared to those who had ill-treated him, and to him who had condemned him, and to all men universally.... For he had no longer occasion to fear any man after his death, being, as you say, a God; nor was he sent into the world at all for the purpose of being hid.¹⁸⁷

Earlier Celsus' Jew complains also about the quality of the persons to whom Jesus made appearances:

Who beheld this? A half-frantic woman, as you state, and some other one, perhaps, of those who were engaged in the same system of delusion, who had either dreamed so, owing to a peculiar state of mind, or under the influence of a wandering imagination had formed to himself an appearance according to his own wishes, which has been the case with numberless individuals, or, which is more probable, one who desired to impress others with this portent, and by such a falsehood to furnish an occasion to impostors like himself.¹⁸⁸

Old Testament Gentile Prophecies Refer to Proselytes

Only Christian sources mention this charge, though doubtless it was a common Jewish interpretation. For Justin, citing Isa 42:6-7 as predicting the Gentiles who would believe in Christ, anticipates and receives a strong reaction from the Jews who had come to listen to the second day of his dispute with Trypho.¹⁸⁹ The Jew in *Timothy and Aquila* says about the same thing when the Christian cites Ps 85:9-10 and Isa 2:2-3:

Haven't I also spoke thus, that the Egyptians, Ethiopians and the Sabaean have followed its laws? And look, even now you have said the same thing: "A law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."¹⁹⁰

Other Christian Teachings Attacked

Celsus also has his Jew disparage certain other Christian doctrines which we know were widely held by the Jews also, namely the resurrection of the dead, divine judgment beyond this life, rewards for the just, and fire for the wicked.¹⁹¹ It is not necessary, however, to assume that Celsus has misrepresented Judaism here. It is possible that one of his informants agreed with the Sadducees on these matters.

¹⁸⁷ OAC, 2.63, 67.

¹⁸⁸ OAC, 2.55.

¹⁸⁹ DT, 122.3-4.

¹⁹⁰ TA, 127v-128r.

¹⁹¹ OAC, 2.5.

§6. Conclusions

In this paper we have attempted to collect the Jewish polemic materials against Christianity which were current in the second century. It would be quite presumptuous to claim that we have located all such material, though it is to be hoped that most of the extant material in second-century sources has been located. The following is a brief summary of the materials recovered.

Among the best-attested material we have the claim that God is strictly one, therefore he has no Son. Some Jews, however, seem to have been more open on this matter. Less well-attested, but related, is the claim that God cannot become man, and therefore the Messiah is not God. Also well-attested are Jewish attacks on the Messianic interpretation of various OT passages, in particular Psalm 2 and 100, and Isaiah 7:14. The birth of Jesus is seen as illegitimate or, at best, natural, and the story of the virgin birth an invention similar to the pagan myths. Jesus' miracles are dismissed as magic, either supernatural but demonic, or natural sleight-of-hand. The Christians are also attacked for claiming that the Mosaic covenant has been abrogated and for living as though it is no longer binding. They are further charged with distorting Scripture, whether by misinterpretation, by acceptance of Jewish books that aid their case, or by writing books of their own.

Rather less well-attested are the following polemics. Jesus cannot be the Messiah because he does not fit the OT prophecies, particularly because Elijah has not yet come, and because Jesus did not reign as the Messiah must. Among those who are more open on the oneness of God, Jesus cannot be God because his suffering and behavior in general is inconsistent with deity. Also moderately well-attested is the charge that Jesus died under the curse of God since he was hung. Furthermore, Jesus was rejected by those who were expecting the Messiah. His own disciples were unsavory characters. Christians cannot and do not keep the ethical principles they teach. In fact, Christianity is even worse than paganism, rejecting God in the face of greater knowledge.

The least well-attested polemics from this period are as follows. Jesus cannot be a true prophet, for true prophecy has ceased. The Jews do not need Christ anyway; they worship the God who made him. The story of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism is an invention, being attested only by Jesus and John the Baptist. Jesus himself gained virtually no real adherents during his lifetime, and he was seen after his resurrection only by a few biased or unstable persons. The growth of Christianity among the Gentiles is not a fulfillment of OT prophecy, for the prophecies adduced refer to proselytes to Judaism. Christianity in any case depends upon those less-refined forms of Judaism which believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead to a divine judgment.

It appears, therefore, in spite of the fact that we have no real accounts of Jewish-Christian debate written by Jews, that we may get a fair idea of the sort of argumentation employed. Naturally, one does not argue with an opponent concerning points on which both are agreed, so we see some different arguments used by the rabbis than by a rather Philonic Roman Jew (if this is not Celsus' own outlook), and a Hellenistic Palestinian or Alexandrian, depending on whether or not they share certain viewpoints with their Christian antagonists. We also see a different style of argumentation in the various sources, corresponding partly to the different backgrounds of the

disputants. Justin and Trypho engage in a philosophical discussion, Timothy and Aquila (Jason and Papiscus?) in a formal public debate. Celsus' presentation shows the Roman penchant for rhetoric, and one can almost picture his Jew addressing the Senate. Most of the rabbinic arguments are cast as clever encounters with heretics, only the episode of R. Eliezer and Jacob of Kefar Sekaniah¹⁹² resembling the sort of discussion carried on between rabbis.

There does not seem to be sufficient evidence for charging either Celsus or the Christians with distortion of the Jewish position. The argument brought forth by them are as strong as anything in the rabbinic materials, excepting only that in the Christian sources the Jewish arguments are merely sketched.

Several lines for further study may be suggested at this point. It is probable that more material relating to the Jewish-Christian confrontation can be quarried from the rabbinic material, especially in the form of OT exegesis adopted in reaction to Christianity. The Jewish *Targumim* and liturgical materials may also contain anti-Christian polemical material.

From the Christian side, Tertullian wrote a work against the Jews at the beginning of the third century, which therefore can be expected to contain much material from the second century. The Gnostic material and NT apocrypha which can be shown to date from this century ought also to be examined for evidences of Jewish polemic.

More work could be done with the Jews pictured in Celsus' *True Account*, Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, and *Timothy and Aquila*, seeking to fit them into the spectrum of second-century Judaism. It would also be interesting (and worthwhile) to translate the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* into English, as it seems to contain some valuable material on text and canon of both the OT and NT in the second century, as well as a long section on Aquila the Bible translator, and some chronological material.

As in any area of scholarship, the more deeply one examines a problem, the more branches it seems to put forth. Truly, "of making many books there is no end."

¹⁹² BT, A. Z. 17a.