

Polemics reheated? The reception of ancient anti-Christian writings in the Enlightenment

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I.

Among the early critics of Christianity the most notorious were the philosophers Celsus and Porphyry, the rhetor and senator Fronto of Cirta, the prefect of Egypt Hierocles and, finally, the emperor Julian¹. None of their anti-Christian works has survived in entirety, since they were systematically destroyed once Christianity prevailed in the struggle for imperial favour². Except for the odd paraphrase by opponents nothing has remained of the works of Fronto and Hierocles. Harnack's reconstruction appeared to have recovered large parts of Porphyry's work *Adversus Christianos* from the anti-pagan apology by Macarius Magnes³. This reconstruction has been called into question⁴ so that most of the text remains lost to us⁵. Considerable chunks, however, of Celsus' Ἀληθῆς λόγος and Julian's *Contra Galilaeos* have been preserved in the writings of their opponents Origen (*Contra Celsum*) and Cyril of Alexandria (*Contra Iulianum*) so that we can assemble a fairly clear account of their respective arguments.

¹ The following text is a revised and expanded version of a lecture I delivered on 5 September 2006 at the Faculty of Theology of Aarhus University within the Research Priority Area "Religion and Normativity". During my stay at Aarhus I was very well looked after by my colleagues Dr. Nils Arne Pedersen and Dr. Jakob Engberg, for which I am very grateful. I am indebted to Christopher Hays (Bonn) for his meticulous revisions of my English text.

² Constantine had Porphyry's writings burnt; cf. Constantine's letter in Socr., h.e. I 9 = Gel. Cyz., h.e. II 36. In 448 Theodosius II and Valentinian III repeated this order (Cod. Iust. I 1,3). Cf. also Justinian's law of 536 prohibiting possession of Porphyry's book *Contra Christianos* (Cod. Iust., Nov. 42,1,2). Cf. G. Rinaldi, *La Bibbia dei pagani*, vol. 1, *La Bibbia nella storia* 19, Bologna 1997, 135-137; J.G. Cook, *The interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman paganism*, STAC 3, Tübingen 2000, 125f.

³ A. von Harnack, Porphyrius, "Gegen die Christen", 15 Bücher. Zeugnisse, Fragmente und Referate, APAW.PH 1916, Berlin 1916; idem, *Neue Fragmente des Werks des Porphyrius gegen die Christen. Die Pseudo-Polycarpiana und die Schrift des Rhetors Pacatus gegen Porphyrius*, SPAW 1921, 266-284; idem, *Nachträge zur Abhandlung "Neue Fragmente des Werks des Porphyrius gegen die Christen"*, SPAW 1921, 834f.

⁴ Cf. discussion in W. Kinzig, *The Pagans and the Christian Bible*, in: J. Schaper/J.C. Paget (eds.), *Cambridge history of the Bible*, new edition, Cambridge 2009 (forthcoming).

⁵ A survey of research since the seventeenth century is found in Rinaldi, *Bibbia* (see note 2), 137f.

Did the ancient opponents of Christianity influence attitudes to Christianity in the Enlightenment⁶ and thus contribute to the process of modern secularization? This is the question which I would like to tackle in this paper. I will concentrate on Celsus and Julian and leave aside the more complex case of Porphyry. Geographically, I will limit myself to Britain, France and Germany.

Contemporary observers of the Enlightenment already saw a direct line running from Celsus and Julian to the philosophy of their time⁷. Modern scholars such as Henri Busson, Lucien Febvre, François Berriot or Wolfgang Gericke have also emphasized the influence of ancient philosophers critical of Christianity on Enlightenment thought⁸. Berriot claimed that until around 1650 “the emerging rationalist thought and the materialism” drew their arguments in their battle against Christianity from antiquity and from authors like Julian and Celsus⁹. According to Gericke the religious criticism which was typical of the Enlightenment was based on two things. First, the opposition against Christianity in antiquity, after its rediscovery, was turned against the Church and in particular against the traditional way of describing the history of the Church. Secondly, new explanations of natural phenomena which Newton and Galilei had developed were now applied to the field of psychology and the human spirit¹⁰.

⁶ As regards ‘Enlightenment’ as historical term and its implications cf. e.g. R. Porter, *Kleine Geschichte der Aufklärung*, Wagenbach Taschenbuch 192, Berlin 1991; R. Porter, *Enlightenment. Britain and the creation of the modern world*, London 2000; G. Himmelfarb, *The roads to modernity. The British, French and American Enlightenments*, New York 2004; A. Borgstedt, *Das Zeitalter der Aufklärung, Kontroversen um die Geschichte*, Darmstadt 2004.

⁷ Thus in his poem *The strong spirits (Die starken Geister)* the conservative “Hofrat” at the court of Saxe-Gotha, Ludwig Friedrich Lenz (1717-1780), lamented the detrimental effect that the free-thinking spirits of his time were having on the fabric of society and denounced them as epigones of Celsus, Julian and Porphyry, who argued with more wit but less wisdom than their spiritual ancestors. Cf. L.F. Lenz, *Gedichte verschiedenen Inhalts*, Altenburg 1781, 45f. – On Lenz cf. H. Reinitzer, *Art. Lenz, Ludwig Friedrich*, *Killy Literaturlexikon* 7, 1990, 228.

⁸ L. Febvre, *Origène et Des Periers, ou l'énigme du “Cymbalum Mundi”*, Paris 1942; H. Busson, *Le rationalisme dans la littérature française de la Renaissance (1533-1601)*, *De Pétrarque à Descartes* 1, second edition Paris 1957, 335-338 and passim; W. Gericke, *Das Buch “De tribus impostoribus”*, *Quellen. Neue Folge* 2, Berlin 1982, 95-97; idem, *Theologie und Kirche im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, *KGE* 3/2, Berlin 1989, 55.66-68.77.87.93; idem, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus und die Untergrundliteratur seiner Zeit*, *PuN* 18, 1992, (118-131) 120f.

⁹ F. Berriot, *Athéismes et athéistes au XVI^e siècle en France*, vol. 1, Lille, 1984, 575: “C’est qu’en fait, sans qu’on puisse vraiment affirmer que la polémique anti-chrétienne est figée dès l’époque de Celse, il faut bien avouer qu’à la Renaissance et qu’au début de l’âge classique, la critique du christianisme par la pensée rationaliste ou le matérialisme naissants se nourrit essentiellement du message de l’antiquité et cela jusque vers 1650 semble-t-il. [...] Cependant, de façon générale [...] les ‘libertins’ de la fin du XVI^e siècle et du début du XVII^e siècle, à quelques exceptions près, se borneront souvent à reprendre les arguments de Julien et surtout de Celse, dans le *Discours véritable contre les Chrétiens*.”

¹⁰ W. Gericke, *Glaubenszeugnisse und Konfessionspolitik der Brandenburgischen Herrscher bis zur Preußischen Union 1540-1815*, *UnCo* 6, Bielefeld 1977, 76.

This discussion, however, is fraught with a number of serious difficulties. To begin with, research into the seventeenth and eighteenth century reception of the ancient enemies of Christianity is very uneven. The case of Julian has been fully documented in the last decades in a series of publications, in particular with regard to France and Germany, but, as we will see, the actual influence of Julian's thought as opposed to his person has so far not often been investigated¹¹. As regards Celsus, research mainly addresses the situation in the Renaissance and the Reformation period and focuses on Origen's reply or on Origen in general rather than on the philosopher Celsus himself¹². The extent of these authors' influence on

¹¹ Cf. R. Foerster, *Kaiser Julian in der Dichtung alter und neuer Zeit, Studien zur vergleichenden Literaturgeschichte* 5/1, Berlin 1905; K. Philip, *Julianus Apostata in der deutschen Literatur, Stoff- und Motivgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 3, Berlin/Leipzig 1929; J. Bidez, *La tradition manuscrite et les éditions des discours de l'Empereur Julien*, Université de Gand, Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, *Recueil de travaux* 61, Gent 1929; J.S. Spink, *The reputation of Julian the 'Apostate' in the Enlightenment*, *Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century* 57, 1967, 1399-1415; R.J. Ziegler, *Julian the Apostate. A study of his reputation from the Renaissance to Gibbon*, Diss., Rochester (New York) 1971 (non vidi); C. Mervaud, *Julien l'Apostat dans la correspondance de Voltaire et Frédéric II*, *RHLF* 76, 1976, 724-743; R. Braun/J. Richer (eds.), *L'Empereur Julien. De la légende au mythe*, CEA, 2 volumes, Paris 1978.1981; J.-M. Moureaux, *D'Argens éditeur de Julien*, *Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth-century* 267, Oxford 1989, 139-198; idem, *D'Argens éditeur de l'Empereur Julien*, in: J.-L. Vissière (ed.), *Colloque international de 1988. Le Marquis d'Argens, Aix-en-Provence 1990*, 157-166; J.-M. Moureaux (ed.), *Voltaire, Discours de l'empereur Julien contre les chrétiens. Édition critique avec une introduction et un commentaire*, *Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth Century* 322, Oxford 1994; B. Neveu, *Un académicien du XVIII^e siècle, traducteur et biographe de l'Empereur Julien. L'abbé de La Bletterie*, *CRAI*, 2000, 93-113; I. Backus, *Images du paganisme dans les histoires ecclésiastiques du XVI^e siècle*, in: M. Nancy/É. Rebillard (eds.), *Hellénisme et christianisme, Mythes, Imaginaires, Religions*, Villeneuve d'Ascq 2004, 171-195; K. Rosen, *Julian. Kaiser, Gott und Christenhasser*, Stuttgart 2006, 394-462. – Research on Cyril's influence in later times is scarce; cf. e.g. P. Strawn, *Cyril of Alexandria as a Source for Martin Chemnitz*, in: D.C. Steinmetz (ed.), *Die Patristik in der Biblexegese des 16. Jahrhunderts, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen* 85, Wiesbaden 1999, 205-230.

¹² Cf. e.g. Febvre, *Origène et Des Periers* (see note 8), 76-104.125-131; Busson, *Le rationalisme* (see note 8), 335-338; L. Giusso, *Origene e il Rinascimento*, *Biblioteca della 'Rassegna di cultura e vita scolastica'* 18, Rom 1957 (non vidi; on which cf. M. Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus*, *BBGW* 140, Basel/Stuttgart 1979, 2 (note 10): "Eine unwissenschaftliche Arbeit!"); E. Wind, *The Revival of Origen*, in: D. Miner (ed.), *Studies in art and literature for Bella da Costa Greene*, Princeton 1954, 412-424; D.P. Walker, *Origène en France au début du XVI^e siècle*, in: *Centre d'Études Supérieures Spécialisé d'Histoire des Religions «Strasbourg»* (as editor), *Courants religieux et humanisme à la fin du XV^e et au début du XVI^e siècle. Colloque de Strasbourg*, 9-11 mai 1957, *Travaux du Centre d'Études supérieures spécialisé d'Histoire des Religions de Strasbourg. Bibliothèque des Centres d'Études supérieures spécialisés*, Paris 1959, 101-119; H. Crouzel, *Pic de la Mirandole et Origène*, *BLE* 66, 1965, 81-106.174-194.272-288; A. Godin, *De Vitrier à Origène. Recherches sur la patristique érasmienne*, in: *Centre Universitaire de L'État* (as editor), *Colloquium Erasmianum. Actes du Colloque International réuni à Mons du 26 au 29 oct. 1967 à l'occasion du Cinquième Centenaire de la Naissance d'Érasme*, Mons 1968, 47-57; A. Godin, *Érasme et le modèle origénien de la prédication*, in: J.-C. Margolin (ed.), *Colloquia Erasmiana Turonensia*, vol. 2. *De Pétrarque à Descartes* 24, Paris 1972, 820; H. Crouzel, *Une controverse sur Origène à*

the Enlightenment's attitude towards the Bible and the Church has largely remained unaddressed.

Additionally, there is the problem of evidence. Modern databanks like those used in the research for this paper¹³ provide such a wealth of fully searchable source texts that it is often difficult to see the forest for the trees. There are literally thousands of quotations to sort out by separating central texts from those ephemeral to our problem. Yet at the same time there is a considerable variety in the scope of these databanks and in the way they make the evidence accessible to the scholar through search or browse options. Thus in the end the overall picture may still be biased in spite of the wealth of sources available online.

Finally, there are methodological obstacles. When Celsus and Julian are quoted by an Enlightenment author, we cannot always be certain that he is quoting directly from the original sources or second- or even third-hand. Even more difficult are those cases in which ancient sources may have been used, but no references are given. The only way to make some progress in

la Renaissance. Jean Pic de la Mirandole et Pierre Garcia. Textes présentés, traduits et annotés, De Pétrarque à Descartes 36, Paris 1977; Schär, Das Nachleben des Origenes (see above); T.J. Wengert, "Qui vigilantissimis oculis veterum omnium commentarios excusserit". Philip Melancthon's Patristic Exegesis, in: Steinmetz, Die Patristik in der Biblexegese (see note 11), (115-134) 131-133; C. Burger, Gegen Origenes und Hieronymus für Augustin. Philipp Melancthons Auseinandersetzung mit Erasmus über die Kirchenväter, in: G. Frank/T. Leinkauf/M. Wriedt (eds.), Die Patristik in der frühen Neuzeit. Die Relektüre der Kirchenväter in den Wissenschaften des 15. bis 18. Jahrhunderts, Melancthon-Schriften der Stadt Bretten 10, Stuttgart 2006, 13-26; H.A. Hall, Melancthon and the Cappadocians, in: Frank/Leinkauf/Wriedt (eds.), Die Patristik in der frühen Neuzeit (see above), (27-47) 44f.; S. Lalla, Robert Bellarmin und die Kirchenväter, in: Frank/Leinkauf/Wriedt (eds.), Die Patristik in der frühen Neuzeit (see above), (49-63) 55f.; M. Rizzi, Patristische Exegese und politische Theologie im sechzehnten Jahrhundert. Eine Forschungsperspektive, in: Frank/Leinkauf/Wriedt (eds.), Die Patristik in der frühen Neuzeit (see above), 327-349. – Often studies of *Contra Celsum* begin with research in the nineteenth century. Cf. e.g. W. Völker, Das Bild vom nichtgnostischen Christentum bei Celsus, Halle (Saale) 1928, 7-17; M. Borret, Origenes – Contre Celse, vol. 5. Introduction générale, tables et index, SC 227, Paris 1976, 141-182; K. Pichler, Streit um das Christentum. Der Angriff des Kelsos und die Antwort des Origenes, RSTh 23, Frankfurt a.M./Bern 1980, 5-101; Die "Wahre Lehre" des Kelsos, übersetzt und erklärt von H.E. Lona, Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten 1, Freiburg 2005, 57-69. – Cf. however D. Breuer, Origenes im 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland, Seminar 21, 1985, 1-30 and R. Häfner, Johann Lorenz Mosheim und die Origenes-Rezeption in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts, in: M. Mulso/R. Häfner/F. Neumann/H. Zedelmaier (eds.), Johann Lorenz Mosheim (1693-1755). Theologie im Spannungsfeld von Philosophie, Philologie und Geschichte, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 77, Wiesbaden 1997, 229-260, who both deal with the reception of Origen in the eighteenth century. – Further studies are to be expected in the proceedings of the conference on "Patristische Tradition und intellektuelle Paradigmen im 17. Jahrhundert" (Kappel am Albis, 7-10 September 2006), edited by Silke-Petra Bergjan (for details cf. URL <<http://www.theologie.uzh.ch/faecher/kirchengeschichte/silke-petra-bergjan/Kappel.html>>; accessed: 27/06/2009).

¹³ In particular, I have made frequent use of the following databanks: Eighteenth Century Collections Online; Gallica; Projekt Gutenberg-de; Project Gutenberg; The Digital Library of Classic Protestant Texts; The Digital Library of the Catholic Reformation; Early English Books Online; the Internet Archive and others.

these situations would be through detailed study of each individual author, his education, his knowledge of antiquity, his library and so on.

Within the scope of this paper I cannot, of course, hope to fill this gap. I can, however, try to make some soundings in significant places in order to see where it is worth exploring the subject further. As I am mainly interested in religious criticism, I will not deal with other works which also draw upon Celsus and Julian, such as writings on witchcraft¹⁴. In order to stand on solid ground, I will concentrate on authors who explicitly quote their ancient sources.

II.

It appears that the details of the criticism of Christianity which Celsus and Julian had uttered in the second and fourth centuries respectively were seldom mentioned until the first Latin editions of *Contra Celsum* and *Contra Iulianum* appeared in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries¹⁵. Origen's and Cyril's works were soon thereafter quoted for apologetic and polemical purposes in the fast growing literature dealing with the controversies between Catholics and Protestants¹⁶ or between

¹⁴ These works can be easily accessed and browsed in the online-edition of the "Witchcraft Collection" of Cornell University Library, URL <<http://historical.library.cornell.edu/witchcraft/about.html>>; accessed: 27/06/2009.

¹⁵ A Latin translation of *Contra Celsum* was first edited in 1481 by Christophorus Persona and variously reprinted. This translation belongs in the context of a revival of Origen in humanist circles of Venice and Rome. Cf. Wind, *The Revival of Origen* (see note 12), 419; Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes* (see note 12), 112-126.168-171. – It was translated again by Sigismund Gelenius in 1545; cf. Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes* (see note 12), 295f.; P. Petitmengin, *Un ami de Melanchthon. Sigismundus Gelenius, éditeur et traducteur de textes classiques et patristiques*, in: Frank/Leinkauf/Wriedt (eds.), *Die Patristik in der frühen Neuzeit* (see note 12), 65-92. – The text of *Contra Iulianum* was first edited in Latin in 1528 by the reformer of Basel, Johannes Oecolampadius. For details cf. W. Kinzig, *Oekolampads Übersetzung der Schrift Contra Iulianum des Kyrill von Alexandrien*, in: A. Lexutt/W. Matz (eds.), *Relationen – Studien zum Übergang vom Spätmittelalter zur Reformation. Festschrift zu Ehren von Prof. Dr. Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen*, *Arbeiten zur historischen und systematischen Theologie* 1, Münster 2000, 154-187. – As regards the history of *Contra Celsum* prior to its editio princeps cf. Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes* (see note 12), 53-55.97-100.110f. – As regards the history of the printed text of *Contra Celsum* cf. Origenes, *Werke* I. *Die Schrift vom Martyrium*. Buch 1-4 gegen Celsus, ed. by P. Koetschau, GCS 2, Leipzig 1899, LXXII-LXXIII; Borret, *Origenes* (see note 12), 27-30; Gericke, *De tribus impostoribus* (see note 8), 96; Lona, *Die "Wahre Lehre"* (see note 12), 12-16; Origenes, *Contra Celsum Libri VIII*, ed. M. Marcovich, SVigChr 54, Leiden/Boston/Köln 2001, XIII-XIV. For *Contra Iulianum* cf. also Cyrille d'Alexandrie, *Contre Julien*, tome 1. Livres I et II, introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes par P. Burguière et P. Évieux, SC 322, Paris 1985, 78-80; E. Masaracchia, *Giuliano Imperatore, Contra Galilaeos*, introduzione, testo critico traduzione, Testi e commenti/Texts and Commentaries 9, Rome 1990, 20f.

¹⁶ For example, these authors were cited very frequently by Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) in the three volumes of his *Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei*, Ingolstadt 1581-1593; cf. Lalla, *Robert Bellarmin* (see note 12), 55f. – Celsus and Julian also loom

various factions within the Church of England¹⁷. These authors were usually not interested in Celsus' or Julian's polemics against Christianity or if they were, they quoted them in order to denounce the unbelief of these 'heathens' and/or their respective religious opponents¹⁸. This does not mean, however, that these polemics were not read in certain free-thinking circles. In fact, there is some evidence that information taken from these authors was passed around in the religious underground of the sixteenth century. Thus in 1537/1538 Bonaventure Des Périers (†1543)¹⁹ may have used Celsus' pamphlet in the satirical dialogues of his *Cymbalum Mundi*, in which he attacked the dogmatic fanaticism and the intolerance of the clergy and the theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, of his time²⁰. The

large in the controversy between the Huguenot theologian Jean Claude (1619-1682) and Jansenist Antoine Arnauld (1612-1694) over the doctrine of the Eucharist in 1669-1674; cf. e.g. A. Arnauld, *La perpétuité de la foi de l'église catholique touchant l'eucharistie, défendue contre les livres du Sieur Claude, Ministre de Charenton*, vol. 3 [1674], Paris/Lausanne 1781, 436-440.452-459 where he argues that the silence of Celsus and Julian about the doctrine of transubstantiation was no argument against its existence in the Early Church. On Arnauld, cf. H. Jaumann, *Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur der Frühen Neuzeit*, vol. 1. Bio-bibliographisches Repertorium, Berlin/New York 2004, 44f.

¹⁷ Thus Origen and Cyril are used by John Martiall (1534-1597), James Calfhill (1529/1530-1570) and William Fulke (1536/1537-1589) in their controversy over the use of the cross and of images; cf. J. Martiall, *A treatyse of the crosse gathred out of the Scriptures, counnelles, and auncient fathers of the primitiue Church*, Antwerpen 1564, fol. 21r-22v.33r-v.85r.120r-121v; J. Calfhill, *An aunswere to the treatise of the crosse*, London 1565, fol. 31r-32v.35r-v.48r-v.51r-v.172v-173v; J. Martiall, *A replie to M. Calfhills blasphemous answer made against the treatise of the crosse*, Louvaine 1566, fol. 198r (erroneously 199r)-199r; W. Fulke, *A Rejoinder to John Martiall's Reply Against the Answer of Master Calfhill to the Blasphemous Treatise of the Cross [1580]*, in: idem, *Stapleton's fortress overthrown. A rejoinder to Martiall's reply. A discovery of the dangerous book of the popish church commende by Sanders*, ed. by R. Gibbings, Cambridge 1848, (125-212) 199f. For details of the controversy cf. L.E.C. Wooding, *Art. Martiall, John (1534-1597)*, *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, 2004, URL <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18171>>; accessed: 27/06/2009.

¹⁸ Surprisingly, John Owen (1616-1683) attacked the Franciscan John Vincent Canes by comparing his polemic against Protestantism with Celsus' polemic against Christianity; cf. J. Owen, *Animadversions on a treatise intituled Fiat lux. or, A guide in differences of religion, between Papist and Protestant, Presbyterian and Independent*, London 1662, 29-35.77.160.217; idem, *A Vindication of the Animadversions on Fiat Lux*, London 1664, preface and 93-98. Incidentally, in the same work Owen uses the evidence from Celsus to argue against images; cf. Owen, *Vindication* (see above), 493f. On Owen cf. R.L. Greaves, *Art. Owen, John (1616-1683)*, *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, 2004, URL <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21016>>; accessed: 27/06/2009.

¹⁹ On Des Périers cf. Jaumann, *Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur* (see note 16), 224f.

²⁰ As regards the *Cymbalum* cf. W. Boerner, *Das "Cymbalum Mundi" des Bonaventure Des Périers. Eine Satire auf die Redepraxis im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung, Humanistische Bibliothek, Abhandlungen, Texte, Skripten Reihe 1, 32*, München 1980; Berriot, *Athéismes et athéistes* (see note 9), 669-679; M. Gauna, *Upwellings. First expressions of unbelief in the printed literature of the French Renaissance*, Cranbury (New Jersey) 1992, 108-204; W. Schröder, *Ursprünge des Atheismus. Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik- und Religionskritik des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts, Quaestiones 11*, Stuttgart 1998, 408-410; Bonaventure Des Périers, *Cymbalum Mundi*, ed. M. Gauna, *Libre pensée et littérature clandestine 3*, Paris 2000, 7-52; F. Giacone (ed.), *Le Cymbalum Mundi. Actes du colloque de Rome (3-6 novembre 2000)*, THR 383, Geneva 2003, 569-591.

boldness of his anonymous attack prompted Lucien Febvre to exclaim that Des Périers had transformed Origen's *Contra Celsum* into a *Pro Celso*²¹. Nonetheless, the *Cymbalum Mundi* is perhaps the most famous example of a text supposedly based on an ancient source which is actually nowhere quoted. In my view it appears likely that Febvre, perhaps misled by a note in Jacob's edition of 1860²², overstated his case²³. Another example is the anonymous treatise *De imposturis religionum (De tribus impostoribus)*, which latest research shows to have been written in 1688 by the German jurist Johann Joachim Müller (1661-1733). Despite the claims by Wolfgang Gericke and François Berriot it appears to me uncertain whether Celsus was used.

Be that as it may, there were soon others who did explicitly draw on the ancient critics of religion²⁴. Henri Busson even claimed that there was one strand of "rationalist philosophers" in the sixteenth century "which exploited and extended the theological rationalism by attempting to destroy the basis of revelation through the criticism and the study of Julian the Apostate and of Celsus"²⁵. Likewise, in the following centuries Celsus and Julian were used by authors who were on the fringes, or indeed outside,

²¹ Febvre, Origène et Des Périers (see note 8), 129. – For the intellectual background of Febvre's analysis cf. D. Wootton, Lucien Febvre and the problem of unbelief in the early modern period, *JMH* 60, 1988, 695-730.

²² Cf. P.L. Jacob (ed.), *Les nouvelles récréations et joyeux devis suivis du Cymbalum Mundi de Bonaventure Des Périers*, nouvelle édition, Paris 1860, 303 (note 3) referring to Or., Cels. VI 78 as model for the comparison between Mercury's being sent by Jupiter to Athens and Christ's coming into the world. Febvre, quoting this passage from Origen, remarks: "Tout est dit. Tout est là. Des Périers tient son scénario. Jupiter enverra son fils Mercure aux Athéniens. Et ce sera, pour eux, un beau sujet de risée" (Febvre, Origène et Des Périers [see note 8], 84). *Contra Celsum* could only have been the model, however, if Des Périers' Mercury is indeed interpreted as Christ, which is by no means certain.

²³ Cf. Busson, *Le rationalisme* (see note 8), 189; Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes* (see note 12), 229f.; Boerner, *Cymbalum Mundi* (see note 20), 176-205; Gauna, *Upwellings* (see note 20), 51-53.108.113.178.185.196.203; Gauna (ed.), *Bonaventure Des Périers, Cymbalum Mundi* (see note 20), 14 (who thinks that certain similarities between Des Périers and Celsus suggested by Febvre are "assez probants"); R. Cooper, *Cymbalum Mundi. État de la question*, in: Giacone (ed.), *Cymbalum Mundi* (see note 20), (3-21) 9f.; O. Millet, *Le Cymbalum Mundi et la tradition lucianique*, in: Giacone (ed.), *Cymbalum Mundi* (see note 20), (317-332) 320; E. Kushner, *L'inscription du second dialogue dans l'histoire du dialogue à la Renaissance*, in: Giacone (ed.), *Cymbalum Mundi* (see note 20), (377-384) 377; C. Clavel/T.T. Quoc, *Euge Sophos. Lecture synchrétique de la devise et de l'image*, in: Giacone (ed.), *Cymbalum Mundi* (see note 20), (569-591) 587.

²⁴ Busson, *Le rationalisme* (see note 8), 356.561 and the references quoted below; Gauna, *Upwellings* (see note 20), 76.81-83.102f.291.293. – As regards the state of research of Libertinism in the sixteenth and seventeenth century cf. J.-P. Cavaillé, *Libertinage, irréligion, incroyance, athéisme dans l'Europe de la première modernité (XVIe-XVIIe siècles). Une approche critique des tendances actuelles de la recherche (1998-2002)*, 2003, online: URL <http://www.ehess.fr/centres/grihl/DebatCritique/LibrePensee/Libertinage_0.htm>; accessed: 30/06/2009.

²⁵ Busson, *Le rationalisme* (see note 8), 362: "ceux qui ont exploité et étendu le rationalisme théologique en s'appliquant à ruiner par la critique et l'étude de Julien l'Apostat et de Celse les bases de la Révélation."

official theology in order to underpin their dissident religious positions. A few examples should suffice here.

The book *L'esprit de Monsieur Benoit de Spinoza*, first published in 1719 and later reprinted under the title *Traité des trois imposteurs*, explicitly refers to Celsus as witness to the story that Jesus' father was a soldier named Panthera and claims that Jesus had stolen his teaching from Plato²⁶. Scholars have assumed that in other passages, too, the author depends on passages from *Contra Celsum* which he may have taken from De La Mothe Le Vayer²⁷.

The anonymous *Symbolum Sapientiae* (also called *Cymbalum mundi*, but different from Des Périers' work) is a Latin work of German origin, the first version of which dates from the 1680s; the second version was compiled between 1703 and 1725²⁸. It draws its criticism of the unrhethorical style and solecisms of the Bible from Celsus, Lucian, Porphyry and Julian²⁹.

In 1766 a work entitled *Examen critique des apologistes de la religion chrétienne* (written in 1733) was published under the name of Nicolas Fréret (1688-1749)³⁰ and several times reprinted³¹. It was, in fact, one of the most popular works of religious criticism of the eighteenth century and provoked a host of refutations. It is today thought that Jean Lévesque de Burigny (1692-1785) may have been its author. It is a critical analysis of

²⁶ Cf. Trattato dei tre impostori. La vita e lo spirito del Signor Benedetto de Spinoza 7,1 (Nuova Universale Einaudi 216, 120 Berti; cf. 120 note a); 9,3 (136 B.); cf. 281 notes 2f. As regards the story of Jesus' disreputable descent cf. also Schröder, Ursprünge des Atheismus (see note 20), 104 (note 37), where further references in unpublished manuscripts of the eighteenth century are given.

²⁷ As regards other passages where Celsus may have been used cf. e.g. Trattato dei tre impostori 8,6 (130 B.), cf. 284 note 8; cf. 9,2 (134 B.); cf. 284f. note 1; cf. 9,3 (138 B.); cf. 286 note 13; cf. 10,1 (142-144 B.); cf. 287 note 1. Cf. also M.C. Jacob, The radical enlightenment. Pantheists, freemasons and republicans, Early Modern Europe Today, London 1981, 217-233; the articles in S. Berti/F. Charles-Daubert/R.H. Popkin (eds.), Heterodoxy, Spinozism, and free thought in early-eighteenth-century Europe. Studies on the "Traité des trois imposteurs", AIHI 148, Dordrecht 1996; esp. B.E. Schwarzbach/A.W. Fairbairn, History and Structure of our Traité des trois imposteurs, in: Berti/Charles-Daubert/Popkin (eds.), Heterodoxy, Spinozism (see note 27), (75-129) 119f.; Schröder, Ursprünge des Atheismus (see note 20), 108 and note 54. – For De La Mothe Le Vayer cf. below pp. 326f.

²⁸ The author of the first version may have been the German professor of Law at the University of Wittenberg, Georg Michael Heber (1652-1702), the compiler of the second the deist Johann Georg Wachter (1663-1757). Cf. W. Schröder in Canziani/Schröder/Socas (eds.), Cymbalum mundi (see note 17), 15-29. Cf. also Schröder, Ursprünge des Atheismus (see note 20), 414f.; M. Mulsow, Moderne aus dem Untergrund. Radikale Frühaufklärung in Deutschland 1680-1720, Hamburg 2002, 231-241.

²⁹ Cf. Anonymus, *Cymbalum mundi* II 4 (184f. C./S./S.).

³⁰ On Fréret cf. Jaumann, Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur (see note 16), 278f.

³¹ N. Fréret, Examen critique des apologistes de la religion chrétienne, [sine loco] 1766. For details cf. Schröder, Ursprünge des Atheismus (see note 20), 516f.; Examen critique des apologistes de la religion chrétienne. Attribuable à Jean Lévesque de Burigny, édition critique par A. Niderst, Libre pensée et littérature clandestine 4, Paris 2001.

the arguments which the apologists of the Early Church put forward in defence of Christianity. It refers often to both Celsus and Julian³².

The 14th Letter of the *Lettres à Sophie Contenant un examen des fondemens de la Religion Chrétienne, et diverses objections contre l'immortalité de l'ame*, which were composed by an atheist author some time between 1760 and 1770³³ collected those fragments of Celsus, Porphyry and Julian that are critical of Christianity. It subsequently used the arguments to rebut the contention that the rapid spread of Christianity was proof of its truth. Julian and Celsus had described Jesus as a man of low descent, not a divine person, who may have healed sick people, but performed no miracles³⁴. As Olivier Bloch has shown, these quotations were not culled by the author from the ancient writers themselves, but rather taken from the annotations of Gabriel Seigneux de Corrèvon to the French translation of Joseph Addison's *Evidences of the Christian Religion* (1730), published in 1757³⁵. But in contrast with Corrèvon who used the pagan authors to demonstrate the truth of Christianity³⁶, the anonymous author of the *Lettres* took the information he found in Corrèvon's notes to demonstrate Christianity's inferiority as a religion.

Finally, at times authors of atheist works would even assume the pseudonym of Celsus, as in the anonymous book *Le Celse moderne ou objections contre le christianisme*, published in Lunéville in 1752³⁷. It immediately provoked a reaction by Joseph Gautier (1714-1776) who refuted it in his *Réfutation du Celse moderne*³⁸.

³² Celsus is mentioned e.g. in Fréret, *Examen critique* 50f. (78 N.); 71 (97 N.); 73 (98 N.); 105 (134 N.), 156 (183f. N.); 172 (201 N.); 176f. (205 N.), Julian in Fréret, *Examen critique* 71 (97 N.); 105f. (134 N.). *Contra Celsum* is also mentioned in Fréret, *Examen critique* 76 (103 N.); 81 (108 N.); 99-101 (127f. N.); 141f. (168-170 N.); 177 (207 N.), *Contra Iulianum* in Fréret, *Examen critique* 78 (105 N.).

³³ Cf. *Lettres à Sophie*: 'Lettres sur la religion, sur l'âme humaine et sur l'existence de Dieu', édition critique par O. Bloch, *Libre pensée et littérature clandestine* 17, Paris 2004, 13.

³⁴ Cf. Bloch (ed.), *Lettres à Sophie* (see note 33), 182-184. Cf. also Schröder, *Ursprünge des Atheismus* (see note 20), 147 (note 4).521f.

³⁵ Cf. Bloch (ed.), *Lettres à Sophie* (see note 33), 30f.279-282; idem, *L'antichristianisme des Lettres à Sophie*, in: C. Mervaud/J.-M. Seillan (eds.), *Philosophie des Lumières et valeurs chrétiennes. Hommage à Marie-Hélène Cotoni*, Paris 2008, 341-350 (non vidi).

³⁶ Cf. below p. 334.

³⁷ Anonymus, *Le Celse moderne ou objections contre le christianisme*, Lunéville 1752 (non vidi). – Some time later the German Enlightenment jurist Christian Ludwig Paalzow (1753-1824) used a similar device by taking the names of Hierocles and Porphyry as titles for his anonymous critiques of Christianity, published in 1785 and 1793 respectively. Cf. *Hierokles oder Prüfung und Vertheidigung der christlichen Religion* angestellt von den Herren Michaelis, Semler, Leß und Freret, Halle 1785 (non vidi); *Porphyrius oder Letzte Prüfung und Vertheidigung der christlichen Religion* angestellt von den Herren Michaelis, Semler, Leß, Richard Simon, Orobio und Freret, Frankfurt/Leipzig 1793 (non vidi). For details cf. M. Mulsow, *Lessing und die Apokalypse: Eine Spurensuche*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18/03/2009, p. N4.

³⁸ J. Gautier, *Réfutation du Celse moderne ou objections contre le christianisme, avec des réponses*, Lunéville 1752 (second edition Lunéville/Paris 1765), p. ii (non vidi);

III.

Following on the increased influence of Deism and rationalism in seventeenth century philosophy and theology, the intellectual establishment also took notice of Celsus and Julian. This is particularly obvious in the case of Julian. Until well into the sixteenth century the large majority of ecclesiastical writers by and large reiterated the negative view of the Church Fathers that the emperor was the apostate par excellence. It was not until the writings of Jean Bodin (†1596)³⁹ and Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592)⁴⁰ that a more nuanced picture of Julian gradually emerged according to which the emperor was no longer the intransigent renegade and evil persecutor of the Christians, but a person with a religious and moral conscience who was deeply convinced of his philosophical ideas. Klaus Rosen has described this reassessment in detail in his recent biography of the emperor⁴¹.

It was, then, no coincidence that Jean Bodin used both the fragments of Celsus and Julian in his *Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis*⁴². As libertinism moved into the mainstream of intellectual thought in France, so did Celsus and Julian. But how important did they become for the sceptics? As opposed to the view of Henri Busson, it appears to me that Bodin's quotations from or references to these works were highly selective and do not actually steer the argument of the book. Although Bodin at times stood in high regard as counsel to King Charles IX of France, his *Colloquium* was not published until the middle of the nineteenth century. Therefore, it stands between the clandestine literature which was mainly passed around in manuscript form and that libertine

cf. Schröder, Ursprünge des Atheismus (see note 20), 516. – As regards unpublished manuscripts with the title "Celse moderne, ou reflexions sur Jésus-Christ" cf. Schröder, Ursprünge des Atheismus (see note 20), 523.

³⁹ On Bodin cf. Jaumann, Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur (see note 16), 110f.

⁴⁰ On Montaigne cf. Jaumann, Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur (see note 16), 452f.

⁴¹ Cf. Rosen, Julian (see note 11), 419-421; cf. also J. Larmat, Julien dans les textes du XVI^e siècle, in: Braun/Richer (eds.), L'Empereur Julien (see note 11), vol. 1, (303-319) 308-314.

⁴² I have used the Latin edition by Noack (J. Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis*, curavit L. Noack, Schwerin/Paris/London 1857 [reprint Stuttgart 1966]). As to the textual problems cf. F. Niewöhner, Vorwort, in: G. Gawlick/F. Niewöhner, Jean Bodins Colloquium heptaplomeres, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 67, Wiesbaden 1996, 7-11. – On Bodin cf. Berriot, Athéismes et athéistes (see note 9), 775-797; M. Turchetti, Art. Jean Bodin, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (summer 2005 edition), URL <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2005/entries/bodin/>>; accessed: 27/06/2009. Bodin's authorship has been called into doubt by Karl F. Faltenbacher; cf. most recently K.F. Faltenbacher (ed.), Magie, Religion und Wissenschaften im Colloquium heptaplomeres. Ergebnisse der Tagungen in Paris 1994 und in der Villa Vigoni 1999, Beiträge zur Romanistik 6, Darmstadt 2002. – As regards references to Celsus in Bodin cf. Busson, Le rationalisme (see note 8), 556.558 (note 2).559 (with note 2). – For Bodin's reading of Origen cf. R. Häfner, Die Präsenz des Origenes in Jean Bodins Colloquium heptaplomeres, in: Gawlick/Niewöhner, Jean Bodins Colloquium heptaplomeres (see above), 73-97.

literature which was still acceptable to the French authorities and public opinion. As regards Celsus, Bodin follows Origen in calling him an Epicurean⁴³. He says that the obscure Apocalypse of John had been rightly criticized by Julian, Porphyry, Proclus and Celsus⁴⁴. Celsus claimed that the Christians and Jews despised the gods of the nations⁴⁵. He accused the Christians of fornication⁴⁶. Celsus and Julian criticized the validity of biblical prophecy⁴⁷. He asserted that Jesus' disciples had been criminals⁴⁸. Christ had not really died on the cross, and his resurrection was similar to that of Cleomedes of Astyalaia. The resurrection had only been seen by a woman of dubious reputation, whereas the crucifixion had been witnessed by many⁴⁹. In addition, Bodin uses information from Origen's defence⁵⁰.

Bodin also quotes from Julian's works. From the *Contra Galilaeos* he adopts Julian's derogatory remarks about the apocryphal gospels⁵¹. The emperor had compared Christ with Asclepius⁵². Julian mocked the Christians for taking everything on faith⁵³. Julian also ridiculed the commandment to love one's neighbour. Christ had in fact promised that robbers and murderers went unpunished⁵⁴. Bodin learns from Julian that demons were afraid of the cross⁵⁵. He also mentions the emperor's remarks about the cult of martyrs and the refutation by Cyril⁵⁶. Finally, he quotes Julian as saying that the laws of Moses prohibited the destruction of the temples of the gentiles⁵⁷. Since we are dealing here with dialogues, Bodin's own attitude towards Celsus and Julian is difficult to assess, as is indeed the character of the whole work. Bodin takes useful information from Celsus and Julian and their antagonists. But, again, in my view they are not intrinsic to his argument.

The same is true for another libertinist author, François de La Mothe Le Vayer (†1672)⁵⁸. Prior to his appointment as tutor to the second son

⁴³ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* V (Joannis Bodini Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis, curavit L. Noack, Schwerin/Paris/London 1857, 234); for references from *Contra Celsum* cf. Lona, Die "Wahre Lehre" (see note 12), 27f.

⁴⁴ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* III (71 N.).

⁴⁵ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* IV (118 N.).

⁴⁶ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* IV (163 N.).

⁴⁷ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* V (223 N.).

⁴⁸ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* VI (259 N.).

⁴⁹ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* V (234 N.).

⁵⁰ Cf. Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* V (181.212.227 N.); VI (243.265.355 N.).

⁵¹ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* V (224 N.).

⁵² Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* VI (291 N.).

⁵³ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* VI (270 N.).

⁵⁴ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* VI (263 N.).

⁵⁵ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* VI (293 N.).

⁵⁶ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* VI (332 N.).

⁵⁷ Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* VI (356f. N.) – For further mentions of Julian cf. Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres* I (63 N.); III (71 N.); IV (129 N.); V (181.223 N.); VI (305 N.).

⁵⁸ On François de La Mothe Le Vayer cf. R. Zuber, Die humanistische Tradition, in: J.-P. Schobinger (ed.), Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts. Frankreich und Niederlande,

of Anne of Austria and of Louis XIII he anonymously published a work (1642) in which he discussed *The Virtue of the Pagans*⁵⁹. Mothe's aim was to dissociate faith from virtue and to demonstrate that certain intellectual and moral virtues could very well be found among pagans. In the course of his argument Mothe quotes *Contra Celsum* only incidentally⁶⁰. But he dedicated a whole chapter to the renegade emperor. Yet strangely enough, although he quotes *Contra Iulianum* elsewhere in his book⁶¹, in this chapter he remains silent as regards Julian's philosophical attack against Christianity⁶².

Increasingly, the advocates of the established Christian religion also drew their arguments from the ancient apologies against the attacks of Celsus and Julian. The debate became more sophisticated. Let us take three famous examples of this apologetic genre. The defence of *The Truth of the Christian Religion* by the prominent French Huguenot theologian and politician Philippe Duplessis-Mornay (1549-1623) was first published in 1581 and often reprinted⁶³. Mornay relies heavily upon ancient sources for his endeavour. He refutes Julian's defence of polytheism as unreasonable and thinks that Celsus and Julian were in truth monotheists⁶⁴; he ridicules Julian's parallels between Asclepius and Christ⁶⁵; he opposes Julian's erroneous comparisons of Christ with Socrates, Lycurgus and Alexander the Great⁶⁶. Mornay also uses Origen and Cyril and ancient sources preserved therein as allies in his apologetic enterprise, for example, in order to show that the pagans had a notion of God, of sin and of eschatology similar to that of the Christians and that they knew about the Flood, the Star of Bethlehem and the solar eclipse when Jesus was crucified. Origen and Cyril are his

vol. 1, Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, Basel 1993, 124-126; Jaumann, Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur (see note 16), 380f.

⁵⁹ F. La Mothe Le Vayer, *De la vertu des payens*, Paris 1642. I have used the second edition Paris 1647.

⁶⁰ Cf. La Mothe Le Vayer, *De la vertu des payens*, p. 91f.105.181.

⁶¹ Cf. La Mothe Le Vayer, *De la vertu des payens*, p. 19.64.82.226. As regards other writings by Julian cf. also La Mothe Le Vayer, *De la vertu des payens*, p. 117.121.262.

⁶² Cf. La Mothe Le Vayer, *De la vertu des payens*, p. 263-304 and C. Faisant, *Images de Julien l'Apostat au XVII^e siècle en France*, in: Braun/Richer (eds.), *L'Empereur Julien* (see note 11), vol. 2, (413-425) 419f. Cf., however, La Mothe Le Vayer, *De la vertu des payens*, p. 268 where the preface to *Contra Iulianum* is quoted as evidence for Julian's ecclesiastical offices and La Mothe Le Vayer, *De la vertu des payens*, p. 285, where he mentions that Cyril said that he had suppressed the worst expressions which Julian had used against Christ.

⁶³ I have used the following edition: Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne, Contre les Athees, Epicuriens, Paiens, Juifs, Mahumedistes, et autre infideles*, Paris 1585. For the history of this text cf. also Berriot, *Athéismes et athéistes* (see note 9), 728-736; Schröder, *Ursprünge des Atheismus* (see note 20), 75f. – On Duplessis-Mornay cf. I. Dingel, *Art. Duplessis-Mornay, Philippe*, RGG⁴ 4, 1999, 1020f.

⁶⁴ Cf. Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne*, p. 359.

⁶⁵ Cf. Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne*, p. 370; cf. Juln. Imp., Galil. frg. 46 (Testi e commenti 9, 140 Masaracchia).

⁶⁶ Cf. Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne*, p. 576; cf. Juln. Imp., Galil. frg. 35.39.51 (130; 134; 145f. M.).

helpers in order to argue against idolatry, to demonstrate the esteem of the Old Testament among pagans and to defend divine providence, the Mosaic Law and Christ⁶⁷.

Mention must also be made of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) who was one of the most influential authors on the eve of the Enlightenment⁶⁸. In his *De veritate religionis Christianae* (On the Truth of the Christian Religion), published in 1627 (1640 with voluminous Annotata), Grotius liberally uses both *Contra Celsum* and *Contra Iulianum*, apparently copying some of the argument from Mornay⁶⁹. He follows Origen in defending the goodness of the Christian God⁷⁰ and his ordering of the world⁷¹. The Flood is attested in pagan writers, as Cyril of Alexandria says⁷². Grotius explains why in Jewish belief certain animals are unclean by referring to Origen⁷³. He takes the pagan writers as witnesses to the truth of the biblical message. He says that Celsus, Julian and the Jews had to admit that the biblical miracles had actually happened⁷⁴. They also attest to the fact that the crucifixion of Christ took place⁷⁵. Julian conceded that the New Testament writings were authentic⁷⁶. Grotius refutes the polytheism of writers like Celsus⁷⁷. The failure of Julian's attempt at restoring paganism proves that polytheism is erroneous⁷⁸. Yet they held doctrines similar to those of the Christians, such as the idea of a divine incarnation, as Julian showed by referring to Asclepius⁷⁹.

Even more voluminous than Grotius' work was the *Demonstratio evangelica* (1679) by the assistant tutor to the Dauphin and member of the

⁶⁷ Cf. Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne*, p. 39.70f.74.86f.90.126.203.296.329.353.432.440.447f.456.513.556.592.594. – Mornay even quotes the anti-Christian fragments by Porphyry, cf. e.g. Duplessis-Mornay, *De la verité de la religion chrestienne*, p. 396.568.576. – In addition cf. Busson, *Le rationalisme* (see note 12), 562 (note 9).563.567 (with notes 4f.).

⁶⁸ As regards Grotius cf. H.-P. Schneider, Hugo Grotius, in: Schobinger, *Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts* (see note 58), 91-107; J. Miller, Art. Hugo Grotius, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, URL <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/grotius/>>; version: 16/12/2005; accessed: 23/06/2009; Jaumann, *Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur* (see note 16), 315-317.

⁶⁹ I use the edition of 1718: Hugo Grotius, *De veritate religionis Christianae*. Editio adcurator [sic], quam secundum recensuit, notisque illustravit Joannes Clericus; cujus accessit De eligenda inter Christianos dissentientes Sententia, liber unicus, The Hague 1718 (online: URL <<http://www.capurromrc.it/grotius/>>; accessed: 23/06/2009).

⁷⁰ Grotius, *De veritate religionis Christianae* 1,19 (81 C.; with note 1).

⁷¹ Grotius, *De veritate religionis Christianae* 5,6 (231 C.; with note 9).

⁷² Grotius, *De veritate religionis Christianae* 1,16 (51f. C.; with note 51).

⁷³ Grotius, *De veritate religionis Christianae* 5,9 (243f. C.; with note 2).

⁷⁴ Grotius, *De veritate religionis Christianae* 2,5 (96f. C.). Cf. also 1,16 (74 C.; with note 107); 3,7 (160f. C.; with note 5).

⁷⁵ Grotius, *De veritate religionis Christianae* 2,2 (94 C.).

⁷⁶ Grotius, *De veritate religionis Christianae* 3,2 (154 C.).

⁷⁷ Grotius, *De veritate religionis Christianae* 4,2 (192-194 C.; with note 2).

⁷⁸ Grotius, *De veritate religionis Christianae* 4,10 (212 C.).

⁷⁹ Grotius, *De veritate religionis Christianae* 4,12 (220f. C.); cf. Juln. Imp., *Galil. frg.* 46 (140 M.).

Académie Française Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630-1721)⁸⁰. This book displayed in its very title the patristic scholarship of its author. Huet had previously edited Origen's commentaries on the Bible (1668, 1685)⁸¹ and used his wide-ranging knowledge of the Church Fathers for his proof of the divine Christian truth. While he culls all factual information available from Origen and Cyril in order to underpin his case, he is less interested in the polemical aspect of the religious debate in antiquity. He quotes (and rejects) the story of Jesus' illegitimate birth as mentioned by Celsus⁸². He also cites Celsus' claim that the Egyptians were hated by the Jews⁸³. Julian is mentioned more frequently: Huet quotes his view that the Christians had stolen from Platonism⁸⁴. The emperor had argued against the christological exegesis of Num 24,17, referring it to David instead⁸⁵. He had claimed that neither Paul nor the Synoptic Gospels had called Jesus God⁸⁶. Even Julian has to admit that Christ performed miracles⁸⁷. Finally he says that the prophets had erred just as the oracles of the pagans⁸⁸. Otherwise, Huet is more interested in what Origen and Cyril have to say in their refutations rather than in those refuted⁸⁹.

As could be seen from these examples (to which others could easily be added⁹⁰), from the end of the sixteenth century *Contra Celsum* and *Contra Iulianum* belonged to the classical canon of apologists. On the whole it appears that the apologists discussed here used their ancient predecessors in order to combat their contemporary enemies. Celsus and Julian were in themselves interesting only insofar as they furnished modern enemies of Christianity with reasons why revealed religion was implausible and

⁸⁰ On Huet cf. A. Juillard, Pierre-Daniel Huet, in: Schobinger, *Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts* (see note 58), 142-153; Jaumann, *Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur* (see note 16), 315-317. I quote from the fourth edition of 1694 (Peter Daniel Huet, *Demonstratio Evangelica ad serenissimum Delphinum*, Leipzig 41694).

⁸¹ Cf. also Breuer, *Origenes im 18. Jahrhundert* (see note 12), 20.

⁸² Huet, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, p. 772.

⁸³ Huet, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, p. 264.

⁸⁴ Huet, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, p. 93.

⁸⁵ Huet, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, p. 670.

⁸⁶ Huet, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, p. 808.

⁸⁷ Huet, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, p. 828.

⁸⁸ Huet, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, p. 831.

⁸⁹ For *Contra Celsum* cf. e.g. Huet, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, p. 51.264.284; for *Contra Iulianum* cf. Huet, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, p. 104.140.217f.

⁹⁰ In 1685 George Bull (1634-1710), defending the Nicene Faith, used *Contra Celsum* in order to prove Origen's views on the trinity as orthodox pace the criticisms raised by Denis Pétau, Huet and – Jerome! Bull concludes his chapter by saying: *Ita mecum statuo; Patrem illum [scil. Origenem], tot theologorum, qua veterum qua recentiorum, censuris vexatum in articulo de Filii divinitate, adeoque de S. Trinitate, revera catholicum fuisse, quanquam in modo articulum explicandi aliter nonnunquam locutus fuerit, quam hodie catholici solent; quod ipsi cum reliquis fere omnibus Patribus, qui concilium Nicaenum antecesserunt, commune fuit* (George Bull, *Defensio Fidei Nicaenae* [1685], ed. by E. Burton, *The Works of George Bull* 5/1, second edition Oxford 1846, esp. 291-363; quotation on 354f.). – For French authors cf. also Busson, *Le rationalisme* (see note 12), 572f. (Georges Pacard); 578f. (Pierre Charron); 590.599 (Guillaume Du Bartas).

outdated. In turn, the modern apologists used the reasonings of Origen and Cyril in their struggle to defend the Church. By the end of the seventeenth century the criticism of Christianity found in the ancient pagan authors was carefully studied for this very purpose at the universities on the European continent and was even made the subject of academic disputations. Thus in 1669 the orthodox Lutheran Balthasar Bebel (1632-1686), who taught theology at Strassburg, composed theses for a *Theological Disputation on the Authority of the Sacred Scriptures*, which were to be illustrated from *Contra Celsum*⁹¹.

Given the fact that both Celsus and Julian could be considered Platonists, it comes as no surprise that their anti-Christian works were also read by those Cambridge theologians in the second half of the seventeenth century who revived the thought of the greatest of ancient philosophers⁹². In his chief work *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), which has been called the first “Philosophy of Religion”⁹³, Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688) dealt with the ancient philosophers at length⁹⁴. Although denouncing their pagan views, Cudworth tried to show that these critics, despite seemingly propagating polytheism, in fact held to a form of philosophical monotheism. This was even true for the fiercest opponents of Christianity, as he demonstrated in a long chapter in which the ancient critics were paraded one by one before the reader to have their views concerning the one highest god analysed⁹⁵. It is obvious from these and other passages that Cudworth wants to ‘save’ both Celsus and Julian for Christianity. Although he has to admit that according to Origen Celsus

⁹¹ Cf. Balthasar Bebel, *Disputatio theologica de autoritate Scripturae Sacrae, atheis potissimum opposita, & imprimis ex octo Origenis contra Celsum Philosophastrum libri illustrata [...] quam [...] sub praesidio Dn. Baltasaris Bebelii [...] solenni disquisitioni pro ingenii modulo defendendam submittit Johann. Daniel Gukkelen*, Strassburg 1669 (non vidi).

⁹² Cf. J.-P. Larthomas, Julien en Angleterre dans le milieu Whig, in: Braun/Richer (eds.), *L'Empereur Julien* (see note 11), vol. 2, 61-67.

⁹³ G. Frank, Die Kirchenväter als Apologeten der natürlichen Theologie und Religionsphilosophie in der frühen Neuzeit, in: Frank/Leinkauf/Wriedt (eds.), *Die Patristik in der frühen Neuzeit* (see note 12), (253-276) 253.

⁹⁴ On Cudworth and his work cf. K.-G. Wesseling, Art. Cudworth [d.J.], Ralph, *BBKL* 16, 1999, 352-362; S. Hutton, Art. The Cambridge Platonists, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, URL <<http://www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/cambridge-platonists/>>; version: 03/10/2001; accessed: 27/06/2009; G. Frank, Die Vernunft des Gottesgedankens. Religionsphilosophische Studien zur frühen Neuzeit, *Quaestiones* 13, Stuttgart 2003, 261-296; D.A. Pailin, Art. Cudworth, Ralph (1617-1688), *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, URL <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6864>>; accessed: 27/06/2009; Frank, Die Kirchenväter als Apologeten (see note 93), esp. 270-275; Jaumann, *Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur* (see note 6), 206f. I quote from the edition of 1845 (R. Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe: Wherein all the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted, and Its Impossibility Demonstrated*, ed. by J. Harrison, 3 vols., London 1845).

⁹⁵ Ralph Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the universe. Wherein all the reason and philosophy of atheism is confuted, and its impossibility demonstrated*, ed. by J. Harrison, 3 vols., London 1845; vol. 1, 436-463; cf. also vol. 2, 298f. (Celsus).

was “indeed an Epicurean, yet did he at least personate a Platonist too”⁹⁶. Thus he also says that Celsus and Origen agree upon the existence of a divine providence⁹⁷. What Cudworth did in this work comes close to a rehabilitation of these enemies of Christianity⁹⁸. Yet his relecture is not uncritical. Cudworth defends the resurrection of the body against Celsus⁹⁹ and also says that Julian had misunderstood the intelligible world of Plato in a polytheistic manner¹⁰⁰.

From the Cambridge Platonists it is no great distance to English Deism. Meanwhile, books 1 and 2 of *Contra Celsum* had been translated by a certain James Bellamy¹⁰¹. Yet my admittedly very provisional analysis of some of the works of the major Deists has yielded little evidence that they were interested in what the ancients had to say against Christianity. Again, to give an example, in his chief work *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730) Matthew Tindal (1657-1733)¹⁰² quotes Celsus just once in passing in order immediately to move on to Origen’s answer¹⁰³ and does not mention Julian at all.

Still, one of the most famous opponents of the Deists, George Berkeley (1685-1753)¹⁰⁴, dedicated a whole chapter of his dialogue *Alciphron* (1732) to Celsus, Porphyry and Julian (*Alciphron* VI 25). The free-thinking Alciphron laments the loss of those “ancient books, which cleared up many points to the eyes of those great men, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, which at a greater distance and with less help cannot so easily be made out by us”¹⁰⁵. He calls them “men of true genius” which provokes his opponent Crito, a defender of revealed religion, into destroying this false reputation. Crito calls Celsus “capricious,” because he ascribed properties to animals

⁹⁶ Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the universe* (vol. 2, 340 H.).

⁹⁷ Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the universe* (vol. 3, 462f. H.).

⁹⁸ Larthomas, *Julien en Angleterre* (see note 92), 66f. slightly overstates this point.

⁹⁹ Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the universe* (vol. 3, 473 H.).

¹⁰⁰ Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the universe* (vol. 2, 233-235 H.).

¹⁰¹ James Bellamy, *Origen Against Celsus*. Translated from the original into English, London [no date; c. 1710]. Nothing seems to be known about the translator. According to Henry Chadwick, the translation is “of insufficient accuracy”, but “the preface of the work is lively reading” (*Origen, Contra Celsum*. Translated with an introduction and notes by H. Chadwick, Cambridge 1965 [reprint 1980], xxxii); cf. also below p. 337.

¹⁰² On Tindal cf. B.W. Young, *Art. Tindal, Matthew* (bap. 1657, d. 1733), *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, URL <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27462>>; accessed: 27/06/2009; Jaumann, *Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur* (see note 16), 658f.

¹⁰³ Cf. M. Tindal, *Christianity as old as the creation. Or, the Gospel, a republication of the religion of nature*, vol. I, London 1730, 42, quotation from Or., Cels. I 62.

¹⁰⁴ On Berkeley cf. A. Kulenkampff, *George Berkeley*, in: H. Holzhey/V. Mudroch (eds.), *Die Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1. Grossbritannien und Nordamerika. Niederlande, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Basel 2004, 322-369; Jaumann, *Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur* (see note 16), 87-89.

¹⁰⁵ Berkeley, *Alciphron* VI 25 (*The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, vol. 3. *Alciphron or The Minute Philosopher*, ed. by A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop, London 1950, 267).

which were characteristic only of human beings. Crito admits that Julian was “lively and satirical” and that “he was a generous, temperate, gallant, and facetious emperor”. Yet at the same time “he was a prating, light, vain, superstitious sort of man”¹⁰⁶. Alciphron then tries to save at least Porphyry’s reputation as a critic of Christianity by proclaiming him the greatest “of all the great men who wrote against revealed religion” and lamenting the loss of his “invaluable work.” But even the famous Neoplatonist is demolished by Crito’s mordent wit which sums up the philosopher’s qualities as follows:

In a word, this great man appears to have been as unintelligible as a Schoolman, as superstitious as a monk, and as fanatical as any Quietist or Quaker; and, to complete his character as a minute philosopher, he was under strong temptations to lay violent hands on himself¹⁰⁷.

IV.

At this point, it is difficult to say whether the knowledge of Celsus and Julian was passed on to the French and German Enlightenment through the English Deists, whether they were influenced by the clandestine literature which I mentioned initially, or whether the authors of the eighteenth century had first-hand knowledge of the ancient sources. Probably a mixture of all three comes closest to the truth¹⁰⁸. In any case, by the eighteenth century at least *Contra Celsum* had become accessible also to the educated layman in France, since it had, for the first time, been translated into a modern language by Élie Bouhéreau (1643-1719)¹⁰⁹. Yet this did not mean that it was read everywhere. In this respect, Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697) is an interesting case in point¹¹⁰. He mentions Bouhéreau’s translation in a footnote to his article on Origen and says that it had caused some stir, because Bouhéreau had been told not to publish it, since it was dangerous to place Origen into the hands of the general public.

¹⁰⁶ Berkeley, *Alciphron* VI 25 (267f. L./J.).

¹⁰⁷ Berkeley, *Alciphron* VI 25 (268 L./J.).

¹⁰⁸ As regards the influence of English Deism on German intellectuals cf. C. Voigt, *Der englische Deismus in Deutschland*, BHTh 121, Tübingen 2003.

¹⁰⁹ E. Bouhéreau, *Traité d’Origène contre Celse ou défense de la religion chrétienne contre les accusations des païens*. Traduit du grec par Elie Bouhéreau, Amsterdam 1700 (non vidi). By that time, Bouhéreau, a Huguenot, had fled France and had come to Ireland, where he was subsequently appointed as first librarian of Marsh’s Library; cf. M. McCarthy, *All graduates & gentlemen. Marsh’s library, Dublin 1980*; reprinted as: *Marsh’s library. All graduates and gentlemen, Dublin 2003* (non vidi); M. McCarthy, *Archbishop Narcissus Marsh and the foundation of the first public library in Ireland*. Paper delivered at the 64th IFLA General Conference, Amsterdam, August 16-August 21, 1998; online URL <<http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla64/100-132e.htm>>; accessed: 27/06/2009).

¹¹⁰ I have used the online-edition of the ARTFL project of the University of Chicago; cf. URL <<http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/node/60>>; accessed 30/06/2009.

He also refers to a rumour that one could reconstruct the Ἀληθῆς λόγος from Origen's apology¹¹¹. Yet in Bayle's Dictionary there are no entries on Celsus and Julian nor do they appear to be quoted often elsewhere in that work. Likewise, a careful reading of the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert (1751-1765) has revealed that, although Julian looms fairly large as a pagan emperor, neither his work against Christianity nor that of Celsus are often mentioned. Again, there are no entries on either Celsus or Julian. Not even fierce atheists such as the Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789) seemed to feel the need to fall back on the ancient texts in order to attack Christianity. In Holbach's notorious polemic of 1766 *Christianity unveiled* (*Le christianisme dévoilé*) Julian fails even to make an appearance, and Celsus is mentioned once as witness to the idea that Christ had taken over several of his doctrines from Plato¹¹².

How, then, did the theologians and philosophers of the eighteenth century approach Celsus' and Julian's attacks against Christianity? I tentatively suggest that there were essentially four ways of dealing with these sources in continuity with what had begun in previous centuries. First, the earlier apologetic use continued unabatedly until the end of the century. For example, in his *Treatise upon the Authenticity of the Scriptures and the Truth of the Christian Religion* (first published in 1791) the antiquary and classical scholar Jacob Bryant (1715-1804) devoted a long chapter to the "Testimony of Gentile Writers in favour of Christianity"¹¹³. More specifically, William Wilson (1762?-1800), Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, used Celsus in his book *An Illustration of the Method of Explaining the New Testament* (1797) in order to prove the divinity of

¹¹¹ Cf. P. Bayle, Dictionnaire historique et critique, vol. 3, p. 546 in the online-edition (see note 110): "J'avois ouï dire à quantité de personnes, que des gens de poids dans l'Église Réformée de Paris, & nommément Mr. Claude, avoient déconseillé parce qu'il n'étoit pas à propos que tout le monde pût voir les Objections du Philosophe Paien, & les comparer avec les Réponses d'Origene. Mais Mr. Bouhéreau n'en parle pas de cette maniere. Il dit [in the preface to his edition] 'que des personnes d'un mérite distingué, & le fameux Mr. Claude entre autres, croyoient qu'il étoit dangereux de mettre Origène entre les mains de tout le monde, à cause de quelques sentimens singuliers qui lui ont été reprochez de tout tems'. Voilà une extrême différence entre ce que l'avois ouï dire tant de fois, & ce que Mr. Bouhéreau mieux instruit du fait que personne nous apprend lui-même. [...] On m'avoit dit aussi que le Traducteur se persuade qu'on rétablirait tout entier le Livre de Celsus, si l'on joignoit ensemble tous les Passages qu'Origene en a allégués. Mais puis qu'il n'observe point cela, ni dans sa Préface, ni dans ses Remarques, je me défie de ceux qui m'ont fait ce conte."

¹¹² Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d'Holbach, *Le christianisme dévoilé, ou Examen des principes et des effets de la religion chrétienne*, par Feu M. Boulanger, London 1756 (= Nancy 1766), note on p. 27; cf. Or., Cels. VI 16.

¹¹³ Cf. J. Bryant, *A Treatise upon the authenticity of the Scriptures, and the truth of the Christian religion*, second edition Cambridge 1793, 131-176 (chapter IV); the quotation is on p. 131. For Bryant cf. D.R. Dean, Art. Bryant, Jacob (bap. 1717, d. 1804), Oxford dictionary of national biography, URL <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3795>>; accessed: 30/06/2009.

Christ¹¹⁴. Mention could also be made of the Swiss magistrate and author Gabriel Seigneux de Corrèvon (1695-1775) who translated Joseph Addison's *Evidences of the Christian Religion* (posthumously published in 1730) into French and added copious notes (which were later re-translated into English). In a section of his work Addison had quoted pagan writers as proof to Jesus' miraculous powers¹¹⁵. Corrèvon extended these comments and added the evidence from the sources which was missing from Addison's treatise¹¹⁶.

Secondly, the philological and historical study of the critics of Christianity was further intensified. The great editions of Julian's writings and of *Contra Iulianum* by Ezechiel Spanheim¹¹⁷ and of Origen's works by the Maurists Charles and Vincent Delarue¹¹⁸ which, in its first volume, also included *Contra Celsum* are cases in point. As regards Julian, scholars attempted to paint a more unbiased picture of the achievements as well as failures of the emperor than previous generations had done¹¹⁹. One might add that both Celsus and Julian also served as sources of information about pagan religion. This is, for example, obvious in many entries of the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert and would need further analysis. Alternatively, they were used to elucidate the history of early Christianity.

Quite often in this context a modern interest becomes apparent. On the one hand, Julian attracted scholarly attention, because he resisted the hegemony of one religion over others and combined this resistance with an intelligent critique of Christianity. This appealed to many who were disgruntled by the Church's intransigent insistence on the divine origin of the biblical texts, because it basically presaged an understanding of the texts which was congruent with modern epistemological and hermeneuti-

¹¹⁴ Cf. W. Wilson, An illustration of the method of explaining the New Testament by the early opinions of Jews and Christians concerning Christ, Cambridge 1797, 226-255.470-504.

¹¹⁵ Cf. J. Addison, The evidences of the Christian religion, London 1730, 9-19.

¹¹⁶ Cf. J. Addison, The evidences of the Christian religion [...] with the notes of the learned Gabriel Seigneux de Corrèvon, London 1807, 47-178 (I have not seen the French original). For the influence of this work on the *Lettres à Sophie* cf. above p. 324. For details on Seigneux and his work cf. P. Nordmann, Gabriel Seigneux de Corrèvon. Ein schweizerischer Kosmopolit 1695-1775, BarRom Serie 1, 30, Florence 1947, especially 71-76; on Addison, see P. Rogers, Art. Addison, Joseph (1672-1719), Oxford dictionary of national biography, URL: <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/156>>; accessed: 30/06/2009 (who does not mention the Evidences).

¹¹⁷ Juln. Imp., Opera quae supersunt omnia et S. Cyrilli Alexandrini archiepiscopi contra impium Iulianum libri decem, Ezechiel Spanhemius Graecum Iuliani contextum recensuit, Leipzig 1696. As regards this edition cf. C. Prato, Ezechiele Spanheim e la fallita edizione di Giuliano Imperatore, in: S. Boldrini (ed.), Filologia e forme letterarie. Studi offerti a Francesco della Corte, Urbino (not dated [1987]), vol. 5, 579-587.

¹¹⁸ Origen Opera omnia quae Graece vel Latine tantum exstant et ejus nomine circumferuntur, opera et studio C. et V. Delarue, 4 vols., Paris 1733-1759.

¹¹⁹ This development has recently been described by Klaus Rosen and need not be repeated here. Cf. above note 41.

cal insights. On the other hand, conservative scholars wanted to make the ancient texts accessible in order to show that the traditional anathema against the pagan philosophers was appropriately rooted in the philosophers' hostile attitude towards the Church. The translations by Celsus and Julian are driven by these conflicting interests, as will be shown below.

Thirdly, the figure of Julian came to function as a mechanism of camouflage and subversion. The emperor served as a substitute for contemporary personalities. There is the famous example of Samuel Johnson (1649-1703), Domestic Chaplain to William, Lord Russell, who, in 1682, published a pamphlet called *Julian the Apostate*¹²⁰. On the surface, this book pretended to be a historical description of the Roman emperor, but it was in fact aimed at the Catholic successor to the Crown, James, Duke of York. Johnson had no sympathies for Julian; he rather disputed James' claim to the throne and called his fellow-countrymen to resist the pretension of the Catholic prince. Characteristically, Johnson was not interested in the philosophical setting of Julian's criticism of Christianity and, therefore, does not quote *Contra Galilaeos*.

In the repressive atmosphere following the Exclusion Crisis Johnson's book provoked numerous counter-reactions. At least seven pamphlets were written in response by Tory supporters¹²¹. "Julian Johnson", as the author of *Julian the Apostate* was called, was unable to reply in written form, because the manuscript he had prepared was suppressed. Ultimately, he had to endure a long prison sentence. In the wake of the Glorious Revolution he was released from prison in 1689 and reinstated. Johnson's originally

¹²⁰ S. Johnson, *Julian the Apostate. Being a short account of his life; The sense of the primitive Christians about his succession; and their behaviour towards him, together with a comparison of popery and paganism*, London 1682. A Dutch translation was published in 1688. – As regards the Johnson affair cf. M. Goldie, *The Roots of True Whiggism, 1688-1694*, *History of political thought* 1, 1980, 195-236; M.S. Zook, *Early Whig ideology, ancient constitutionalism, and the Reverend Samuel Johnson*, *Journal of British Studies* 32, 1993, 139-165; eadem, *Radical Whigs and conspiratorial politics in late Stuart England*, University Park (Pennsylvania) 1999, especially 57-62.164-170; M.S. Zook, *Art. Johnson, Samuel (1649-1703)*, *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, URL <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14916>>; accessed: 30/06/2009.

¹²¹ Figure taken from Zook, art. Johnson, Samuel (see note 120). Cf. E. Meredith, *Some remarques upon a late popular piece of nonsense [by Samuel Johnson] called Julian the Apostate, &c. together, with a particular vindication of his Royal Highness the Duke of York*, London 1682; J. Bennet, *Constantius the Apostate. Being a short account of his life, and the sense of the primitive Christians about his succession; and their behaviour toward Him [...] being a full answer to a late pamphlet [by Samuel Johnson], intituled Julian the Apostate, &c. [...]*, London 1683; J. Dowell(l), *The triumph of Christianity. Or, the life of Cl. Fl. Julian the Apostate*, London 1683; G. Hickes, *Jovian. Or, an answer to Julian the Apostate [by Samuel Johnson]. The second edition more correct, than the former. By a minister of London*, London 1683; *The Life of Boetius, recommended to the author of the Life of Julian*, London 1683; T. Long, *A vindication of the primitive Christians, in point of obedience to their Prince, against the calumnies of a book intituled the Life of Julian*, London 1683; H. Neville, *Remarks upon the most eminent of our antimonarchical authors and their writings*, London/Westminster 1699.

suppressed defence against his Tory critics was ultimately published in the same year, once again under the cover of the emperor Julian¹²².

Johnson was not alone in using this simple literary device to evade censorship. Another famous example comes from the nineteenth century. On the eve of the German revolution, the enfant terrible of German biblical criticism, David Friedrich Strauß (1808-1874), published a treatise in which he depicted Julian as a well-meaning but backwards looking “romantic on the throne of the Caesars”, whose worldview was obscurantist rather than enlightened. The pamphlet, much acclaimed by the avant-garde of literary critics in Germany, aimed in fact at the rule of the Prussian king Frederick William IV¹²³.

Finally, there was a fourth way of reading the ancient texts: writers began to apply ancient thought to modern contexts. On the one hand, one of the chief projects of the Enlightenment was the battle against an interpretation of Christianity which advocated an outdated hermeneutic of the Bible. In cases of ambiguities in the interpretation of biblical texts this hermeneutic fell back on the concept of verbal inspiration instead of trying to understand the texts within their historical context. On the other hand, Christian orthodoxy, both Catholic and Protestant, was often seen to be in alliance with an absolutist state suppressing dissenting views on religion. In this context, the ancient texts critical of Christianity could come in handy, because they were both hallowed by age and written in the name and the spirit of ‘classical’ philosophy, which had been rediscovered by the Cambridge Platonists in the middle of the seventeenth century. They could be mined for arguments against an outdated theology, combed for evidence that inconsistencies in the Bible need to be freely discussed, and sifted for data useful to advocates of religious tolerance.

Yet modernizing ancient evidence was not without its difficulties. We must not forget that, although seemingly modern in their critical approach to Christianity, Celsus, Porphyry and Julian advocated no rational Christianity freed from medieval fideism nor did they champion atheism. In spite of the fact that Middle and Neoplatonic philosophy increasingly tended towards some species of philosophical monotheism, in their battle against the Christian version of belief in one God they fell back on a polytheistic metaphysics which Enlightenment philosophers could no longer accept.

¹²² S. Johnson, *Julian's arts to undermine and extirpate Christianity. Together with answers to Constantius the Apostate, and Jovian*, London 1689 (Dutch translation: *Julianus den Apostaat, of Kort begriip van zijn Leven. Waar in men ziet den gruwel dien de beste Christenen van zijn onderzaaten openlijk tegens hem [...] betuigden. Met een vergelijking van het Pausdom en het Heidendom. [By Samuel Johnson.] En een ander algemeen Afbeeldsel van het Pausdom, benefens een klein Tractaat van den Antichrist. Uit het Engelsch vertaald. Vrstad [Amsterdam?], 1688; [non vidi]).*

¹²³ D.F. Strauß, *Der Romantiker auf dem Throne der Cäsaren oder Julian der Abtrünnige. Ein Vortrag*, Mannheim 1847. Cf. W. Kinzig, *Kaiser, König, Ketzler. Zu Intention und Rezeption der “Julian”-Schrift von David Friedrich Strauß*, *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte* 4, 1997, 9-46.

At the same time, theologians in the eighteenth century became increasingly aware that the ancient apologies against the attacks of critics like Celsus and Julian had lost their persuasive power in an intellectual atmosphere where many educated Christians were no longer prepared to take as much on faith as former generations. When Bouhéreau's French translation was published in 1700, a reviewer¹²⁴ remarked that there had been discussion whether this work ought to be published, because Origen's defence was too weak. He emphasized that this fear rested on two assumptions, namely that Celsus' criticisms were important and that Origen's responses were not solid enough. In his view both were false. There was nothing as weak as the objections of this pagan against Christianity, because they consisted in unfounded assumptions, in charges which could equally be brought against paganism and in simple misunderstandings. Therefore, there was no danger in publishing such feeble criticisms, because the 'modern Deists' would never use Celsus' weapons in their fight against religion. Although the reviewer conceded that Origen's responses were not always strong, his work was praised as being full of esprit, zeal, learning and piety¹²⁵. In the preface to his English translation of *Contra Celsum*¹²⁶, James Bellamy defended Origen's piety and learning against his Roman critics¹²⁷. He, too, saw no harm in making Celsus' critique of Christianity available to a wider public:

But certainly the Truth is so safely guarded, by its Native Purity, and so well recommended by the Evidence that attends it, that 'tis so far from being afraid of the Light, that it desires nothing more, if I may so say, than to make its most open, and undisguis'd Appearance in the World; and if the Objection has any real Force, 'twill hold, as well, tho' not equally against Origen himself, for writing against Celsus, which plainly supposes, that all the Learning, Wit, and Malice of that Arch-Fiend of Hell must be dissected, as it were, and laid open to View, which tho' they are the rankest Poison, will never be able to infect us, if we have but the Blessing of the Almighty God, on so Excellent an Antidote at hand, as the indefatigable, and almost inimitable Labours of that Pious, Rational, and Learned Father, who oppos'd him¹²⁸.

Some decades later distrust of the efficacy of Origen's defence had grown. Thus in 1745 the Lutheran Church historian Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693-1755)¹²⁹, Professor at Helmstedt University, published a German edition of *Contra Celsum* (1745), recently praised as "undoubtedly one of the best pieces of German literature in the field of learned prose of that

¹²⁴ Anonymus, Review of Bouhéreau 1700, *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, January 1700, 3-20.

¹²⁵ Cf. Anonymus, Review of Bouhéreau (see note 124), 11-13.

¹²⁶ Cf. above p. 331.

¹²⁷ Cf. Bellamy, *Origen Against Celsus* (see note 101), 19-27.

¹²⁸ Bellamy, *Origen Against Celsus* (see note 101), 27f.

¹²⁹ On Mosheim cf. Jaumann, *Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur* (see note 16), 460-462.

time”¹³⁰. In his introduction Mosheim openly criticized the sloppiness of Origen’s defence¹³¹. His eccentric theological views notwithstanding, the Alexandrine scholar had not sufficiently dealt with all of Celsus’ attacks. He had covered up weaknesses in his defence and denied what he could easily have conceded without doing his cause any harm. There were apologies by contemporary German authors that were by far superior to Origen’s book¹³². The main reason for Mosheim’s translation was to make Origen accessible to a non-academic, albeit educated public and to immunize his readers against a fashionable critique of Christianity which clothed itself in elegant, well-written tracts but remained superficial, lacking profound knowledge of the sources. Mosheim attempted to show, first, that contrary to what was claimed by some of these stylish *littérateurs* there were considerable literary remains of the ancient enemies of Christianity such as Celsus and Julian still existed and, secondly, that a study of these fragments showed that these attacks did not affect the heart of Christianity¹³³.

¹³⁰ R. Häfner/M. Mulsow, *Mosheims Bibliothek*, in: Mulsow/Häfner/Neumann/Zedelmaier (eds.), *Johann Lorenz Mosheim* (see note 12), 374: “Mosheim publizierte 1745 seine Übersetzung von Origenes’ Streitschrift gegen Kelsus, die stilistisch zweifellos zum Besten gehört, was die deutsche Literatur auf dem Felde der gelehrten Prosa jener Zeit zu bieten hatte. Darin kommt eine sprachkritische Bemühung zum Ausdruck, die ganz wesentlich durch Gottsched und seine Teutsche Gesellschaft in Leipzig gefördert worden ist.”

¹³¹ J.L. Mosheim, *Origenes Vorstehers der Christlichen Schule zu Alexandrien und Aeltestens Acht Bücher von der Wahrheit der Christlichen Religion wider den Weltweisen Celsus*, Hamburg 1745. On Mosheim cf. Mulsow/Häfner/Neumann/Zedelmaier (eds.), *Johann Lorenz Mosheim* (see note 12), *passim*. On his edition see Breuer, *Origenes im 18. Jahrhundert* (see note 12), 14f.; W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Platonismus, Kirchen- und Ketzergeschichte. Mosheims dogmatisch-historische Kategorien*, in: Mulsow/Häfner/Neumann/Zedelmaier (eds.), *Johann Lorenz Mosheim* (see note 12), (193-210) 205; Häfner, *Mosheim und die Origenes-Rezeption* (see note 12), especially 244-247.252. On Mosheim’s criticism of Origen in general cf. U.J. Schneider, *Zum Sektenproblem der Kirchengeschichte*, in: Mulsow/Häfner/Neumann/Zedelmaier (eds.), *Johann Lorenz Mosheim* (see note 12), (147-191) 168; Schmidt-Biggemann, *Platonismus, Kirchen- und Ketzergeschichte* (see note 131), 197.205f.; Häfner, *Mosheim und die Origenes-Rezeption* (see note 12), *passim*; E.P. Meijering, *Mosheim und die Orthodoxie*, in: Mulsow/Häfner/Neumann/Zedelmaier, *Johann Lorenz Mosheim* (see note 12), (261-275) 265. – Cf. also S.-P. Bergjan, *Celsus the Epicurean? The interpretation of an argument in Origen, Contra Celsum*, *HThR* 94, 2001, (179-204) 179f.

¹³² Cf. Mosheim, *Origenes [...] Acht Bücher* (see note 131), 15: “Die Schwachheiten und besonders Meinungen des Verfassers, die so wohl dieses, als seine übrigen Bücher, verunzieren, nicht gerechnet; alles auf die Seite gesetzt, was die Hauptsache, die er treibet, nicht angehet: so bleibet doch noch mehr als zu viel übrig, das uns verbietet, diese Schutzschrift der Christen für eine vollkommene Arbeit zu halten. Origenes lässet ein Theil der Verleumdungen und Vorwürfe seines Widersachers ungerochen, und schweiget da, wo er hätte mit Eifer reden sollen. Oft widerleget er nicht redlich genug, und leugnet oder verdeckt etwas, das er ohne alle Furcht hätte zugeben und aufdecken können. Zuweilen kämpft er ganz schwach und ohnmächtig, und rechnet seinem Feinde das als einen großen Beweis an, was entweder nichts, als sein eigener Einfall, oder eine Lehre der Christen ist, die Celsus nicht ohne Beweis glauben will. Wir lesen in unserer Sprache Vertheidigungen der christlichen Religion, die diese weit überwiegen [...]”.

¹³³ Mosheim, *Origenes [...] Acht Bücher* (see note 131), especially 18-22 (Vorrede).

Mosheim's free-thinking opponents no doubt included Johann Christian Edelmann (1698-1767)¹³⁴ who had come a long way from radical Pietism to Deism and Spinozism¹³⁵. In 1740 he published his *Moses mit aufgedeckten Angesichte*¹³⁶, in which he propagated an unveiled Spinozism and attacked the divine origin of the Bible and Christian dogma. He also included a criticism of the feudal society of his time. Edelmann was immediately charged with blasphemy and was sought by the police. In 1744 he came to Neuwied where he was forced by the clergy to compose a confession of faith¹³⁷. Nonetheless, in his confession of 1746 Edelmann did by no means recant but renewed his criticism, leading to his expulsion from Neuwied. In this confession Celsus' attack and Origen's defense figure prominently: Celsus told the Christians that the Colchians and Egyptians had had circumcision long before the Jews¹³⁸, and he had proven to the Christians that their idea of a devil as God's antagonist was taken over from pagan writings which they had misunderstood. In a lengthy digression Edelmann rejects Origen's objection that the Mosaic writings were older than those of the pagans¹³⁹. In another passage, however, he cites Origen's claim that the Numidians, Scythians and Seres were considered atheists¹⁴⁰.

Edelmann's radical perspectives provoked a barrage of over 160 pamphlets. Among his opponents was Johann Christoph Harenberg (1696-1774), who was honorary professor at the *Collegium Carolinum* at Braunschweig and provost of the monastery of St Lorenz near Schöningen. Harenberg was a versatile, but also mediocre scholar. In 1747 and 1748 he had already published a lengthy refutation of Edelmann's confession¹⁴¹, to which Edelmann gave a detailed reply¹⁴². Harenberg rejoined by pub-

¹³⁴ On Edelmann cf. Jaumann, *Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur* (see note 1), 241-244.

¹³⁵ On Edelmann cf. A. Schaper, *Ein langer Abschied vom Christentum. Johann Christian Edelmann (1698-1767) und die deutsche Frühaufklärung*, Marburg 1996.

¹³⁶ J.C. Edelmann, *Moses mit aufgedeckten Angesichte. Erster, zweyter und dritter Anblick. Faksimile-Neudruck der Ausgabe 1740 mit einer Einleitung von W. Grossmann, Johann Christian Edelmann: Sämtliche Schriften in Einzelausgaben 7/1*, Stuttgart 1972.

¹³⁷ J.C. Edelmann, *Abgenöthigtes jedoch andern nicht wieder aufgenöthigtes Glaubens-Bekennniß. Faksimile-Neudruck der Ausgabe 1746 mit einer Einleitung von Walter Grossmann, Johann Christian Edelmann: Sämtliche Schriften in Einzelausgaben 9*, Stuttgart 1969.

¹³⁸ Edelmann, *Glaubens-Bekennniß* (see note 137), 167.

¹³⁹ Edelmann, *Glaubens-Bekennniß* (see note 137), 275-279. The passage contains a disguised attack against Mosheim.

¹⁴⁰ Edelmann, *Glaubens-Bekennniß* (see note 137), 31.

¹⁴¹ Cf. J.C. Harenberg, *Die gerettete Religion oder gründliche Wiederlegung des Glaubens-bekennnisses, welches Johann Christian Edelmann in kleiner und hernach in weitläufiger und erläuteter Form vernünftigen Gemüthern vorzulegen ihm unterstanden*, two parts, Braunschweig/Hildesheim 1747/1748.

¹⁴² J.C. Edelmann, *Die erste Epistel St. Harenbergs an Johann Christian Edelmann, ihrem vornehmsten Inhalt nach von demselben beantwortet, und [...] zu freymüthiger Prüfung vorgelegt. Von dem Verfasser, (sine loco) 1747.*

lishing a comparison of the views of Celsus and Edelmann¹⁴³. There is no need to go into a sustained analysis of this synkrisis. Suffice it to say that Harenberg made the point of defending Celsus against Edelmann by saying that the ancient philosopher's critique of Christianity stemmed from the deep conviction that paganism was right, whereas Edelmann's thought simply remained frivolous atheism.

At about the same time that Mosheim expressed his criticism of Origen in his bulky translation of *Contra Celsum*, similar concerns were voiced in France with regard to Cyril of Alexandria. In 1748 the Abbé Jean-Philippe René de La Bletterie (La Bléterie, 1696-1772)¹⁴⁴, who, in 1735, had written a *Life of the Emperor Julian*¹⁴⁵, published his *Life of the Emperor Jovian* to which he appended a translation of some of Julian's works. In his introduction he noted that Cyril's work *Contra Iulianum* was "learned, profound and decisive against Julian and the paganism," but not as well written as Julian's own book. In addition, Cyril wrote for readers who had a choice only between Christianity and paganism, whereas nowadays Julian's objections were repeated by men who were enemies of all religion¹⁴⁶.

By the 1740s, therefore, both Catholic and Protestant theologians were no longer certain about the plausibility of the ancient apologies. Interestingly, La Bléterie did not include the fragments of *Contra Galilaeos* in his translation. This gap was soon felt and filled by none other than the famous, and some thought notorious, chamberlain (Kammerherr) to Frederick the Great of Prussia and Director of the Philological Section at the Prussian Academy of Sciences, Jean-Baptiste de Boyer, Marquis Argens

¹⁴³ J.C. Harenberg, *Zwey Religions-Spötter, Celsus und Edelmann, nach der Aehnlichkeit und Unähnlichkeit ihres Lehrbegriffs, und der Ungleichheit beyder mit dem Inhalte der christlichen Lehre des Origenis, als eine eigne Abhandlung erwogen und dargestellt, mithin zur Rettung der Wahrheit und Befestigung der christlichen Religion in der Form eines Sendschreibens*, Leipzig 1748.

¹⁴⁴ Although his works were very influential at the time, the Abbé is today virtually forgotten. As regards his life and works cf. Neveu, *L'abbé de La Bletterie* (see note 11), passim.

¹⁴⁵ As regards this work cf. M.-H. Cotoni/L. Vigliéno, *Julien au siècle des lumières en France*, in: Braun/Richer (eds.), *L'Empereur Julien* (see note 11), vol. 2, (11-39) 12-15.21-24.32; Rosen, *Julian* (see note 11), 423f.

¹⁴⁶ Jean Philippe René de La Bléterie, *Histoire de l'empereur Jovien, et traductions de quelques ouvrages de l'empereur Julien, nouvelle édition*, Paris 1776, XIII-XIV: "La réfutation qu'en a faite ce saint docteur, & qu'il a dédiée à l'empereur Théodose le jeune, est savante, profonde, décisive contre Julien & le paganisme: mais la lecture en seroit plus agréable, si sa plume étoit aussi légère que celle de Julien. D'ailleurs saint Cyrille écrivoit pour des lecteurs, persuadés que si le paganisme étoit faux, le christianisme étoit nécessairement vrai. C'est pour cela qu'il s'attache moins à répondre directement aux objections de Julien, qu'à faire sentir la foiblesse ou plutôt le néant du paganisme. Cette méthode, qui suffisoit alors, ne seroit pas assez proportionnée aux besoins de notre siècle, où les mêmes objections ne sont malheureusement que trop répétées par des hommes également ennemis de toute religion. Une réfutation directe de ces livres trop fameux, seroit un travail vraiment digne d'un théologien philosophe."

(1703-1771)¹⁴⁷. In 1764 Argens edited the fragments of *Contra Galilaeos* contained in Cyril's work and added an extensive introduction, French translation and notes¹⁴⁸.

It was Argens' stated aim to continue his attack on "the superstition which had been given the name of religion", as he wrote in a letter to Frederick on 14 October 1762¹⁴⁹. He continued by saying that "the greatest evils" which had occurred during the last two thousand years had been caused by the priests who had murdered kings and emperors. The Church Fathers were charged with promoting the doctrine that rebellion and regicide was permitted. The Christian monarchs Constantine and Clovis were more evil than even Nero and Caligula. "The emperor Julian, the model of good princes, was wrongly denigrated by all Church Fathers"¹⁵⁰.

Argens' aim was both religious and political. He wanted to fight Christianity, because he saw it as a superstition which had outlived itself and because the Catholic powers had used churchmen to attack the Prussian King. Yet Argens proceeded with some caution. In the *Discours préliminaire* which preceded his edition he quoted at length the Jesuit Denis Pétau (1583-1652)¹⁵¹ who had justified his own edition of Julian's works published in 1630 (which, however, did not include *Contra Galilaeos*)¹⁵², by saying that, since paganism had disappeared there was no danger in reediting pagan texts; instead one could admire their elegance and call to memory the blindness of the pagans and the grace of God which had delivered them from this blindness¹⁵³. In addition, Argens noted that Julian's writings contained information about the customs and the discipline of the Early Church. In particular, he quoted the ancient cult of martyrs and the prayer to the martyrs mentioned by Julian. He went on to remind his readers that one could learn from Julian that already before his time the Eucharist had been called a sacrifice – all of which proved that the Catholics

¹⁴⁷ For details of his life and works cf. E. Johnston, *Le Marquis d'Argens. Sa vie et ses œuvres. Essai biographique et critique*, Paris 1929; H.-U. Seifert/J.L. Seban (eds.), *Der Marquis d'Argens, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen* 103, Wiesbaden 2004.

¹⁴⁸ Jean-Baptiste de Boyer d'Argens, *Deffense du paganisme par l'empereur Julien, en Grec et en François avec des dissertations et des notes*, Berlin 1764. As regards the history of this edition cf. Moureaux, *D'Argens éditeur de Julien* (see note 11), passim; idem, *D'Argens éditeur de l'Empereur Julien* (see note 11), passim; idem, *Voltaire* (see note 11), 1-28.

¹⁴⁹ For details cf. Moureaux, *D'Argens éditeur de Julien* (see note 11), 154f.; idem, *Voltaire* (see note 11), 6f.

¹⁵⁰ Moureaux, *D'Argens éditeur de Julien* (see note 11), 154f.: "Les plus grands maux qui ont accablé l'univers depuis deux mille ans ont été causé par les prêtres; ils ont assassiné les rois et les empereurs; les Pères de l'Eglise ont été les premiers promoteurs du dogme qu'il est permis aux sujets de se révolter et de tuer leurs princes; ils ont corrompu l'histoire; Constantin et Clovis, les deux premiers princes chrétiens, ont été plus méchants que les Néron et les Caligula; l'empereur Julien, le modèle des bons princes, a été fausement dénigré par tous les Pères de l'Eglise."

¹⁵¹ On Pétau cf. Jaumann, *Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur* (see note 16), 501-503.

¹⁵² As regards Pétau's edition cf. Faisant, *Images de Julien l'Apostat* (see note 62), 416-418.

¹⁵³ Cf. Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. VII-IX.

were right and that the Protestants were wrong¹⁵⁴. Finally, Julian's book was full of details concerning the 'profane history,' the antiquities, the elegance and purity of the language and about the humanities in general which was found nowhere else¹⁵⁵. Thus, at first glance Argens' motive for publishing *Contra Galilaeos* seemed innocent enough.

But the Marquis was unable to contain his sympathies for the emperor altogether. He criticized Pétau for not having done justice to the personality of the emperor, instead having repeated the slanders of the Church Fathers. Argens argued that one had to distinguish the philosopher and theologian Julian from the emperor Julian who was "just, wise, clement, generous and worthy"¹⁵⁶ and quoted at length from La Mothe le Vayer's chapter on Julian in his *De la vertu des payens*. In somewhat cryptic remarks he portrayed Julian's lapse from Christianity as a kind of "involuntary crime" "caused by a fatal concatenation of secondary causes"¹⁵⁷. The emperor belonged to those men who, by God's secret judgment, had been condemned to eternal death before creation. Therefore, he could never have performed good deeds and even his prayers changed into sin, as Augustine clearly taught¹⁵⁸. Cyril, on the other hand, should have used the same weapons as Julian instead of denigrating this "honest man who had erred in good faith"¹⁵⁹. Argens added "Réflexions sur l'Empereur Julien" in which he explained his positive assessment of the monarch despite his lapse from Christianity. He repeated that Julian could not be blamed for his apostasy, because (a) he was personally convinced of the superiority of the pagan doctrines and (b) because God had predestined his fate in this way. Argens saw one of the reasons exculpating Julian's lapse to be the absurdity of some of the Christian doctrines. In fact, he compiled a long comparison of pagan and Christian doctrines regarding God and the trinity which he submitted to a fictitious Chinese character for assessment in order to show that the Christian doctrine could not be grasped by reason but only be accepted by faith¹⁶⁰. Before coming to power Julian had covered his lapse to paganism for his own safety. Argens went on to show that also the biblical prophecies and the rapid spread of Christianity constituted no argument in favour of the Church. From this it followed that from Julian's point of view it was right to destroy Christianity. Christianity was for him what Catholicism was for England. And yet Julian was much better than many Christian rulers and many popes who lived in luxury and ruthlessly

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. IXsq.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. Xsq.

¹⁵⁶ Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. XII.

¹⁵⁷ "Cet Empereur merite plutôt d'être plaint que d'être calomnié: son crime a été involontaire: ce fut par un funeste enchainement de causes secondes, qu'il tomba dans l'erreur qui lui fit embrasser avec tant de zèle la deffense du paganisme" (Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. XVII).

¹⁵⁸ Cf. also Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. XXXVII-XXXIX.

¹⁵⁹ Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. XX.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. XL-XLIII.

suppressed the pagans and heretics¹⁶¹. The intolerance of the Christians is then cited by Argens as one of the principal objections against the truth of Christianity. The way he presented his case suggests that he actually agreed with it¹⁶². His little treatise culminated in a passionate plea for religious tolerance. In particular, Argens called for an end to the persecution of the Protestants and the Jansenists in France.

Finally, he returned to his translation by saying that he had added two different kinds of notes, one explaining grammatical problems and the meaning of the text, the other one serving to refute those of Julian's accusations against Christianity which were unfounded and to demonstrate "the truth of the sacred doctrines that he wanted to destroy"¹⁶³. Yet he added that he had made no attempt to refute Julian's arguments in favour of paganism since they had been refuted long ago. Finally, he had dealt with the errors of paganism only if they concerned Christianity¹⁶⁴. Contrary to what one would expect Argens does indeed resign himself to explaining the text and to refuting Julian in most of his footnotes¹⁶⁵. Sometimes he also draws information concerning Christian life from his source¹⁶⁶. Only occasionally does he criticize the Bible or Christianity himself¹⁶⁷. Incidentally, Argens also knows and uses *Contra Celsum* in his notes¹⁶⁸.

The text which Argens presented was taken from Spanheim's edition of *Contra Iulianum*, but the work was sloppily done, and modern scholars have quite rightly suspected that Argens had not even read the whole of Cyril's apology. His translation was not much better, in many places being no more than a superficial paraphrase¹⁶⁹.

While Argens saw reason to disguise the true motives for his edition of *Contra Galilaeos*, Voltaire knew no restraints when he reedited Argens' translation in 1768¹⁷⁰. He dropped Argens' *Discours préliminaire*, his

¹⁶¹ Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. LV-LIX.

¹⁶² Cf. Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. LX-LXV.

¹⁶³ Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. LXX.

¹⁶⁴ Argens, *Deffense du paganisme*, p. LXXXII.

¹⁶⁵ As regards refutations of Julian cf. e.g. Argens, *Deffense du paganisme* (see note 148), notes 20.22.34.42.44f.49-54.62.67.80.88.91f.95.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. e.g. Argens, *Deffense du paganisme* (see note 148), note 47: adoration of the cross, sign of the cross; note 81: martyrs' cult.

¹⁶⁷ In Argens, *Deffense du paganisme* (see note 148), note 30 he points out à propos Gen 11,7 that the exegesis of the Fathers of passages such as this had changed through the centuries; the same in note 67 concerning Gen 6,1f.; note 84 (Matt 8,21f.); note 85 (Is 65,4); note 87 (Gen 2,3f.). In note 54 he attempts to show that the Christian exegesis of Gen 49,10 is erroneous. In note 61 he is puzzled as to the meaning of Is 7,15. In note 88 he ostracizes the permanent squabbles of the "ancient and modern monks". In note 91 he says that Cyril's argument against circumcision was not sufficient.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Argens, *Deffense du paganisme* (see note 148), note 62.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Moureaux, D'Argens éditeur de Julien (see note 11), 161-167; idem, Voltaire (see note 11), 7-9.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Moureaux, Voltaire (see note 11), 75-118.119-125. On Voltaire and Julian cf. Philip, *Julianus Apostata* (see note 11), 53-57; C. Mervaud, *Julien l'Apostat dans la correspondance de Voltaire et Frédéric II*, RHLF 76, 1976, 724-743; Cotoni/Viglieno, *Julien* (see

Réflexions and some of his notes and substituted them with texts which clearly showed his hatred of the Church and his sympathy with Julian.

Voltaire added a "Portrait of the Emperor Julian"¹⁷¹ and a short analysis of the fragments. In addition he appended a vitriolic "Supplement to the Discourse of the Emperor Julian". I will not analyse Voltaire's attitude towards Julian in depth, but will just resume the main points of his argument. It is clear to him that the emperor, had he lived longer, could have "reversed the Christian religion established by Constantine." "But after him fanaticism triumphed"¹⁷². Cyril, on the other hand, was an ambitious and cruel man, whose ruthlessness is painted in the darkest colours. In particular, he was guilty of the murder of the Platonic philosopher Hypatia¹⁷³. Voltaire accuses the Christian rulers of the fourth century of cruelty and bloodthirst. It is true, he notes, that both Julian and his adversaries were Platonists. But he calls the "Greek clergy" "fanatic and ignorant", whereas Julian kept to the true doctrine of Plato¹⁷⁴. In the final "Supplement" he condemned all apocryphal writings of the Christians outright as a bunch of lies. He ended this piece by exclaiming: "It is time to break that infamous yoke that the stupidity has put over our head and that reason has jogged with all its might." Dogma had to be abolished in order to rediscover the morality which comes from God, the justice inherent in God and the goodness which was the essence of God¹⁷⁵.

V.

Argens' publication of Julian's fragments did not remain unnoticed among German intellectuals. However, these thinkers lacked the libertine fervour which their French counterparts had developed. Therefore, the German Enlightenment, although it provided the classical definition of the epoch in Kant's famous essay "Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?", on the whole refrained from drawing the radical religious conclusions which at the time were debated at the court of Potsdam¹⁷⁶.

note 145); eadem, *Voltaire et Frédéric II. Une dramaturgie des lumières 1736-1778*, Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth Century 234, Oxford 1985, register, s.v. Julien.

¹⁷¹ It was taken over from the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, vol. 2, The complete works of Voltaire 36, Paris 1994, 267-280.

¹⁷² Moureaux, Voltaire (see note 11), 137.

¹⁷³ Moureaux, Voltaire (see note 11), 137.

¹⁷⁴ Moureaux, Voltaire (see note 11), 138.

¹⁷⁵ Moureaux, Voltaire (see note 11), 211: "Il est temps de briser ce joug infame que la stupidité a mis sur notre tête, que la raison secoue de toutes ses forces; il est temps d'imposer silence aux sots fanatiques gagés pour annoncer ces impostures sacrilèges, & de les réduire à prêcher la morale qui vient de Dieu, la justice qui est dans Dieu, la bonté qui est l'essence de Dieu, & non des dogmes impertinens qui sont l'ouvrage des hommes. Il est temps de consoler la terre que des canibales déguisés en prêtres & en juges ont couverte de sang. Il est temps d'écouter la nature qui crie depuis tant de siècles; ne persécutez pas mes enfants pour des inepties. Il est temps enfin de servir Dieu sans l'outrager."

¹⁷⁶ The most recent survey is by A. Beutel, *Aufklärung in Deutschland*, KIG. Lieferung O2, Göttingen 2006.

Whereas in France Argens was praised because of the quality of his translation and the wealth of his footnotes¹⁷⁷, in Germany his edition was received with the utmost reservation. This was not, however, only due to his critical view of Christianity but also to the obvious shortcomings of his editorial talents. In the “Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek” Argens’ work was severely criticized by an anonymous reviewer because of its philological inaccuracy and its faulty translation¹⁷⁸. Very similar reproaches were raised in the “Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen”. This review culminated in the following remark:

We cannot refrain from saying that even the French privilege of providing incorrect translations was here abused. There is nearly no page without mistakes, and there are whole passages where not one word of the translation is found in Greek¹⁷⁹.

Others were prepared to take on the intellectual challenge which Argens had placed before them. Thus Georg Friedrich Meier (1718-1777)¹⁸⁰, professor of philosophy at the university of Halle, one of the centres of the philosophy of Christian Wolff (1679-1754)¹⁸¹, composed an extensive refutation of Argens, taking issue in particular with the portrait of the emperor which the Marquis had painted in his introduction. Meier was by no means hostile towards Argens whose learning he respected, but he argued at some length that the Marquis’ rehabilitation of Julian was unethical, illogical and unreasonable¹⁸².

Although German intellectuals, therefore, by and large refused Argens’ frivolous approach, they were by no means unaware of the ancient criticisms themselves. Indeed, one might say that on a philological and historical level, they even belonged to the champions of the study of Celsus and Julian. Mosheim’s annotated translation of *Contra Celsum*, which ran to over 900 pages, is a showpiece of erudition and scholarship. Yet when it

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Anonymus, Review of Argens, Deffense du paganisme, Gazette littéraire de l’Europe 1, 1764, (306-308) 307: “M. le Marquis d’Argens en a rapproché les différentes parties, & après avoir donné ses soins à ce que le texte parût dans toute sa pureté, il l’a accompagné d’une bonne traduction & d’une quantité considérable de remarques presque uniquement employées à combattre Julien & à défendre la Religion Chrétienne.”

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Anonymus (signed ‘L.’), Review of Argens, Deffense du paganisme, Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek 1/1, 1766, 188-198.

¹⁷⁹ Anonymus, Review of Argens, Deffense du paganisme, GAGS 111, 15.09.1764, (899-901) 901: “Auf der Seite gegenüber ist die französische Uebersetzung beygefüget; wir können uns nicht enthalten, zu sagen, daß selbst das Privilegium der Franzosen, untreu zu übersetzen darinnen gemißbraucht sey. Fast keine Seite ist ohne Unrichtigkeiten, und es giebt ganze Stellen, wo nicht ein Wort im Griechischen von der Uebersetzung stehet.” – I have not seen C.A. Klotz, Review of Argens, Deffense du paganisme, Acta litteraria 2/1, 1765, 175-203.

¹⁸⁰ On Meier cf. F. Muncker, Art. Meier, Georg Friedrich, ADB 21, 1885, 193-197; K.-W. Segreff, Art. Meier, Georg Friedrich, NDB 16, 1990, 649-651.

¹⁸¹ On Wolff cf. Jaumann, Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur (see note 16), 709f.

¹⁸² G.F. Meier, Beurtheilung der Betrachtungen des Herrn Marquis von Argens über den Kayser Julian, Halle 1764.

came to appropriating the ancient writings and to applying their argument to modern biblical and religious criticism, it appears that the German intellectuals were much more cautious than their French counterparts. Of course, they, too, had their share of clandestine literature¹⁸³. But their use of the ancient texts did not, on the whole, filter through to mainstream philosophical and theological writing.

To this pattern there was one significant exception. Arguably the most notorious radical thinker of German theological Enlightenment was Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768). Reimarus led a strange intellectual double life¹⁸⁴. As a teacher of philosophy, history and philology at the “Akademisches Gymnasium” in Hamburg he prepared many generations of young people for their university studies. He was valued as a gifted and immensely learned teacher for whom his students had the utmost respect. Yet at the same time he secretly wrote a devastating critique of the Bible which he dared not publish and which largely remained hidden in the archives until 1972. Even the limited portions of it published by Lessing¹⁸⁵ triggered the “Fragmentenstreit” which shook German Protestant theology to its core.

How did Reimarus approach Celsus and Julian? In fact, although he possessed the relevant editions¹⁸⁶, there are fewer quotations from these authors in his major works than one might expect. While perhaps the epistemological subject of his *Vernunftlehre* did not lend itself to such quotations¹⁸⁷, his work on natural religion most certainly did. Yet there is no trace of either Celsus or Julian¹⁸⁸. Not even in those tracts that paved the way for the *Apology* do we find mention of the ancient authors¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸³ Cf. above pp. 322-324.

¹⁸⁴ For what follows cf. H. Schulze, Art. Reimarus, Hermann Samuel, TRE 28, 1997, 470-473; cf. Jaumann, Handbuch Gelehrtenkultur (see note 16), 547f.

¹⁸⁵ Critical edition in: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Werke, ed. by H.G. Göpfert, vol. 7, Darmstadt 1976, 311-604.

¹⁸⁶ We happen to know from the auction catalogue of his private library that he owned the editions of Origen by Erasmus (1557, no. 1463f.), Spencer (1677, no. 1488) and Delarue (1733-1740, no. 1460-1462) and of Cyril by Spanheim (1696, no. 1442). He also possessed Argens’ bilingual edition of the fragments of *Contra Galilaeos* (1764, no. 1910c). The numbers in brackets refer to Auktionskatalog der Bibliothek von Hermann Samuel Reimarus. Redigiert von Johann Andreas Gottfried Schetelig, Hamburg 1769 und 1770, ed. by the Reimarus-Kommission der Joachim-Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften e.V. Hamburg und der Lessing-Akademie e.V. Wolfenbüttel, 2 vols., Hamburg 1978/1980.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Gesammelte Schriften, vols. 1 and 2. Vernunftlehre, ed. by F. Löttsch, München 1979.

¹⁸⁸ Only Porphyry is mentioned once in passing; cf. H.S. Reimarus, Die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der natürlichen Religion. Mit einer Einleitung, ed. by G. Gawlick, 2 vols., Veröffentlichung der Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften Hamburg 53, Göttingen 1985, 31.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. H.S. Reimarus, Kleine gelehrte Schriften. Vorstufen zur Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes, ed. by W. Schmidt-Biggemann, Veröffentlichung der Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften Hamburg 79, Göttingen 1994.

However, there are quotations in one of Reimarus' early lectures and in the *Apology* itself, and they provide a curious picture by standing in stark contrast to each other. The *Vindicatio dictorum Veteris Testamenti in Novo allegatorum* was a Latin lecture which Reimarus held at the "Akademische Gymnasium" in Hamburg in 1731. Here he quotes Celsus and Julian as witnesses to the miracles of Christ, an argument which we already found in Grotius and Huet¹⁹⁰. In thesis VII and its explanation Reimarus says that among the pagans and the heretics there were many who denied that the Old Testament referred to Christ in any respect. He enumerates Celsus, Julian, Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Manichee Faustus. He clearly rejects this view and sticks to the orthodox christological exegesis of the Old Testament¹⁹¹.

In his *Apology* Reimarus turned this argument upside down. Here he rejects any kind of allegorical exegesis of the Old Testament and quotes the same sources (plus some more) as evidence in support of his argument¹⁹². Celsus and Julian have now also become his allies in other respects. Reimarus criticizes the cheap grace of the Christians which was dispensed to thieves, robbers and murderers, and he refers in this context to Celsus and Julian; the similarity with Bodin is baffling¹⁹³. Julian and Celsus are Reimarus' crown witnesses in his attack on the trinitarian doctrine, whereas Origen's defence is seen as deficient on this point and elsewhere¹⁹⁴. Reimarus regrets that the writings of the pagans and heretics such as Celsus, Porphyry and others were suppressed and burnt.

For who is now able to find reliable information as to the opinion, reasons and criticisms of these people concerning Christianity from these ashes?¹⁹⁵

Incidentally, Lessing, who had edited parts of Reimarus' apology, was much more cautious in using the ancient authors. He introduced his little pamphlet *Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*¹⁹⁶, which he published

¹⁹⁰ H.S. Reimarus, *Vindicatio dictorum Veteris Testamenti in Novo allegatorum* 1731. Text der Pars I und Conspectus der Pars II, ed. by Peter Stemmer, Veröffentlichung der Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften Hamburg 47, Göttingen 1983, 39 and above pp. 328f.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Reimarus, *Vindicatio* (54-56 S.), and Stemmer, *Vindicatio dictorum* (see note 190), 9f.

¹⁹² Reimarus, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift* (H.S. Reimarus, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, ed. by G. Alexander, vol. 2, Frankfurt a.M. 1972, 268f.). Cf. P. Stemmer, *Weissagung und Kritik. Eine Studie zur Hermeneutik bei Hermann Samuel Reimarus*, Veröffentlichung der Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften Hamburg 48, Göttingen 1983, 160.

¹⁹³ Cf. Reimarus, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift* (vol. 1, 156f. A.) and above pp. 325f.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Reimarus, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift* (vol. 2, 384 A.: Origen; 435 A.: Julian; 438 A.: Celsus and Origen).

¹⁹⁵ Reimarus, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift* (vol. 2, 393 A.): "Wer kann denn nun wohl eine treue Nachricht von der Leute Meynung, Gründen, und Einwürrfen wieder das Christenthum, aus dieser Asche herausfinden?"

¹⁹⁶ Lessing, *Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft* (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Werke*, ed. by H.G. Göpfert, vol. 8, Darmstadt 1979, 9-14).

in 1777 at the beginning of the “Fragmentenstreit” with a quotation from *Contra Celsum* I 2. Yet the text dealt not with Celsus, but with Origen’s claim that the truth of the Christian religion could be proven by prophecies and miracles¹⁹⁷. Origen’s apology was sometimes used as evidence for certain historical conjectures regarding the history of ancient religions and the Early Church¹⁹⁸. Lessing also censured Origen’s shortcomings in refuting Celsus’ statement that Christian gatherings were suspicious¹⁹⁹. The pagan philosopher himself, however, was rarely mentioned. Lessing termed his philosophy “vulgar” and that of Porphyry an “even greater folly”²⁰⁰. He had doubts that Celsus knew the Holy Scriptures and thought that he had drawn his knowledge of the Church and its doctrines from other sources²⁰¹. Lessing thought of using Celsus and other authors in order to show that the arcane discipline of the early Christians had existed before the end of the second century, a plan which he never executed²⁰². Apparently, Lessing never read Julian’s work against the Christians. Instead he regarded Porphyry as the most dangerous of Christian enemies, as he explained in the sixth part of his *Anti-Goeze* in 1778²⁰³. In any case,

¹⁹⁷ Cf. also Lessing, Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft. Ein zweites Schreiben an den Herrn Direktor Schuhmann in Hannover [Nachlass] (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Werke, ed. by H.G. Göpfert, vol. 7, Darmstadt 1976, 658-660).

¹⁹⁸ Cf. e.g. Lessing, Von der Art und Weise der Fortpflanzung und Ausbreitung der christlichen Religion [Nachlass] (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Werke, ed. by H.G. Göpfert, vol. 7, Darmstadt 1976, 289.301 [note]); Lessing, Neue Hypothese über die Evangelisten als bloß menschliche Geschichtschreiber betrachtet [Nachlass] (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Werke, ed. by H.G. Göpfert, vol. 7, Darmstadt 1976, 630); Lessing, Über die Elpistiker [Nachlass] (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Werke, ed. by H.G. Göpfert, vol. 8, Darmstadt 1979, 525.527).

¹⁹⁹ Lessing, Von der Art und Weise der Fortpflanzung und Ausbreitung der christlichen Religion (294f. G.).

²⁰⁰ Lessing, Von der Art und Weise der Fortpflanzung und Ausbreitung der christlichen Religion (300 G.): “Hieher gehört die abgeschmackte Philosophie des Celsus, und die noch weit tollere des Porphyrius”.

²⁰¹ Lessing, Sogenannte Briefe an den Herrn Doktor Walch, Iter [Nachlass] (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Werke, ed. by H.G. Göpfert, vol. 7, Darmstadt 1976, 685f.).

²⁰² Lessing, Von der Art und Weise der Fortpflanzung und Ausbreitung der christlichen Religion (287 G.).

²⁰³ Cf. Lessing, *Anti-Goeze* (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Werke, ed. by H.G. Göpfert, vol. 8, Darmstadt 1979, 240): “Unter den heidnischen Philosophen, welche in den ersten Jahrhunderten wider das Christentum geschrieben, muß ohne Zweifel Porphyrius der gefährlichste gewesen sein, so wie er, aller Vermutung nach, der scharfsinnigste und gelehrteste war. Denn seine 15 Bücher *katà christianôn* sind, auf Befehl des Constantinus und Theodosius, so sorgsam zusammengesucht und vernichtet worden, daß uns auch kein einziges kleines Fragment daraus übrig geblieben. Selbst die dreißig und mehr Verfasser, die ausdrücklich wider ihn geschrieben hatten, worunter sich sehr große Namen befinden, sind darüber verloren gegangen; vermutlich weil sie zu viele und zu große Stellen ihres Gegners, der nun einmal aus der Welt sollte, angeführet hatten.– Wenn es aber wahr sein sollte, was Isaac Vossius den Salvius wollen glauben machen, daß dem ohngeachtet noch irgendwo ein Exemplar dieser so fürchterlichen Bücher des Porphyrius vorhanden sei; in der Mediceischen Bibliothek zu Florenz nämlich, wo es aber so heimlich gehalten werde, daß niemand es lesen, niemand das geringste der Welt daraus mitteilen dürfe: wahrlich, so möchte ich dort zu Florenz nicht Bibliothekar sein, und wenn ich Großherzog zugleich

he thought that writings critical of Christianity, such as the work of the Fragmentist, ought to be published in his time as they should have been in antiquity²⁰⁴.

VI.

By way of summing up, I would like to repeat my initial question: Did Celsus' and Julian's attacks on Christianity influence the Enlightenment? Although there is no simple answer to this question we can say that their influence was probably less substantial than some scholars have suggested and that the influence of Julian was probably greater than that of Celsus.

Reception of Julius and Celsus can be observed on various levels:

1. Both authors were exploited as a mine of information about ancient pagan religions and the practices of the Early Church.
2. The textual history of the writings of both authors served to demonstrate the ruthlessness with which the Church had fought and suppressed her opponents.
3. Arguments were borrowed from Celsus and Julian in order to show contradictions in the Bible and in Christian doctrine. Both were thought to be inconsistent in themselves and incompatible with true reason.
4. Both Celsus and Julian served as rationalist 'role models' which modern critics revived for their contemporary situation in order to give their opposition against the Church an ancient aura.
5. Conversely, Christian apologists argued that Celsus and Julian were, against their will, proof for the authenticity of the biblical and Christian tradition and, therefore, for the truth of Christianity.

Religious critics and apologists alike exploited Celsus and Julian, albeit for different reasons. Whereas the critics usually saw in them allies or at

sein könnte. Oder vielmehr, ich möchte es nur unter dieser Bedingung sein, damit ich ein der Wahrheit und dem Christentume so nachteiliges Verbot geschwind aufheben, geschwind den Porphyrius in meinem herzoglichen Palaste drucken lassen, und geschwind das Großherzogtum, welches mir itzt schon im Gedanken zur Last ist, geschwind wieder an seine Behörde abgeben könnte."

²⁰⁴ Cf. Lessing, *Eine Parabel* (1778) (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Werke*, ed. by H.G. Göpfert, vol. 8, Darmstadt 1979, 121): "Sie würden vor Ihrer Todesstunde zittern, wenn Sie an der Bekanntmachung der bewußten Fragmente den geringsten Anteil hätten. – Ich werde vielleicht in meiner Todesstunde zittern; aber vor meiner Todesstunde werde ich nie zittern. Am allerwenigsten deswegen, daß ich getan habe, was verständige Christen itzt wünschen, daß es die alten Bibliothekare zu Alexandria, zu Cäsarea, zu Constantinopel, mit den Schriften des Celsus, des Fronto, des Porphyrius, wenn sie es hätten tun können, möchten getan haben. Um die Schriften des letztern, sagt ein Mann, der sich auf solche Dinge versteht, gäbe itzt mancher Freund der Religion gern einen frommen Kirchenvater hin."

least utilized their arguments against Christianity²⁰⁵, the apologists tried to rebut these attacks by claiming that the ancient pagans, too, had held some form of monotheism or at least had believed in some kind of god, whereas the modern atheists did not believe in anything at all.

The influence of Celsus and Julian on the religious criticism of the eighteenth century was probably strongest at the Prussian court of Frederick II. Otherwise it appears to have been limited and to have been used to strengthen the extant attack on Christianity rather than actually constitute the offensive in the first place. In my view, none of the modern authors mentioned here could by rights be called a 'Celsus redivivus' or a 'Julianus reincarnatus'. This may not be surprising when we keep in mind that the *True Word* and *Against the Galilaeans* were ultimately defences of a belief in God (albeit of a different kind than that of the Christians) such that the writings of Celsus and Julian offered no alternatives for the emerging atheism of modern times.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Artikel diskutiert die These von Forschern wie Henri Busson, Lucien Febvre, François Berriot oder Wolfgang Gericke, derzufolge antike Christentumskritiker wie der Philosoph Kelsos und der Kaiser Julian (der so genannte „Apostat“) der Philosophie der Aufklärung in ihrer Auseinandersetzung mit dem Christentum eine erhebliche, wenn nicht gar die entscheidende Argumentationshilfe geboten hätten. Ein Durchgang durch zentrale Schriften der aufklärerischen Religionskritik erbringt zwar tatsächlich Hinweise auf eine solche Rezeption im Bemühen, Widersprüche in der Bibel und der christlichen Lehre aufzuweisen. Ebenso konnten Kelsos und Julian als rationalistische „Rollenmodelle“ für die Kirchenkritik benutzt werden. Umgekehrt nutzten aber auch Apologeten des Christentums die Schriften der beiden antiken Philosophen, um die Wahrheit des Christentums nachzuweisen. Der Einfluss der antiken Christentumskritik scheint am stärksten am Hof Friedrichs des Großen gewesen zu sein. Insgesamt gesehen blieb er jedoch begrenzt, weil der Polytheismus eines Kelsos oder eines Julian dem entstehenden modernen Atheismus keine wirklichen Alternativen anbot.

²⁰⁵ The reverse strategy was used by Edward Gibbon in his "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire". As David Wootton has shown, in chapter XV of his work describing "The Progress of the Christian Religion, and the Sentiments, Manners, Numbers, and Condition of the primitive Christians," Gibbon "was quite systematically trying to provide a survey of eighteenth century arguments against Christianity"; D. Wootton, Narrative, irony, and faith in Gibbon's Decline and fall, HTh 33, 1994, 77-105.