Jewish Beginnings

Earliest Christianity in Alexandria

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1. The Silence of the Sources and the Imagination of Scholarship

1.1 Adolf von Harnack: Jewish Beginnings

When and how did the Jesus movement reach Alexandria? The answer is quite simple: we do not know.[1] Adolf von Harnack famously stated,

[1] Nevertheless, literature abounds: Andreas Heckel, *Die Kirche von Ägypten: Ihre Anfänge, ihre Organisation und ihre Entwicklung bis zur Zeit des Nicänum* (Strassbourg: Heitz, 1918); H. Idris Bell, "Evidences of Christianity in Egypt during the Roman Period," *HTR* 37 (1944): 185–208; Manfred Hornschuh, *Die Anfänge des Christentums in Ägypten* (PhD diss., Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität, 1959); Colin H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, The Schweich Lectures 1977 (London: The British Academy, 1979); Gilles Quispel, "African Christianity before Minucius Felix and Tertullian" (1982), in *Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 387–459; Birger A. Pearson, "Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Some Observations," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, ed. idem and James E. Goehring (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 132–61; idem, "Christianity in Egypt," *ABD* 1:954–60; idem, *Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt*, SAC (New York: T&T Clark, 2004); idem, "Cracking a Conundrum: Christian Origins in Egypt," *Studia Theologica* 57 (2003): 61–75; idem, "Egypt," in *Origins to Constantine*, vol. 1 of *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 331–50; idem, "Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Further Observations," in *The World of Early Egyptian Christianity: Language, Literature, and Social Context – Essays in honor of David W. Johnson*, ed. James E. Goehring and Janet A. Timbie, CUA Studies in Early Christianity (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 97–112; C. Wilfred Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity: From Its Origins to 451 C.E.*, Coptic Studies 2, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1991); Adolf M. Ritter, "Das frühchristliche Alexandrien im Spannungsfeld zwischen Judenchristentum, 'Frühkatholizismus' und Gnosis," *Charisma und Caritas: Aufsätze zur Geschichte der Alten Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 1993, 117–36; Gilles Dorival, "Les débuts du christianisme à Alexandrie," in *Alexandrie: Une mégapole cosmopolite*, ed. Jean Leclant (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1999), 157–74; Attila Jakab, *Ecclesia alexandrina: Evolution sociale et institutionelle du Christianisme Alexandrin (IIe et IIIe Siècles)*, Christianismes anciens 1 (Frankfurt: Lang, 2001); Annick Martin, "Aux origins de l'Alexandrie chrétienne: Topographie, liturgie, institutions," in *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition*, ed. Lorenzo Perrone, BETL 164 (Leuven:

> The worst gap in our knowledge of early church history is our almost total ignorance of the history of Christianity in Alexandria and Egypt … up till 180 A.D. (the episcopate of Demetrius), when for the first time the Alexandrian church appears in the daylight of history.

Less frequently quoted is Harnack's following statement, which makes clear that the appearance of the first testimonies of the Alexandrian community must not be confused with the appearance of the Christian community itself:

> It is then a stately [stattliche] church with a powerful bishop and a school of higher learning attached to it by means of which its influence was to be diffused and its fame borne far and wide.[2]

Harnack draws the conclusion that, despite the lack of direct evidence, Alexandria counts among the "places in which Christian communities or Christians can be traced as early as the 1st century (previous to Trajan)."[3] Harnack gathered all potential traces of the earliest Alexandrian or Egyptian church prior to Demetrius, mentioning over a dozen texts and persons. Apollos (Acts 18:24–25), the pseudo-Pauline "Letter to the Alexandrians", the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*, the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, Basilides, Valentinus, Apelles, Pantaenus, and others.

With respect to the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Didache*, the *Kerygma Petrou* or the *Apostolic Constitutions*, he ponders if "one or two of them" might be of Egyptian or Alexandrian origin, though this "can hardly be proved in the case of any one of them with clearness."[4] He discards Hebrews as a possible

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Leuven University Press, 2003), 1:105–20; Simon C. Mimouni, "A la recherche de la communauté chrétienne d'Alexandrie aux Ier- IIème siècles," in ibid. 1:137–63; Alfons Fürst, *Christentum als Intellektuellen-Religion: Die Anfänge des Christentums in Alexandria*, SBS 213 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2007); Markus Lang, *Spuren des frühen ägyptischen Christentums* (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 2008; I am grateful to Dr Lang for allowing me to consult his dissertation); David Brakke, "The East (2): Egypt and Palestine," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. David G. Hunter and Susan A. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 344–63; Malcolm Choat, "Christianity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, ed. Christina Riggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 474–89; idem, "Egypt's Role in the Rise of Christianity, Monasticism and Regional Schisms," in *A Companion to Greco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt*, ed. Katelijn Vandorpe (Hoboken: Wiley, 2019), 449–70; Robert A. Kraft and AnneMarie Luijendijk, "Christianity's Rise after Judaism's Demise in Early Egypt," in *Partings: How Judaism and Christianity Became Two*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2013), 179–85; Sabine Huebner, *Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2019), 8–15.

I am very grateful to Jan N. Bremmer for his insightful feedback on this contribution and to Christina Harker for improving the English style of this article.

[2] Adolf von Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. and ed. James Moffatt, 2nd ed. (New York: Putnam, 1908), 2:158–59.

[3] Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, 2:91.

[4] Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, 2:159. See, however, his thoughts on 2 Peter etc. in Adolf von Harnack, *Die Chronologie der Litteratur bis Irenäus nebst einleitenden*

candidate in a footnote, he does not even mention James or *2 Clement*, and he holds that "we have no means of checking" the earliest Alexandrian traditions on Mark.[5]

1.2 Walter Bauer: Dominance of Heresy

Harnack's data have been reevaluated and supplemented in subsequent decades, most prominently by Walter Bauer in his *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, first published in 1934.[6] Bauer surmised that the sources on earliest Christianity in Alexandria are silent because they could not report anything favorable.[7] For him, the silence of the sources tells us that heresy reigned. Bauer postulated a forked, mostly "heretical" Christian movement at the beginning of the 2nd century – "how long before that we cannot say." "There were gentile Christians alongside Jewish Christians, with both movements resting on syncretistic-gnostic foundations. But apparently, they were not both united in a single community, but each group congregated around a distinctive gospel": the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* and the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*.

> We first catch sight of something like "ecclesiastical" Christianity in Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria from 189 to 231. Certainly, there had already been orthodox believers there prior to that time, and their community possessed a leader. But we can see how small their number must have been from the fact that when Demetrius assumed his office he was the

Untersuchungen, vol. 2/1 of *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897), 470–71.

[5] Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, 2:162. The tradition that Mark was the evangelist to Alexandria is first reported in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.16 (during the reign of Claudius); see also the recently published *Historia Episcopatus Alexandriae*, a medieval Ethiopian version of a fourth-century Greek text, that has a different dating (in the seventh year of Nero). Cf. Alessandro Bausi and Alberto Camplani, "New Ethiopic Documents for the History of Christian Egypt," *ZAC* 17 (2013): 215–47; also idem, "The *History of the Episcopate of Alexandria* (*HEpA*): *Editio minor* of the fragments preserved in the *Aksumite Collection* and in the *Codex Veronensis* LX (58)," *Adamantius* 22 (2016): 249–302. If, as Eckhard Rau has argued, the *Secret Gospel of Mark* is a product of second-century Alexandrian Christianity, this would be the earliest tradition on Mark (Eckhard Rau, "Das Geheimnis des Reiches Gottes: Die esoterische Rezeption der Lehre Jesu im geheimen Markusevangelium," in *Jesus in apokryphen Evangelienüberlieferungen: Beiträge zu außerkanonischen Jesusüberlieferungen aus verschiedenen Sprach- und Kulturtraditionen*, ed. Jörg Frey and Jens Schröter, WUNT 256 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010], 187–221). Many others deem the writing a plain forgery.

[6] Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971). See on Bauer's historiographical scheme Christoph Markschies, *Kaiserzeitliche christliche Theologie und ihre Institutionen: Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der antiken christlichen Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 339–69.

[7] Referring to Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, 2:59: "Eusebius found nothing in his sources."

only Egyptian "bishop." … Demetrius lived long enough to achieve success and possessed a consciousness of his own power that was sufficient to take disciplinary action against even an Origen.[8]

Bauer remained the starting point for subsequent scholarship on Christianity in Alexandria, though his ideological premises and his binary terminology ("orthodoxy"/"heresy") have been scrutinized and revised.[9] He himself did his thesis a disservice by not explaining why and how the minority of "orthodox" Christianity would gain the upper hand so rapidly during Demetrius's episcopate. Bauer questions the opinion, prevalent in his time, that the strength of the Jewish community in Alexandria was instrumental to the rise of Christianity. He asks, "Is it possible to demonstrate, not as an occasional occurrence, but as a general rule, that a large population of Jews would immediately attract Christianity?"[10]

1.3 Alfons Fürst: Educated Christianity

Alfons Fürst has presented a contemporary variation of Bauer's thesis. He notes a certain spiritual kinship between Philo and Origen, and a common mentality which he considers typical of the educated elite in Alexandria. That is, due to a forced abstinence from political commitment, Alexandria's upper class resorted to education and science, and Alexandria offered ideal possibilities for such activities unparalleled in the ancient world.[11] According to Fürst, Origen is just the most prominent example of Alexandrian "educated Christianity" (*Bildungschristentum*), and others could be placed by his side. Among the "heterodox" early Christian intellectuals we find Basilides and Isidore, Carpocrates, Epiphanes, Apelles, Valentinus and Heracleon. Among the "orthodox," he refers to those associated with the catechetical school: Pantaenus, Clement, Heraclas, Origen, and Ambrose.[12]

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[8] Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 46n6. Bauer (ibid., 63) seems to contradict himself when he argues that "even into the 3rd century, no separation between orthodoxy and heresy was accomplished in Egypt and the two types of Christianity were not yet at all clearly differentiated from each other."

[9] In the 1990s, Griggs followed Bauer's lead in distinguishing between the "orthodox" and the "so-called heretics" (*Early Egyptian Christianity*, 45–78). He charges Bauer with overemphasizing Gnosticism and argues that the theological profile of heresiarchs such as Cerinthus, Carpocrates, Basilides, and Valentinus has been corrupted by their later disciples (ibid., 32–33).

[10] Bauer argues here (*Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 46n6) against the contrary view of Harnack (*Mission and Expansion*, 2:159n2).

[11] Alfons Fürst, "Der junge Origenes im Bildungsmilieu Alexandrias" (2007), *Von Origenes und Hieronymus zu Augustinus: Studien zur antiken Theologiegeschichte*, AKG 115 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 45–79 (79): "Wie Philon und Origenes reden und handeln politisch abstinente Intellektuelle."

[12] Fürst, *Christentum als Intellektuellen-Religion*, 20–33, 36–69.

Fürst suggests that earliest Christianity took root in Alexandria as a Gentile-Christian intellectual phenomenon after the end of Alexandrian Judaism. It began in the shape of a Christian philosophical school. Fürst's final sentence signals how important this idea is for his view of events: "Christianity in Alexandria started on a high, the highest intellectual level – as a religion of intellectuals."[13] Unfortunately, Fürst's provocative thesis cannot be evaluated here extensively.[14]

Without a doubt, Alexandria became a formative force in the Christian movement only in the 2nd century when Christian-"Gnostic" thinkers placed and developed Christian ideas within the framework of higher education and contemporary philosophy of religion, and would later enrich the philosophical discourse themselves. The qualification of this type of Christianity as a "religion of intellectuals" or as an "educated Christianity" is debatable.[15] To infer from the lack of earlier sources the non-existence of Christ-groups in Alexandria is even bolder, even if one agrees that Alexandria was a "very peculiar city".[16]

1.4 Adolf von Harnack Revisited: Jewish Beginnings

If Bauer and his later ally Fürst mark the second stage after Harnack in the quest for the roots of Christianity in Alexandria, those who posit a thoroughly Jewish character of earliest Christianity in Egypt represent the third stage. Scholars like Manfred Hornschuh, C. H. Roberts, Helmut Koester, A. F. J. Klijn, Birger Pearson, Adolf M. Ritter, Christoph Markschies, Attila Jakab, Joseph Mélèze-Modrzejewski, Martin Hengel, Anna Maria Schwemer, Simon Mimouni, and Markus Lang are part of a new consensus on the Jewish context for the emergence of Christianity in Alexandria and an early date of its Jewish

[13] Fürst, *Christentum als Intellektuellen-Religion*, 110.

[14] See the modifications of Fürst's proposal in Lang, *Spuren des frühen ägyptischen Christentums*. Lang assumes an early, hardly tangible form of Jewish Christianity which has been replaced after the Jewish revolt by an "intellectual" type of Gentile Christianity, which in turn has been influenced by popular philosophy and, later, Gnosticizing elements.

[15] See, apart from Fürst, e.g., Thomas Söding, *Das Christentum als Bildungsreligion: Der Impuls des Neuen Testaments* (Freiburg: Herder, 2016). Critical opposition includes Samuel Vollenweider, "Bildungsfreunde oder Bildungsverächter? Überlegungen zum Stellenwert der Bildung im frühen Christentum," in *Was ist Bildung in der Vormoderne?*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt, SERAPHIM 4 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 283–304 and Dietmar Wyrwa, "Philosophie in der alexandrinischen Schule," in *PHILOSOPHIA in der Konkurrenz von Schulen, Wissenschaften und Religionen: Zur Pluralisierung des Philosophiebegriffs in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike*, ed. Christoph Riedweg, Philosophie der Antike 34 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 193–216. Wyrwa contends, "Schlagworte wie Christentum als Intellektuellen-Religion oder Ähnliches [sind] unangemessen, bestenfalls sind sie historisch nur die halbe Wahrheit…" (194).

[16] Fürst, *Christentum als Intellektuellen-Religion*, 105.

beginnings.[17] In fact, the third stage of scholarship is a return to Adolf von Harnack.

> It is more than a conjecture, however, that a larger number of Jews were converted to Christianity in the Nile valley than anywhere else; for (i) the inner development of Judaism never approximated so closely to a universal religion as it did in Alexandria, and (ii) we know that the gospel according to the Hebrews circulated in a Greek version in Egypt during the second century – which implies the existence of an original Jewish Christianity.[18]

The post-Bauer stage is characterized by a thorough challenge and rebuttal of the categories "orthodoxy" and "heresy". They have been unmasked as polemical concepts introduced in the processes of identity formation in the 2nd century, with varied implications in different regions and among different groups.[19] In modern historiography they are no longer used. Rather, most recent studies, such as David Frankfurter's *Christianizing Egypt*, emphasize the fluidity of cultural forms and a fascinating reciprocal ideological osmosis.[20] On related grounds, the labels "Jewish," "Jewish-Christian," and "Christian" have come under scrutiny, as they misleadingly pretend that clear-cut distinctions are possible, which they are not. Mindful of their limitations and for want of a better terminology – e.g., "Judean," "Judeo-Christian," "Jewishness," and "Christianness"[21] – I will nevertheless use these terms.

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[17] See the bibliographical data above in note 1. In addition, Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins*, WUNT 65 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 319; Helmut Koester, "Egypt," in *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, vol. 2 of *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 658–76; Albertus F. J. Klijn, "Jewish Christianity in Egypt," in Pearson and Goehring, *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, 161–75 (see the references to older literature in ibid., 162nn3–6); Joseph Mélèze-Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt from Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian,* trans. Robert Cornman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 227–31; Martin Hengel and Anna M. Schwemer, *Paulus zwischen Damaskus und Antiochien: Die unbekannten Jahre des Apostels – Mit einem Beitrag von Ernst Axel Knauf*, WUNT 108 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 393.

[18] Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, 2:159n2.

[19] Cf. Fürst, *Christentum als Intellektuellen-Religion*, 19.

[20] David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). Frankfurter covers the process of "Christianizing Egypt" over the fourth through seventh centuries, but his findings also pertain to the analysis of earlier stages. See also Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 14–20; Bernard Pouderon, "'Jewish,' 'Christian,' and 'Gnostic' Groups in Alexandria during the 2nd Century: Between Approval and Expulsion," in *Beyond Conflicts: Cultural and Religious Cohabitations in Alexandria and Egypt between the 1st and the 6th Century CE*, ed. Luca Arcari, STAC 103 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 155–76.

[21] Cf., e.g., Jennifer Otto, *Philo of Alexandria and the Construction of Jewishness in Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 4 with n12. My discussion will underline that Christian "identities" were dynamic and fluid in the period covered. Cf., for the

Bearing that in mind, what are possible continuities between Alexandrian Judaism, earliest Alexandrian Jewish Christianity and post-117 CE Alexandrian Christianity? Previous scholarship mainly focused on literary sources, which is certainly the most productive and promising approach. New insights, especially on "Petrine" and "Jacobean" literature, require a fresh analysis (section 2). Anti-Christian sentiments expressed by Celsus and the Jewish voices he calls upon need to be taken into account as well (section 3). A systematic compilation of Jewish and Jewish-Christian traces in second-century Christianity in Alexandria would be incomplete if it did not include literary, personal, institutional, documentary, and statistical evidence (section 4).

What I present in the following is no more than a preliminary sketch that requires supplementing. I am not looking for traces of earliest Alexandrian Christianity in general[22] but for traces and trajectories of *Jewish* beginnings of Christianity in the 1st century CE, prior to the revolt under Trajan.[23] This was a time when, generally, "the Christians were not yet regarded (by the bulk of Jews) as a group already distinct from the Jewish community."[24] If it is possible to substantiate the existence of significant "Jewish" and "Jewish-Christian" traces in 2nd century Alexandrian Christianity, we can reasonably assume the existence of Jewish Jesus followers in the 1st century. I am well aware that the lack of sources requires historical imagination and conjectures. For the sake of the argument I present a "maximalist" view that emphasizes continuity. This is not to deny the horrible disruptive effects of the revolt for the Jewish community but to question the "minimalist" view that posits a total annihilation of Jewish (and early Christian) life in 117 CE.

later period, Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity: North Africa, 200–450 CE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

[22] See especially Lang, *Spuren des frühen ägyptischen Christentums*.

[23] On the revolt, see Miriam P. Ben Zeev, *Diaspora Judaism in Turmoil, 116/117 CE: Ancient Sources and Modern Insights*, Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion 6 (Leuven: Peeters, 2005); William Horbury, *Jewish War under Trajan and Hadrian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); also Gottfried Schimanowski, *Juden und Nichtjuden in Alexandrien: Koexistenz und Konflikte bis zum Pogrom unter Trajan (117 n. Chr.)*, Münsteraner Judaistische Studien 18 (Berlin: LIT, 2006).

[24] James D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity*, vol. 3 of *Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 617.

2. Evidence for Continuity in Alexandrian Christian Literature

2.1 Epistle of Barnabas

In the first place, the *Epistle of Barnabas* deserves mention in connection with the early tradition of Barnabas's visit to Alexandria. While Acts eclipses Barnabas after his clash with Paul, Paul himself indicates that Barnabas is still active as a missionary in the mid 50s (1 Cor 9:6). Barnabas might have traveled from Cyprus to Alexandria, as indicated in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (1:9.1–2): Peter sent "a Hebrew man (ἀνὴρ Ἑβραῖος) called Barnabas" from Jerusalem to preach the gospel in Alexandria.[25] We should not rule out the reliability of this tradition from the outset, including the remark on the role of Peter.

The origin of the *Epistle of Barnabas* is disputed as well. James Carleton Paget writes, "If Barnabas did in fact visit Egypt, then the ascription of a letter to him written in Alexandria would make sense."[26] Clement of Alexandria is the first to quote from the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the Codex Sinaiticus, an "Alexandrian" version of the New Testament text, includes it. Barnabas's affinity for texts and traditions of Alexandrian provenance suggests that it could have been composed there.

Its continuity with Jewish messianism and other millennial hopes, the anti-Roman bias, and the figurative modes of interpretation can be situated in a setting where "Jewish literal interpretation of the law is harshly condemned and Jewish nationalistic promises are interpreted in a broadly Christocentric manner."[27] In particular, the figurative hermeneutics has obvious equivalents among Alexandrian exegetes, both Jewish (e.g., Philo) and Christian (e.g., Origen).[28] The author polemicizes against Jewish ideas and symbols while at the same time incorporating Jewish messianic,[29] apocalyptic, and ethical concepts (e.g., Two Ways). He defines "Christian" identity by a ubiquitous language of

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[25] Cf., e.g., Mimouni, "Communauté chrétienne d'Alexandrie," 154: "On doit cependant se demander si Barnabé, mandaté par les Hébreux de Jérusalem ou les Hellénistes d'Antioche, n'a pas joué un rôle important dans la première mission chrétienne d'Alexandrie."

[26] James Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background*, WUNT 2/64 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 36.

[27] James Carleton Paget, "Messianism and Resistance among Jews and Christians in Egypt" (2007), in *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity*, WUNT 251 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 103–22 (119); cf. 113–15 and extensively idem, *Epistle of Barnabas*, 30–42.

[28] Cf. the summary in Bart D. Ehrman, "Introduction to The Apostolic Fathers," LCL 24 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 7–8.

[29] Cf. Pearson, "Cracking a Conundrum," referring to Philo, *Praem.* 85–168. Pearson suggests that the *Epistle of Barnabas* reflects a certain kind of Jewish messianism, a "christocentric" reading of scripture focusing on the figure of Jesus, while Philo, by contrast, had sought to interiorize the messianic outlook in terms of enhancing virtue.

"us" vs. "them".[30] Christians are "this people" (as opposed to the "first people") (Barn. 13:1) or the "new people" (Barn. 5:7). Although all particulars regarding date and provenance remain speculative, the evidence could point to an Alexandrian origin between the diaspora revolt in 115–117 CE and the Bar Kokhba revolt, i.e., around 130 CE[31], with strong ties to the first-century Jewish-Christian setting and an affinity for the anti-Jewish sentiment after the riots. Carleton Paget's thesis that Christian anti-Jewish polemic is connected to the presence of Jews where the authors lived could be interpreted in terms of the continual presence of Jews in Alexandria after the revolt.[32]

2.2 Kerygma Petrou

The *Kerygma Petrou*, which came down to us only in fragments, could have its roots in a similar historical atmosphere as the *Epistle of Barnabas*.[33] Both Clement of Alexandria and Origen used it but, due to its fragmentary character, ascertaining a relationship of literary dependence to any of the other Petrine literature discussed is not possible.[34] Adolf von Harnack considers the *Kerygma Petrou* the first among the Petrine writings and dates it to 100–130 CE,[35] though a date after the revolt seems more likely. Harnack also finds it "tempting" to think – but unprovable – that 2 Pet 1:15 alludes to the *Kerygma Petrou*.[36]

In the Kerygma of Peter, Peter serves as the spokesman of a completely Gentile type of Christianity, rejecting pagan cults as well as Jewish practices and angel veneration. Christ is

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[30] Cf. Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*, WUNT 2/82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 137–39.

[31] Cf. Hvalvik, *Struggle*, 23.

[32] See, however, Carleton Paget who takes this argument to date the *Epistle of Barnabas* to a time prior to the revolt (*Barnabas*, 9–27).

[33] Cf., on the Alexandrian (or Egyptian) setting, Harnack, *Chronologie*, 473; Jakab, *Ecclesia alexandrina*, 54–55; Michel Cambe, *Kerygma Petri: Textus et commentarius*, CChr.SA 15 (Turnhout: Brepols 2003), 382; Wilhelm Pratscher, "Die Rede von Gott im Kerygma Petri und in den Ignatiusbriefen," in *Die Briefe des Ignatios von Antiochia: Motive, Strategien, Kontexte*, ed. Peter von Möllendorff and Thomas J. Bauer, Millenium Studies 72 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 229–48. Lang lists many more authors (*Spuren*, 121n469).

[34] Wolfgang Grünstäudl, *Petrus Alexandrinus: Studien zum historischen und theologischen Ort des Zweiten Petrusbriefes*, WUNT 2/315 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 95–96; Paul Foster, "The Relationship between 2 Peter and Early Christian Pseudepigrapha," in *Der Zweite Petrusbrief und das Neue Testament*, ed. Wolfgang Grünstäudl, Tobias Nicklas and Uta Poplutz, WUNT 389 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 179–201 (189); Tobias Nicklas, "Petrus-Diskurse in Alexandria: Eine Fortführung der Gedanken von Jörg Frey," in *2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter: Towards a New Perspective*, ed. Jörg Frey, Matthijs den Dulk, and Jan van der Watt, BibInt 174 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 99–127 (114).

[35] Harnack, *Chronologie*, 474.

[36] Harnack, *Chronologie*, 474n1.

called 'Nomos' and 'Logos.' God is depicted in Platonizing terms as the creator of all things, and he is also said to have the power to set an end. The interpretation of Scripture and the motif of 'insight' ([ἐπι]γινώσκειν) seem to be predominate elements of Peter's teaching in the Kerygma.[37]

At most, we can say that the "theological milieu" of the *Kerygma* resembles that of 2 Peter.[38] Both seek to establish "knowledge" (of Christ) among their readers, and they do so by integrating (Jewish-)Hellenistic philosophical terminology and ideas (e.g., εὐσέβεια) into their exegetical efforts. Their authors use the first-person plural to convey their standing and authority.

The author of *Kergyma Petrou* considers "Jewish" worship dated, as well as the "Gentiles'" worship; he declares Christ established a new kind of worship. "He made a new covenant with us; for what belonged to the Greeks and Jews is old. But we, who worship Him in a new way, in the third form [τρίτῳ γένει], are Christians. For clearly, as I think, he showed that the one and only God was known by the Greeks in a Gentile way, by the Jews Judaically, and in a new and spiritual way by us."[39] The author pioneers the striking idea that Christianity represents a "new covenant" and a "new way" that outranks both Judaism and Greek religion, but – in contrast to Marcion and in consonance with the *Epistle of Barnabas* – "he grounds the new covenant on the Jewish scriptures, the Prophets."[40] In fact, this could be the first literary reference (known to us) to the idea of something "third" – a third form of worship.

2.3 Apocalypse of Peter

The *Apocalypse of Peter* has been associated with two places of origin, Palestine and Alexandria, with a tendency in recent scholarship to favor the Egyptian metropolis on grounds of distinct "Egyptian" motifs (e.g., the river of fire, the Acherusian lake and Elysian fields, the angel Temelouchos, *ekpyrosis*).[41] As for the date, there is a "general consensus" for a period from ca. 130 to 150

[37] Jörg Frey, "Second Peter in New Perspective," in Frey, den Dulk, and van der Watt, *2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter*, 7–74 (23) (with the relevant references from Clement).

[38] Frey, "Second Peter in New Perspective," 23.

[39] Frag. 5, *apud* Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 6.5.41.4–6 (Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 157).

[40] Markus Vinzent, *Christ's Resurrection in Early Christianity and the Making of the New Testament* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 149.

[41] Cf. Jan N. Bremmer, "The *Apocalypse of Peter* as the First Christian Martyr Text: Its Date, Provenance and Relationship with 2 Peter," in Frey, den Dulk, and van der Watt, *2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter*, 75–98 (87): "All evidence we have at the moment points to Egypt, in particular to Alexandria." Nicklas, "Petrus-Diskurse in Alexandria," 102–8.

CE,[42] although there are suggestions of a date prior to the diaspora revolt.[43] The well-educated author consistently used the Septuagint for his scriptural arguments, drew on Enochic traditions, included Orphic material (e.g., *borboro*s, scourging angels, ideas of crimes and punishments) also found in other Jewish Egyptian texts,[44] and he produced what could be called "the first Christian martyr text."[45]

Furthermore, the text mentions followers of a messianic claimant (the "liar") who persecuted the Christians.

> But this liar is not the Christ. And when they resist him, he will wage war with the sword. And there will be many martyrs …. Therefore, all who die by his hand will be martyrs and will be counted in the company of the good and righteous martyrs who pleased God with their life (Apoc. Pet. 2.10, 13).[46]

In the text, we find a developed martyrological language including the title "martyr",[47] the idea that the intercession of martyrs could save from hell's punishments, and the designation of martyrs as "holy". This points to the need to cope with experiences of persecution. In fact, the purpose of the writing is to convey a "message of compassion" to those undergoing persecution and compassion for persecutors.[48]

We need not engage in the question whether or not the messianic "liar" should be identified with Bar Kokhba. It is plausible that Apoc. Pet. 7–12 preserves "older traditions or an edited source which was incorporated by the author into the work."[49] These may have been Palestinian traditions that made

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[42] Jan N. Bremmer, "Christian Hell: From the Apocalypse of Peter to the Apocalypse of Paul," in *Maidens, Magic and Martyrs in Early Christianity*, WUNT 379 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 295–312 (300–1), referring to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.1.

[43] Tobias Nicklas, "Jewish, Christian, Greek? The Apocalypse of Peter as a Witness of Early 2nd-Cent. Christianity in Alexandria," in Arcari, *Beyond Conflicts*, 27–46 (40–41): "the author (and his group) may have sensed the 'winds of change' that both led to the catastrophe of the diaspora revolt and almost totally destroyed Jewish life in Egypt (and many other parts of the diaspora) for more than a century."

[44] Cf. Bremmer, "The *Apocalypse of Peter* as the First Christian Martyr Text," 86n46 (with a number of references). Bremmer also points out that there is a reference to the worship of cats that also has analogies in Jewish Egyptian texts.

[45] Bremmer, "The *Apocalypse of Peter* as the First Christian Martyr Text."

[46] I follow Eric J. Beck*, Justice and Mercy in the Apocalypse of Peter: A New Translation and Analysis of the Purpose of the Text*, WUNT 427 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 67.

[47] Bremmer, "The *Apocalypse of Peter* as the First Christian Martyr Text," 78: "the repetition and explanation of the term suggests that the author is here employing a relatively new term."

[48] Beck*, Justice and Mercy*, 175.

[49] Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, "Is the Liar Bar Kokhba? Considering the Date and Provenance of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter," in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz, Studies in Early Christian Apocrypha 7 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 63–77 (75). Tigchelaar questions Richard Bauckham's proposal that the Apocalypse of Peter responds

their way to Alexandria.[50] It might even be conceivable that Palestinian Jewish-Christian notions from the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–135 CE) resonated with experiences of persecution that Jewish Christians underwent twenty years prior during the Kitos War (115–117 CE). After all, the Alexandrian revolt was also fueled by messianic aspirations which could easily have led its leaders to "wage war with the sword" against conflicting messianic concepts, such as the Christian belief in a non-political Messiah.[51]

2.4 2 Peter

In what has been called a "New Perspective on 2 Peter",[52] the study of this enigmatic New Testament writing is currently experiencing a renaissance. Recent scholarship has reopened the old debate about how we should assess the striking analogies and parallels between 2 Peter and the *Apocalypse of Peter*, in some ways circling back to ideas current 100 years ago. In his first analysis of the fragments of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, Adolf von Harnack left open the question of chronology. However, a few years later he had made up his mind: the author of 2 Peter "ransacked"[53] existing Jewish-Christian writings (in 2 Pet 2, the Letter of Jude and in 2 Pet 3, the *Apocalypse of Peter*[54]), and he was aware of synoptic traditions, especially the transfiguration (cf. 2 Pet 1:16–18 with Matt 17:1–8). In effect, Harnack concludes, the letter did replace the *Apocalypse*, even if it is not possible to prove that he intended to do so. More recent work on 2 Peter has refined this thesis. Following Wolfgang Grünstäudl, Jörg Frey states that "2 Peter postdates the Apocalypse of Peter and responds to it", and he adds that "Second Peter draws on certain elements of the Apocalypse, but it does so from a critical distance."[55] In Alexandria, Frey argues, the

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to the Bar Kokhba revolt and originates in Palestinian Jewish Christianity. See Richard Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter: A Jewish Christian Apocalypse from the Time of Bar Kokhba" (1994), in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, NovTSup 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 160–258.

[50] On a possible Palestinian origin, see Theodor Zahn, *Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons*, vol. 2/2 (Leipzig: Deichert, 1892), 810–20 and Harnack, *Chronologie*, 471n4.

[51] Cf. Martin Hengel, "Messianische Hoffnung und politischer 'Radikalismus' in der 'jüdisch-hellenistischen Diaspora': Zur Frage der Voraussetzungen des jüdischen Aufstandes unter Trajan 115–117 n. Chr.," in *Judaica et Hellenistica*, Kleine Schriften 1, WUNT 90 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 358–91.

[52] Frey, "Second Peter in New Perspective."

[53] This is Harnack's term (*Chronologie*, 469).

[54] Harnack, *Chronologie*, 471–72. Cf. idem, *Bruchstücke des Evangeliums und der Apokalypse des Petrus*, TU 9.2 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1893), 89: "wie die Verwandtschaft zu deuten ist, lasse ich dahingestellt."

[55] Frey, "Second Peter in New Perspective," 21. Cf. Grünstäudl, *Petrus Alexandrinus*. Obviously, not everyone is convinced by this reconstruction of the order and by the proposed date and place. See the critique in Paul Foster, "Does the *Apocalypse of Peter* Help to Determine the Date of 2 Peter?" and Richard Bauckham, "2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter Revisited:

author was even part of a "flourishing Christian school activity" which engaged in dialogue with both Hellenistic-Jewish traditions and pagan thinking, and which debated different forms of Scriptural reasoning and different concepts of Christian "knowledge."[56]

In comparison with the Letter of Jude, we note that 2 Peter reduced Enochic traditions (Jude 6, 12–13, 14–15) and is instead interested in incorporating concepts also found in Philo (e.g., Balaam) and, more generally, in Hellenistic moral philosophy (e.g., the "Christianized" form of a *sorites* in 2 Pet 1:5–7). One of the most remarkable features of the writing is that it adopts the idea of conflagration (*ekpyrosis*), a Stoic notion, which is absent in early Christian or Jewish texts with the exception of the (Egyptian) *Sibylline Oracles* (e.g., Sib. Or. 5.206–13) and the *Apocalypse of Peter*.[57] 2 Peter stands for a chapter in Egyptian Christianity in which Jewish, Jewish-Christian, and Gentile-Christian identities were being negotiated, but the egregious polemics is an intra-Christian polemics. There is no confrontation with Jews; they are unreservedly called λαός (2 Pet 2:1). It is a time in which Paul's letters were regarded as "Scriptures" and weaponized by groups Peter identifies as opponents (2 Pet 3:1).

2.5 Sibylline Oracles

Although the first two books of the *Sibylline oracles'* process of composition,[58] place of authorship, and date are debated, there is strong evidence that the author, especially in the second book, has used, adapted, reordered and "classicised" the *Apocalypse of Peter*, e.g., his reference to the river Acheron from Plato's *Phaedo* (Sib. Or. 1.302; 2.338) and his extensive incorporation of Ps.-Phocylides's ethical teachings (Sib. Or. 2.56–148).[59] The author made a

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A Response to Jörg Frey," in Frey, den Dulk, and van der Watt, *2 Peter and the Apocalypse of Peter*, 217–60 and 261–81. Notably, Clement of Alexandria quotes the *Apocalypse of Peter* but gives no indication that he knew 2 Peter, though there is a "fundamental correspondence" of theological conceptions (cf. Grünstäudl, *Petrus Alexandrinus*, 236–86).

[56] Jörg Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus*, THKNT 15/2 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt), 189.

[57] Cf. Jane L. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles: With Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on the First and Second Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2007, 482–86 and Knut Usener, "Ekpyrosis – ein (nicht nur) mythologisches Denkmodell in der Antike: Der Weltenbrand in der antiken Literatur," in *Der eine Gott und die Völker in eschatologischer Perspektive: Studien zur Inklusion und Exklusion im biblischen Monotheismus*, ed. Luke Neubert and Michael Tilly, BTS 137 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2013), 149–81.

[58] Olaf Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1–2: Studien und Kommentar*, AJEC 76 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 466, again advocates the theory of a first-century Jewish *Grundschrift* which has been reworked by a single Christian author.

[59] Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 141: "One naturally asks about the reasons for this classicisation, particularly of the underworld. Is it connected with the choice of pseudo-pagan literary

deliberate choice of "recasting a predecessor [sc. the *Apocalypse of Peter*] in a classical idiom,"[60] possibly in order to make its content accessible to a different readership. We observe a movement from Jewish Enochic tradition to the *Apocalypse of Peter* and from there to a thoroughly classical tone. A likely date for the final (Christian) composition of books 1–2 is the second half of the 2nd century.[61] Its polemical confrontation with Judaism presupposes confident and well-integrated Jewish communities which, for some scholars, point to Asia Minor,[62] but its tie to the *Apocalypse of Peter* might also suggest Alexandria. Finally, correspondences between 2 Peter and the Sib. Or. 2 are conspicuous,[63] particularly those on the idea of punishments and rewards, and, more specifically, on Noah as the preacher of righteousness and as the "eighth" (ὄγδοος) man saved (cf. 2 Pet 2:5 with motifs from Sib. Or. 1.125, 129, 281). "Might it suggest specifically Petrine influence …?"[64] Yes, it might.

2.6 Gospel according to the Hebrews

So far, we have encountered texts that (with varying degrees of probability) originated in Alexandria and are all part of a "Petrine discourse." The enigmatic fragments of the Jewish-Christian *Gospel according to the Hebrews* might point to another and even earlier testimony of Alexandrian Jewish Christianity,[65] to a "Jacobean discourse" in the widest sense. Authors from Alexandria, Clement, Origen, and Didymus the Blind, quote or allude to it. According to the stichometry of Nicephorus, the gospel was 2200 stichoi long and even longer than Mark's with 2000 stichoi. Due to its fragmentary transmission, recent scholarship is quite cautious in determining its date and provenance, its theological characteristics, and its contribution to the reconstruction of earliest Jewish Christianity. Notable features include an affinity for Hellenistic-Jewish

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form, and the pretense that the Sibyl is a certain kind of revelatory figure? … Was it in order to reach a particular kind of readership?"

[60] Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 142. See the table of parallels ibid., 560–63.

[61] Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1–2*, 487, 502.

[62] Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1–2*, 503: "[Es] gibt … keine andere Lokalisierung, für die sich annähernd schlüssige Argumente finden ließen." Waßmuth rejects direct influence of the Apocalypse of Peter on Sib. Or. 1–2 and suggests a common source (ibid., 440).

[63] Compiled in Thomas J. Kraus, *Sprache, Stil und historischer Ort des zweiten Petrusbriefes*, WUNT 2/136 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 359, who cautions, however, that such overlaps do not point to literal dependence but rather to a common repertory of motifs and ideas.

[64] Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 253.

[65] Cf. the overviews in Andrew Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Ebionites* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) and Jörg Frey, "Whence the Gospel according to the Hebrews?," in *Texts in Context*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, BETL (Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming). See the clear judgment in Albertus F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, VCSup 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 42: "The GH is an authentic product of Egyptian Christianity."

wisdom tradition, e.g., the spirit descending onto Jesus at his baptism (frag. 13) and the spirit identified as Jesus's mother transporting him to a mountain (frag. 10).

In another section (frag. 11 *apud* Jerome, *Vir. ill*. 2) it is not Peter, but James who receives greatest prominence.

> The Lord, however, when he had given the shroud to the servant of the priest, went to James and appeared to him (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the cup of the Lord, until he would see him rising from those who sleep) … "bring a table and bread," said the Lord. … He took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to James the Just and said to him, "My brother, eat your bread, because the Son of Man has risen from those who sleep" (trans. Gregory).

The protophany before James implies a Jewish-Christian character of the gospel, as do Jesus's words to the rich young man that prompt him to obey the law and the prophets (frag. 17; cf. Matt 19:17–19).[66]

If from Alexandria, the most likely setting of the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* are the decades prior to the revolt around the turn of the 1st century. It was composed by, and circulated among, Jewish Jesus followers who held James in high esteem and who were inspired by Alexandrian wisdom traditions. In the turmoil of the violent conflict the Jewish-Christian group(s) were severely diminished, though their gospel survived and was handed down to Clement and Origen. With the exception of a few fragments, it would sink into oblivion, replaced by what came to be the "canonical" gospels.

2.7 Protevangelium of James

The *Protevangelium of James* claims to be written by James, the brother of Jesus, and presents a narrative of the life of Mary to fill the gap left by the gospels. Despite its popularity in early Christianity, the text has been sidelined in scholarship, although currently there is renewed interest in this obscure writing, including in its provenance.[67] In a recent study, Jan N. Bremmer has opted for an Alexandrian origin toward the end of the 2nd century (180–190 CE),[68] where it was quoted for the first time by Clement and later by Origen. The

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[66] Ps.-Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 15.14.4.

[67] On the historical place of the *Protevangelium of James*, see Silvia Pellegrini, "Das Protevangelium des Jakobus," in *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, vol. 1/2, ed. Christoph Markschies and Jens Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 903–29 (907–9); Lily C. Vuong, *Gender and Purity in the Protevangelium of James*, WUNT 2/358 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 182–90, 193–239; George T. Zervos, *The Protevangelium of James: Greek Text, English Translation, Critical Introduction*, vol. 1, Jewish and Christian Texts in Context and Related Studies 17 (New York: T&T Clark, 2019); Jan. N. Bremmer, "Author, Date and Provenance of the *Protevangelium of James*," in *The Protevangelium of James*, ed. idem et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 49–70.

[68] Bremmer, "Author, Date and Provenance." I present some of his insights in the following.

writing is an interesting "history of religions"-hybrid with (superficial) knowledge of Jewish life and the reception of various early Christian traditions and texts. The author was conversant with the Septuagint's vocabulary and phraseology, and adapts scenes from the Septuagint (e.g., Susanna). He knew Matthew, Luke and John – Mark and the *Acts of the Apostles* are less likely[69] – and he freely wove gospel traditions into the fabric of his own narrative. We cannot ascertain the use of the letters of Paul. On the other hand, the author was inspired by Jude, 1 Peter and 2 Peter, not surprising considering our previous discussion.

Bremmer's case for Alexandria as the place of origin, as opposed to Syria, on the basis of "details of the vocabulary, sources and aims of the author" is convincing.[70] Among the most interesting details is the figure of Salome, the midwife who verified the perpetual virginity of Mary through manual inspection (Prot. Jas. 20:1). Salome plays a major role in the probably Alexandrian *Gospel according to the Egyptians*, where she engages in a dialogue with Jesus about sexual asceticism and purity as the only means to overcome the power of death.[71] As for the aims of the author, it has been convincingly argued that Prot. Jas. reacted to "Jewish accusations concerning Mary's background and character."[72] Such charges were also levelled against the Christians by Celsus who, in his *Logos Alethes* (ca. 180 CE), drew on the argument of a Jewish polemicist (whether a real person or a literary figure) who insulted the Jesus movement and intended to drag the family situation of its founding figure through the mire. The narrative of the *Protevangelium of James* addresses precisely such aspects, with a notable effort to facilitate dialogue.

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[69] Thomas R. Karmann, "'Rein bin ich und von einem Mann weiß ich nichts!' Zur Rezeption neutestamentlicher Texte und Motive im Protevangelium Jacobi," in *Christian Apocrypha: Receptions of the New Testament in Ancient Christian Apocrypha*, ed. Jean-Michel Roessli and Tobias Nicklas (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 61–104. Knowledge of John seems indisputable to me on account of the relationship between John 20:25 and Prot. Jas. 19:3.

[70] See, again, Bremmer, "Author, Date and Provenance," 65. Syria is suggested by Vuong, *Gender and Purity*.

[71] According to Clement, the encratic movement referred to the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* to bolster its claim for their ascetic and sexually abstinent lifestyle. The quotations in Clement's *Stromateis* offer the only fragments of the lost gospel, though even he has only second-hand acquaintance with the text. Thus, at the end of the 2nd century, the gospel seems to have been out of reach in Alexandria or was not considered to be worth possessing.

[72] Petri Luomanen, "Judaism and Anti-Judaism in Early Christian Apocrypha," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Apocrypha*, ed. Andrew Gregory and Christopher Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 319–42 (327) (quoted and accepted in Bremmer, "Author, Date and Provenance," 69).

3. Evidence for Continuity in Alexandrian "Anti-Christian" Literature

3.1 Celsus, Logos Alethes

The Alexandrian Platonist Celsus is an unwitting witness to continuities between the Jewish beginning of Christianity in Alexandria and its second-century shape. Celsus incorporated the anti-Christian ideas of a "Jew," yet it is disputed whether he created a literary character (prosopopoeia) that simulates reality[73] or actually used the writing of a real person.[74] Whether real or not, the Jew is an educated exponent of Hellenistic Judaism who holds on to the messianic prophecies and believes in bodily resurrection, but also knows (and does not subscribe to) "pagan" mythology. He gathers accusations against the Jesus followers, denigrating Jesus's conception, his way of life and his deeds,[75] and he does so by inventing a conversation with Jesus himself (Origen, *Cels.* 1.29). In Origen's report of Celsus's rendition of the Jew's dialogue with Jesus, we find the following charges:

> He fabricated the story of his birth from a virgin; he came from a Jewish village and from a poor country woman who earned her living by spinning; she was driven out by her husband, who was a carpenter by trade, as she was convicted of adultery; after she had been driven out by her husband and while she was wandering about in a disgraceful way she secretly gave birth to Jesus; because he was poor he hired himself out as a workman in Egypt, and there tried his hand at certain magical powers on which the Egyptians pride themselves; he returned full of conceit because of these powers, and on account of them gave himself the title of God (*Cels.* 1.29)

> The mother of Jesus turned out by the carpenter who was betrothed to her, as she had been convicted of adultery and had a child by a certain soldier named Panthera (*Cels.* 1.32).

> It is not likely that God would have fallen in love with her since she was neither wealthy nor of royal birth; for nobody knew her, not even her neighbours. When she was hated by the carpenter and turned out, neither divine power nor the gift of persuasion saved her. Therefore, he says, these things have nothing to do with the kingdom of God (*Cels*. 1.39; transl. Chadwick).

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[73] E.g., Horacio E. Lona, *Die "Wahre Lehre" des Kelsos: Übersetzt und erklärt*, Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 172–77 (172): "Die *Konturen* der fiktiven Gestalt müssen die Wirklichkeit nachahmen. Die Schöpfung des Kelsos entspricht in seinem Denken und Sprechen des öfteren einem echten Juden." Johannes Arnold, *Der* Wahre Logos *des Kelsos: Eine Strukturanalyse*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum. Ergänzungsband 39 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2016), 479 *et passim*.

[74] Maren R. Niehoff, "A Jewish Critique of Christianity from the Second Century: Revisiting the Jew Mentioned in *Contra Celsum*," *JECS* 21 (2013): 151–75; James Carleton Paget, "The Jew of Celsus and *adversus Judaeos* Literature," *ZAC* 21 (2017): 201–42.

[75] Lona, *"Wahre Lehre,"* 173–74.

Celsus's detailed accusation through the mouth of the Jew is only conceivable as the result of ongoing crosstalk between Jews and Jesus followers (both Jewish and Gentile), which also produced writings such as the *Kerygma Petrou* and the *Epistle of Barnabas*. To name just one piece of evidence for a sustained quarrel: the idea that Jesus is the result of an affair with Penthera (*Cels.* 1.32) presupposes a milder form of insult reported in the *Acts of Pilate*, in which a group of Jews insists that Mary just had pre-marital sex (cf. Acts Pil. 2.3–4).

Jewish-Christian missionary success is transparent in the Jew's rebuke to Jewish believers: "deluded by Jesus, they have left the law of their fathers and have been quite ludicrously deceived and have deserted to another name and another life" (*Cels*. 2.1). The Jew's line of argument shows various points of contact with Matthew (e.g., *Cels*. 1.34, 58, 66: birth narratives) and John (e.g., *Cels*. 2.36, 55: Passion and Easter accounts), seeks to refute Jewish-Christian doctrines,[76] and displays knowledge of the dialogue genre between Christians and Jews for the sake of both apologetics and propaganda.[77]

3.2 Dialogue between Papiscus and Jason

Celsus's Jew is aware of a book by the title *Dialogue between Papiscus and Jason* (*Cels.* 4.52–53) that Clement ascribes to Luke in his fragmentary *Hypotyposeis.*[78] Origen still knows and commends it with some reluctance:

> Out of all the writings which contain allegories and interpretations written with a literary style, he has chosen one that is worthless, which although it could be of some help to the simple-minded multitude in respect of their faith, certainly could not impress the more intelligent … In it a Christian is described as disputing with a Jew from the Jewish scriptures and as showing that the prophecies about the Messiah fit Jesus; and the reply with which the other man opposes the argument is at least neither vulgar nor unsuitable to the character of a Jew. (*Cels*. 4.52).

The "small book" (*Cels.* 4.52: συνγραμμάτιον) is mostly considered to be the first known exemplar of the Jewish-Christian dialogue genre with a

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[76] According to Arnold's overall reconstruction, the refutation of Jewish-Christian teaching was Celsus's first main goal, and his second was to convince the more intellectual group of Christians to be loyal to the empire and to follow the true knowledge of the divine (Arnold, *Der* Wahre Logos *des Kelsos*).

[77] Cf. Lona, *"Wahre Lehre,"* 175–76.

[78] Cf. Harry Tolley, "Clement of Alexandria's Reference to Luke the Evangelist as Author of *Jason and Papiscus*," JTS 63 (2012): 523–32. See, however, the hypothesis in Luke J. Stevens, "The Evangelists in Clement's *Hypotyposes*," *JECS* 26 (2018): 353–79 (354), that John of Scythopolis (ca. 540 CE), the source of this ascription, erroneously transferred a clause on Luke's authorship of Hebrews to the *Dialogue between Papiscus and Jason*. The ascription to Luke is confirmed by a fragment discovered in 2012 from the works of Sophronius of Jerusalem (ca. 635 CE), which, however, is dependent on John of Scythopolis. Cf. François Bovon and John M. Duffy, "A New Greek Fragment from Ariston of Pella's *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*," *HTR* 105 (2012): 457–65.

stereotypical pattern of a studious debate and the ensuing conversion of the Jewish interlocutor.

The dialogue very likely has an Alexandrian provenance; it had a wide range of readership throughout a long period of time. We have evidence ranging from the philosopher Celsus in ca. 180 CE to Origen in ca. 250 CE, when its significance was already fading. If Celsus did not invent the Jew but rather drew on an actual Jewish writing, the *Sitz im Leben* of the Jew's anti-Christian rebuke could actually point to a time before the turmoil under Trajan. This would require an even earlier date for the *Dialogue between Papiscus and Jason*. It is, however, more likely that both the *Dialogue* and the alleged writing of the Jew (who, after all, refers to the Gospel of John!) should be dated later. The friendly character of the encounter between Papiscus and Jason suggests a less fraught situation in the years after the Jewish revolt (ca. 120 CE).[79] In stark contrast to the non-dialogical "us vs. them"-rhetoric of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the author of the *Dialogue between Papiscus and Jason* might have considered an open clash between Jews and Jewish Jesus followers unwise after a near eradication of the Jewish communities. The much more combative writing of the Jew (if he is not a literary invention of Celsus) was penned some time after 150 CE, when the "Jewish community in Alexandria was recuperating" and, at the same time, had to react against the success of Christian mission, which not only attracted non-Jews but also Jews.[80]

4. Personal, Literary, Institutional, Documentary, and Statistical Evidence for Continuity

4.1 Apollos of Alexandria

Birger Pearson recently revived the thesis that Apollos was a student of Philo. "I would go so far as to suggest that Apollos had been a pupil of Philo's before

[79] It is much more diplomatic than Justin's *Dialogus cum Tryphone*. An Alexandrian provenance of the *Dialogue between Papiscus and Jason* seems more likely than the traditional ascription to Ariston of Pella. Though Adolf von Harnack followed the conventional ascription to Ariston, his characterization of the author could also be an accurate description of an Alexandrian author: a work with an apologetical tendency penned by a Jewish-Christian author who was philosophically educated and who did not disavow the religious ideas of his people. See Adolf von Harnack, "Das dem Aristo von Pella beigelegte Werk Jason's und Papiskus' Disputation über Christus," in *Die Überlieferung der griechischen Apologeten des 2. Jahrhunderts in der alten Kirche und im Mittelalter*, TU 1/1–2 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1883), 115–30 (129) (soon after the year 135 CE); cf. idem, "Die Altercatio Simonis et Theophili nebst Untersuchungen über die antijüdische Polemik in der alten Kirche," TU 3/1 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1883), 1–136 (116) (between 135 and 165 CE).

[80] Bremmer, "Author, Date and Provenance," 69. Bremmer opts for 170 CE; Niehoff, "A Jewish Critique of Christianity," 152, for 150 CE.

his departure from Alexandria."[81] This, of course, is highly speculative, but calls attention to the mysterious figure of Apollos, who is reported to be a native of Alexandria (Acts 18:25: Ἀλεξανδρεὺς τῷ γένει) and who has taught in Ephesus (Acts 18:24–28) and in Corinth (Acts 19:1–7; 1 Cor 1–4). Apollos is the earliest potential signpost to Jewish-Christian beginnings in Alexandria. Reconstructing and assessing the disparate information from Luke and Paul is notoriously difficult.[82] In particular, this is true of Apollos's Alexandrian setting. In the textual tradition, there is a hint of Jewish-Christian activity in Alexandria. The *varia lectio* of Acts 18:25 (Codex Bezae), which is certainly secondary but might go back to the 2nd century,[83] reports that Apollos "had been instructed in the word in his native city (ἐν τῇ πατρίδι)." The Western text thus establishes what Luke left open: Apollos joined an existing Christian community in Alexandria in the 40s and is therefore the first Egyptian Christian known by name. The "Egyptian conversion" of Apollos is by no means certain, as any educated, presumably wealthy, Alexandrian could have become acquainted with Christianity on his travels, possibly even in Judea,[84] as Ernest Renan suggested.[85] Up to today, however, these mentions of Apollos are taken as pivotal evidence of "a date in the first half of the 1st century for the presence of a Christian community in Alexandria."[86] The idea that Apollos formed his christology against the backdrop of Alexandrian-Jewish wisdom theology remains a valid possibility.[87]

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[81] Pearson, "Earliest Christianity in Egypt," 101.

[82] See the attempts by Pier F. Beatrice, "Apollos of Alexandria and the Origins of the Jewish-Christian Baptist Encratism," *ANRW* 2.26.2 (1995): 1232–75; Jürgen Wehnert, "Apollos," in *Alexandria*, ed. Tobias Georges et al., COMES 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 403–12; Claire Clivaz, "Reading Luke-Acts in Second Century Alexandria: From Clement to the Shadow of Apollos," in *Engaging Early Christian History: Reading Acts in the Second Century*, ed. Ruben R. Dupertuis and Todd Penner (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2013), 209–23. See also the contribution of Samuel Vollenweider in the present volume.

[83] Cf. Anna Maria Schwemer, "Zum Abbruch des jüdischen Lebens in Alexandria: Der jüdische Aufstand in der Diaspora unter Trajan (115–117 n.Chr.)," in Georges et al., *Alexandria*, 381–99 (397). The information is considered reliable, e.g., by Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1994), 413: "The implication of the statement no doubt accords with historical fact," suggesting that Christianity had come to Alexandria by 50 C.E.

[84] Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (London: SCM, 1997), 259: "In the case of Apollos, too, one could ask whether he did not gain his new faith in Judaea, since he is alleged to know only the baptism of John (Acts 18.25). Elsewhere we have no evidence of a particular influence of John the Baptist from Egypt." Cf. Huebner, *Papyri*, 9.

[85] Ernest Renan, *The Apostles*, vol. 2 of *The History of the Origins of Christianity* (London: Mathieson, 1890), 152.

[86] Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 27; Klijn, "Jewish Christianity in Egypt," 163–64.

[87] Cf. Wehnert, "Apollos," 412.

4.2 Circulation of Extra-canonical Jewish-Christian Writings

The reception of Jewish-Christian writings which are not of Alexandrian provenance, but enjoyed great popularity there, suggests an early Jewish-Christian readership. The Shepherd of Hermas, for instance, was regarded as a proper divine revelation due to its genre as an apocalypse and the idea, first expressed by Origen, that the "apostolic" Hermas mentioned in Paul's letter to the Romans (Rom 16:14) was its author. Clement, too, was an advocate of the text and referred to it as "divinely inspired."[88] The remarkable success of Hermas in Alexandria and in Egypt in general[89] is best explained by the hypothesis that Jewish-Christian sub-groups transmitted and used it even after the tragedy of the diaspora revolt. Is it not even plausible that the character of the writing actually resonated in a situation of great distress, with its repeated references to persecution and martyrdom?[90] To be sure, one should not put too much weight on the currency of writings such as the Shepherd of Hermas for our question on Jewish-Christian continuities. However, the existence and appreciation of the Shepherd in 2nd century Alexandrian Christianity suggests that these texts were not only held on shelves in a library but also in the hands of members of a community.

4.3 Jewish Literature and Ideas in Christian Writings

The above survey of Christian and anti-Christian literature from Alexandria suggests a dynamic Jewish and Jewish-Christian presence after the revolt in the beginning of the 2nd century, with robust traces of continuity into the 1st century. A comprehensive analysis of the Christian literary landscape in Alexandria would confirm that Christians in Alexandria retained and used the Alexandrian Jewish Septuagint, and that they collected and disseminated the writings of Philo. These two aspects have been counted by Birger Pearson among "the most obvious signs of continuity"[91] and they should not be

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[88] Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 5. Cf. Dan Batovici, "Hermas in Clement of Alexandria," *StPatr* 66 (2013): 41–51.

[89] On a survey of manuscripts from Egypt before the time of Constantine, see Malcolm Choat and Rachel Yuen-Collingridge, "The Egyptian Hermas: The Shepherd in Egypt before Constantine," in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, ed., Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 191–212; cf. ibid., 196: "There are 11 papyrus witnesses to the text of Hermas up to the time of Constantine. In the same period, there is a solitary witness to the Gospel of Mark (P.Beatty 1), 6 texts of Luke and only slightly more copies of Matthew (14) and John (17). Hermas is considerably better attested than any other non-scriptural Christian text."

[90] Cf. the excursus "Bedrängnis – Verfolgung – Martyrium" in Norbert Brox, *Der Hirt des Hermas*, KAV 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 471–76, with the relevant references.

[91] Pearson, "Earliest Christianity," 100; cf. Kraft and Luijendijk, "Christianity's Rise after Judaism's Demise," 180. David Runia believes Philo's work would have been preserved in the

underestimated. Jennifer Otto argued in a recent monograph that early Christian invocations of Philo are best understood in the context of "ongoing efforts by Christians to conceptualize and demarcate the difference between two emerging but fluid collective identities, 'Christianness' and 'Jewishness'."[92]

In addition, it is important to take note of the variegated reception of biblical and extra-biblical traditions in Alexandrian Christian literature that is dependent not only on available texts but also on real people, on authors who have them at their disposal, and on readers who would accept them as authoritative, convincing, or encouraging. Enochic tradition, in particular, was in high regard both in Alexandrian Judaism (e.g., Wisdom) and in Alexandrian Christianity.[93]

Clement of Alexandria is a case in point. He was not only influenced by Philo but also drew on other Jewish sources like Demetrius, Aristobulos, Pseudo-Aristeas, Artapanus, Pseudo-Hecataeus, the poet Ezekiel, the *Apocryphon of Ezekiel*, and parts of the *Sibylline Oracles*.[94] For instance, despite his predilection for Paul's theology, he did not choose Abraham as a paradigm for Christian existence but chose Moses instead. "The honourable title 'Gnostic Moses' … not only promotes Moses as an ideal for Christians, but also emphasizes the value of the Old Testament as still containing a valuable message at the time of the new covenant."[95] On the other hand, according to Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 6.13.3), Clement wrote a treatise against "Judaizers." We can only speculate about its content, but it likely presupposes a strong Jewish(-Christian) influence on the type of Christianity represented by Clement.

4.4 Jewish Tradition in "Gnostic" and Related Literature

Jewish-Christian elements are also evident in what came to be labelled "Gnosticism". Several decades ago, Roelof van den Broek set out to reconstruct the various theological strands of second-century Alexandrian Christianity, arguing that the Jewish milieu of the city merged with Platonic ideas and led to both Christian-Gnostic (e.g., *Epistle of Eugnostos* [NHC III 3] and non-Gnostic

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Catechetical School (David T. Runia, "Witness or Participant? Philo and the Neoplatonist Tradition," in *Philo and the Church Fathers: A Collection of Papers*, ed. idem, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 32 [Brill: Leiden, 1995], 182–205 [191]): "How did Philo survive this early watershed? It is very likely that this happened in the so-called Catechetical school of the Christian diocese of Alexandria, perhaps through the special efforts of its first 'director' – (to use a modern term) – Pantaenus."

[92] Otto, *Philo of Alexandria*, 4.

[93] Cf. Birger A. Pearson, "Enoch in Egypt," in *For a Later Generation: The Transformation of Tradition in Israel, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, ed. Randal A. Argall, Beverly A. Bow, and Rodney A. Werline (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2000), 216–31.

[94] Cf. Annewies van den Hoek, "How Alexandrian was Clement of Alexandria? Reflections on Clement and his Alexandrian Background," *HeyJ* 31 (1990): 179–94.

[95] Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Clement of Alexandria: A Project of Christian Perfection* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 42.

"Christianities" (e.g., *Authoritative Discourse* [NHC VI 3], the *Teachings of Silvanus* [NHC VII 4], and the *Sentences of Sextus* [NHC XII 1]). In summary, he observed that "since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic Library it has become increasingly clear that in second-century Egypt, Jewish-Christian conceptions and traditions played a part in several Gnostic speculations."[96] The inherent weakness of such reconstructions is obvious: they rely on fourth-century texts that no doubt include older traditions – but we cannot be certain what precisely they are. Christoph Markschies is quite critical of such hypotheses.[97] He analyzed the fragments of Valentinus and noted that they shed new light on the early development of Alexandrian theology. According to Markschies, throughout his fragmentary work, Valentinus shows his relationship to Hellenistic Judaism as represented by Philo; this allocates him to an "intellectual intermediate stage between Philo and Clement."[98]

4.5 Jewish Learning Center and Christian "School"

Trajectories to the 1st century have also been identified on an institutional level. There are good reasons to assume that the unique shape of the Catechetical School in Alexandria as a Christian philosophical school originated as an indirect result of the structures of Jewish teaching institutions in the synagogues.[99] The mysterious figure of Pantaenus has been described as the mediator between a Jewish-Christian and a Hellenistic type of Christianity[100] and even as a

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[96] Roelof van den Broek, "The Shape of Edem according to Justin the Gnostic" (1973), in *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 131–41 (140). See also Birger A. Pearson, "Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and the Development of Gnostic Self-Definition," in *The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries*, ed. Ed P. Sanders (London: SCM, 1980) 151–60.

[97] Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus*, 320–22.

[98] Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus*, 323, 407 ("geistige Zwischenstufe zwischen Philo und Clemens Alexandrinus").

[99] Cf. Wyrwa, "Philosophie in der alexandrinischen Schule," 198: "Vermutlich sind die jüdischen Einrichtungen von Synagoge und Lehrhaus in Alexandrien in der anfangs überwiegend judenchristlichen Kirche Alexandriens einfach beibehalten worden." Wyrwa refers to the similar suggestion in Mimouni, "Communauté chrétienne d'Alexandrie," 161: "Cette communauté judéo-chrétienne est peut-être à l'origine du Didascalée d'Alexandrie." See also Gert J. Steyn, "Consequences of the Desecration and Destruction of Alexandrian Synagogues as Spaces of Learning and Living: An Orientation Based on Philo's *In Flaccum* and *Legatio ad Gaium*," in *Tempel, Lehrhaus, Synagoge, Tempel: Orte jüdischen Lernens und Lebens – Festschrift für Wolfgang Kraus*, ed. Christian Eberhart, Martin Karrer, Siegfried Kreuzer and Martin Meiser (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2020), 57–77.

[100] Martiniano P. Roncaglia, "Pantène et le didascalée d'Alexandrie: Du Judéo-Christianisme au Christianisme hellénistique," in *Studies in early Christian literature and its environment, primarily in the Syrian East: FS Arthur Vööbus*, ed. Robert H. Fischer (Chicago: The Lutheran School of Theology, 1977), 211–33.

preserver of Philo's works.[101] Also, the presbyterate and the office of teachers in Alexandrian congregations as well as their counterparts in some "Gnostic schools" may have reflected leadership structures of the synagogue. Roelof van den Broek contends that:[102]

> There are strong indications that in second-century Alexandrian Christianity the διδάσκαλοι and the πρεσβύτεροι continued the roles of the rabbis and elders of the Jewish community …. They were, however, no ecclesiastical officials but laymen. It was inevitable that their independent position and their claim to apostolic authority would lead to a clash with the Alexandrian bishop. In the end the bishop prevailed, and Origen had to leave the city definitively in 234.

Obviously, caution should be exercised: With Origen we are well in the 3rd century, and it is, of course, a highly speculative endeavor to extrapolate back such a long way. The same is true for the abovementioned institutional continuities. Due to our lack of data we are left with conjectures which receive argumentative weight only in conjunction with other supportive arguments.

4.6 Scribal Habits and Nomina Sacra

In his pithy but influential study on earliest Egyptian Christian literary papyri, Colin Roberts has argued that the scribes' use of *nomina sacra* contribute "a footnote of some theological importance and at the same time shed some illumination, however sparse, on the dark period of the Church in Egypt."[103] He regards the Christian abbreviations of the *nomina sacra* as a "creation of the primitive Christian community," indeed as "the embryonic creed of the first Church" in Jerusalem.[104] He concludes that Christianity reached Alexandria from Palestine and put a specifically Jewish mark on it.[105] His study was intended to contribute to the "orthodoxy-heresy" debate and engages Bauer's thesis, suggesting that the earliest shape of Alexandrian Christianity had a Jewish-Christian profile and was only later "gnosticized" by Basilides and Valentinus. Although not every detail of Roberts's hypothesis stands up to closer scrutiny, a valid case can be made that Jewish-Christian scribes established the practice of *nomina sacra* as part of their religious convictions. For instance, both the *Epistle of Barnabas* (9:7–8) and Clement (*Strom.* 6.278–80) comment on Abraham's 318 servants (Gen 14:14), refer to the shape of the cross (T =

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[101] Runia, "Witness of Participant," 191. See Wolfgang Grünstäudl's contribution in this volume.

[102] Roelof van den Broek, "The Christian 'School' of Alexandria in the Second and Third Centuries" (1995), in *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity*, 197–205 (200–1). Cf. Pearson, "Earliest Christianity," 105.

[103] Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief*, 48. The study goes back to his Schweich Lectures of 1977.

[104] Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief*, 46.

[105] Cf. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief*, 49.

300), and refer to the numerical value of the first two letters of ΙΗΣΟΥΣ (ΙΗ = 18). "Both of these writers were familiar with Greek copies of Genesis in which the number was written as TIH, and they both see in this letter compendium a foreshadowing of Jesus and his cross."[106] Yet again, this can be no more than a "footnote" in our quest for the Jewish beginnings of Christianity in Alexandria.

4.7 Onomastics

Onomastic studies have identified both Old Testament and New Testament names among Christians in Egypt in Late Antiquity, but they do not allow for unequivocal inferences on the Jewish character of earliest Christianity.[107] Rather, they affirm the complexity of the question of what constitutes "being a Christian" and of the inappropriateness of a simple correlation of religious conversion and onomastic change.[108] While it therefore remains notoriously difficult to pinpoint the number or the percentage of Christians at a given stage in the process of the Christianizing of Egypt, onomastics might still provide certain clues. By the end of the 4th century, the proportion of Christians must have been significant. Estimates on the grounds of onomastic analysis range from 70% to 90%.[109]

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[106] Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 114, with reference to Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief*, 37n2. Cf. ibid. 117: "Jesus' name is an unsurpassed candidate in early Christian piety as a factor capable of generating the sort of special treatment that is represented in the scribal practice that we call *nomina sacra*." See also AnneMarie Luijendijk, "The Gospel of Mary at Oxyrhynchus (P.Oxy. L 3525 and P.Ryl. III 463): Rethinking the History of Early Christianity through Literary Papyri from Oxyrhynchus," in *Re-Making the World: Christianity and Categories – Essays in Honor of Karen L. King*, ed. Taylor G. Petrey, WUNT 434 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 391–418 (395–96), on the fluidity of the use of *nomina sacra* in the third century.

[107] Roger S. Bagnall, "Religious Conversion and Onomastic Change in Early Byzantine Egypt," *BASP* 19 (1982): 105–24; idem, "Conversion and Onomastics: A Reply," *ZPE* 69 (1987): 243–50; Mark Depauw and Willy Clarysse, "How Christian was Fourth Century Egypt? Onomastic Perspectives on Conversion," *VigC* 67 (2013): 407–35.

[108] David Frankfurter, "Onomastic Statistics and the Christianization of Egypt: A Response to Depauw and Clarysse," *VigC* 68 (2014): 284–89. See also the response Mark Depauw and Willy Clarysse, "Christian Onomastics: A Response to Frankfurter," *VigC* 69 (2015): 327–29.

[109] The higher number is suggested by Roger Bagnall, the lower number in the study by Mark Depauw and Willy Clarysse.

4.8 Statistics

Onomastic data can be combined with estimated growth rates that, of course, are even more hypothetical.[110] If the population of Roman Alexandria was 500,000 and the proportion of Christians in the year 313 CE was 16.2 percent (i.e., 81,000), a growth rate of 40 percent per decade would statistically result in almost 100 Christians at the wake of the Kitos War in 115 CE and in more than 1,000 Christians at the beginning of the episcopate of Demetrius around 180 CE.[111] In the earliest period of Alexandrian Christianity, the actual figures would be considerably higher since the proportion of Christians in the cities outnumbered the empire-wide average and since, at first, Christianity was generally most successful in Jewish communities. Those who suggest a late, pagan rise of Christianity without any Jewish-Christian pre-history have to reckon with almost miraculous rates of conversion or large-scale immigration. All population figures and statistical data are rough estimates, but if the numbers at least approximate the facts, then we should expect a Jewish-Christian community before the 2nd century.

5. Conclusion

(1) The first goal of this essay was to revisit 2nd century Christian writings embedded in a "Jewish-Christian" milieu and to reweigh the pros and cons for their Alexandrian provenance. Behind those writings there are actual people who wrote and read them, there are friendly or polemical arguments with other schools and Jewish and non-Jewish individuals, and there is competition and debate among various Christ groups. The breadth of discourses is only explicable on grounds of a prevailing presence of Jewish-Christian groups that formed in the 1st century and battled their way through the riots under Trajan. We documented traces of what has been called a "Petrine discourse" in Alexandria in five texts (Barn., *Kerygma Petrou*, Apoc. Pet., 2 Pet, Sib. Or.)[112] and

[110] Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (New York: Harper, 1997), 12–13, observes a remarkable correlation with his sociological and Bagnall's onomastic findings, though up to the year 300 C.E., Bagnall arrives at higher numbers.

[111] On the growth rate of 40 percent per decade in the Roman Empire, see Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 5–6.

[112] See, again, Frey, "Second Peter in New Perspective." The *Epistula Apostolorum*, which has been located in Alexandria by many (most prominently by Hornschuh, *Anfänge* 113–259), also has a "Jewish-Christian" profile and a Petrine coloring. For instance, it quotes from the *Apocalypse of Peter* and in EpAp 11 (22) Jesus not only invites Thomas to touch his wounds but also Peter. Currently, however, Asia Minor is favored as the place of origin, following the proposal of Carl Schmidt, *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung: Ein katholisch-apostolisches Sendschreiben des 2. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1919), 361–

discussed two writings that could be attributed to a "Jacobean discourse" in the widest sense (*Gospel according to the Hebrews*, *Protevangelium of James*).[113]

The *Epistle of Barnabas* (around 130 CE) stands at the margins of a "Petrine discourse" on account of the hint in the Pseudo-Clementine *a* (1:9.1–2) that Peter sent Barnabas from Jerusalem to Alexandria to preach the gospel there. The epistle displays a robust effort to demarcate his group (part of the "new people") from the influence of Jewish ideas and symbols by beating the opponents at their own game (e.g., figurative hermeneutics). In the *Kerygma Petrou* (around 120–130 CE), we encounter a confident appraisal of the Christian identity as something "new," that is, a "third" form of worship, while Jewish and Gentile worship are assigned to the older, outdated stage. Both the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Kerygma Petrou* witness to an anti-Jewish sentiment in the city resulting from the catastrophe of the revolt and, at the same time, establish a distinct "Christian" identity on the grounds of the Jewish beginnings of Christianity. The *Apocalypse of Peter* (around 140–150 CE) reflects on experiences of persecution and martyrdom under a messianic claimant and presents an amalgam of Hellenistic ideas and biblical reasoning. The author might have received and incorporated apocalyptic material from Palestine reacting to the Bar Kokhba revolt. He may have deemed the material fitting for the Alexandrian milieu and its own dynamic pre-history with Jewish opposition to the Jesus movement. 2 Peter (around 150–160 CE) is a witness to fierce intra-Christian struggles. Remarkably, it forgoes any polemics against Jews but rather develops earlier Jewish-Christian traditions (Jude, Apoc. Pet.) for its own argumentative strategy and eagerly taps into current philosophical discourses. The *Sibylline Oracles* (around 160 or later), finally, rearranged, redesigned and "classicized" the *Apocalypse of Peter*, with sidelong polemical blows against Judaism.

The notion of a "Jacobean discourse" in Alexandria as part of Jewish-Christian beginnings allows for the idea that both the Epistle of James and the Epistle of Jude (as a "Second James", as it were) could be located in Alexandria as well.[114] But the evidence is too scarce, and the counter-evidence is too strong. The provenance of *2 Clement* is even more mysterious. It is certainly not part of a "Jacobean discourse" but has strong affinities to ethical and theological traditions of Jewish Christianity, above all James and Matthew.[115] With greater

401, with additional supportive arguments such as its echo of earthquakes and a severe plague (cf. Bremmer, "The *Apocalypse of Peter*," 89–90: the Antonine plague).

[113] On the role of James in Alexandria, see also Lang, *Spuren*, 318: "Der Herrenbruder scheint die zentrale Identifikationsfigur dieser Gemeinschaft gewesen zu sein."

[114] See Jörg Frey's reflections in this volume.

[115] On the difficulties to determine date and provenance, cf. Ernst Baasland, "Der 2. Klemensbrief und frühchristliche Rhetorik: 'Die erste christliche Predigt' im Lichte der neueren Forschung," *ANRW* 2.27.1 (1979): 78–157, 84: "Bei zahlreichen frühchristlichen Schriften stehen wir vor vielen Rätseln, wenn wir eine geschichtliche Einordnung versuchen. Was den 2.

confidence we can propose an Alexandrian provenance of the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*; its roots could reach into the 1st century. It holds James in high regard and draws on Hellenistic-Jewish wisdom traditions. In the wake of "Gentile" Christianity its influence diminished, though it was still used unapologetically to invoke Jesus traditions not attested in the "canonical" gospels. The *Protevangelium of James* (ca. 180 CE) is an apologetic work with no anti-Jewish slants but with an interest in engaging in a dialogue with Jews and countering an anticipated bias against Jesus's family and Mary. As this writing also draws on Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter, it represents an interesting hybrid of "Petrine" and "Jacobean" fields of discourse.

Incidentally, with the exception of 2 Peter, all these writings were used by Clement of Alexandria. This is an additional, though by no means compelling, indication of their Alexandrian origin. For, "writings of probable Alexandrian descent are dominant among those absorbed into Clement's work,"[116] as he could access and study such writings in his local libraries.

(2) Second, we considered the anti-Christian treatise of Celsus which reveals a trajectory from the rather diplomatic *Dialogue between Papiscus and Jason* (ca. 120 CE), which Origen characterizes as addressed to the "simple-minded,"[117] the alleged anti-Christian writing of a "Jew" (ca. 150–170 CE) via Celsus, as preserved by Origen, to Celsus himself (ca. 180 CE), again as reported by Origen. The diplomatic character of the *Dialogue between Papiscus and Jason*, which eventually leads to the conversion of the Jewish dialogue partner, seems to fit into a cultural atmosphere in which open conflicts are considered out of place and Christians are engaged in subtle propaganda. Celsus's

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Klem. betrifft, gibt es fast nur Rätsel." With the suggestion to reconsider Rome, Christopher Tuckett summarizes: "Probably any claim about the geographical origin can be, at the end of the day, no more than an educated guess. An Egyptian origin for the text (probably the most widely held view in current scholarship) is possible, though the lack of firm positive evidence makes it difficult to be certain" (Christopher Tuckett, *2 Clement: Introduction, Text, and Commentary*, Oxford Apostolic Fathers [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 62). Alexandria is favored by Burnett H. Streeter, *The Primitive Church* (London: Macmillan, 1929), 244–53; Andreas Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, HNT 17/Die Apostolischen Väter I (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 92; Wilhelm Pratscher, "Der zweite Clemensbrief als Dokument des ägyptischen Christentums," in *Das ägyptische Christentum im 2. Jahrhundert*, ed. Markus Lang and Markus Öhler, SNTU.NF 6 (Wien: LIT, 2008), 81–100; Lang, *Spuren*, 161–62 (with additional literature). In the case of an Alexandrian origin the observation of Christopher Tuckett would be all the more significant for the research question of the present contribution: "It would appear that the author of *2 Clement* is living in a context where non-Christian Jewish neighbours are virtually non-existent…. He can assume, apparently without any challenge, that Jewish traditions are to be used for (predominantly Gentile) Christians" (Tuckett, *2 Clement*, 75).

[116] Van den Hoek, "How Alexandrian was Clement of Alexandria?," 190–91.

[117] Harnack, "Altercatio Iasonis et Papisci," 118, assumes that the text contained some antiquated and possibly apocalyptic ideas that were no longer suitable for the intellectual Christian elite of Origen's time.

"Jew" – if an actual writer and not just a literary fiction – fits well in a time when the Jewish community started to reorganize and was even faced with anti-Jewish sentiments from the Christian side (*Kerygma Petrou*, *Epistle of Barnabas*), as well as with the missionary success of Jesus followers among both Jews and Greeks. His reaction includes slandering Jesus's family background, an easy target for Celsus's attacks. We get a glimpse into extensive religious-philosophical debates with all these writings, as the literary products presumably condense a much wider earlier discourse, the starting point of which certainly reaches beyond the time of the revolt.

(3) In a final step, we considered a bundle of secondary and tertiary evidence for Jewish beginnings of Alexandrian Christianity: the popularity of Jewish-Christian writings in Alexandria from other regions, Jewish scriptures, traditions and ideas in Christian and "Gnostic" literature, the figure of Apollos, Jewish learning institutions as a model for the Catechetical School, scribal habits and, finally, onomastic and statistical data.

We will never be able to reconstruct the diverse topography of early Christianity in Alexandria, only roughly comparable to other cities such as Rome or Ephesus.[118] The catastrophe of the diaspora revolt extinguished the Jewish beginnings of Christianity almost completely. There is no firsthand evidence such as 1st century texts or persons, with the possible exceptions of the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* or Apollos. We have to start from the shape of Christianity in the 2nd century and are dependent on hypothetical reconstructions.

The authors, factions and groups of second-century Christianities in Alexandria seem to have been pluriform: Jewish Christianity, apocalyptically oriented Christianity, encratite Christianity, several types of Christian "Gnosticism" and Christian Platonism.[119] Some of these groups "represent continuities with varieties of Alexandrian Judaism."[120] Indeed, the factionalizing among early Christianity in Alexandria has been said to be due "more to rifts within the existent Jewish community than to specific immigrant influences."[121] But this cannot be proven, as we hardly hear about Jewish community life, let alone Jewish factions until late in the 2nd century.[122]

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[118] See on this point also Nicklas, "Jewish, Christian, Greek?," 40f.

[119] Jan N. Bremmer (in private conversation) rightly cautions not to jump too quickly from authors to groups.

[120] Pearson, "Earliest Christianity," 105.

[121] William H. C. Frend, review of *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, by Colin H. Roberts, *JEH* 31 (1980): 207–8, 208.

[122] On the few second-century papyri referring to Jews, see Tal Ilan, "The Jewish Community in Egypt before and after 117 CE in Light of Old and New Papyri," in *Jewish and Christian Communal Identities in the Roman World*, ed. Yair Furstenberg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 203–24, 215: "The evidence for Jews [in Egypt] in the first two centuries after the revolt is scant, and they are only recognizable by their names."

Taken cumulatively, the traces of Jewish elements in the texts, traditions, and shapes of Alexandrian Christianity from the 2nd century onwards hardly allow for any other conclusion: there was a Jewish beginning of the Jesus movement in Alexandria. Once again, Adolf von Harnack's erudition and intuition proves sound, despite Walter Bauer's classic challenge of this view and Alfons Fürst's more recent attempt. The lack of primary evidence is certainly lamentable for the historian but, at the same time, explainable. The tensions between the Jews and Greco-Romans in Alexandria, particularly the revolt from 115 to 117 CE but also the less violent disturbances, certainly had an impact on the process of "Christianizing" Alexandria. The theory of a complete annihilation of Jewish (and, by implication, Jewish-Christian) life is not plausible,[123] as it cannot explain the substantial and many-faceted continuities between Alexandrian Judaism and Alexandrian Christianity after 117 CE.[124] And it cannot explain that two generations later the church should have become – in Harnack's words – "a stately church".[125]

Not many questions in the history of Christianity deserve to be framed with the slogan "the absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence", but the question of when Christianity gained a foothold in Alexandria certainly does. Considering its rapid growth in other *metropoleis* of the Roman Empire as early as the 40s, such as Antioch and Rome, it would be strange to expect marks of the Christian movement only 60 years later.[126] Earliest Alexandrian Christianity was Jewish. In Jerome's words: *Alexandriae prima ecclesia adhuc iudaizans*.[127] Christians perceived themselves, and were perceived, as part of the

[123] Cf. Mélèze-Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt*, 228: "If primitive Christianity had not left any marks on Egyptian soil until the end of the second century, it was because it had been annihilated along with the entire body in which it was immersed – the Jewish community of Alexandria." Discussing the period from 117 to 337 CE, Victor Tcherikover had noted: "The general impression is that of a complete breakdown of Jewish life in Egypt, at least at the beginning of this period" (*Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, vol. 1, ed. Victor Tcherikover [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957], 94. See, by contrast and more plausibly, Horbury, *Jewish War*, 233–34: "On the analogy of the survival of a Jewish community in the *chora* on a small scale, as attested in papyri, one may envisage a surviving remnant of the vast city population."

[124] Pearson, "Egypt," 337. Cf. Mimouni, "Communauté chrétienne d'Alexandrie," 161: "Par conséquent, il ne faudrait pas croire que la communauté judéo-chrétienne d'Alexandrie a totalement disparu à la suite de la révolte de 115–117."; Kraft and Luijendijk, "Christianity's Rise after Judaism's Demise," 185: "While at the individual level … a total purging (through annihilation, enslavement, exile, immigration, assimilation or whatever) may be unlikely, especially outside the urban centers, it could certainly be true as a feature of public life and official Roman-Egyptian policy."

[125] Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, 2:158–59.

[126] Cf. Udo Schnelle, *Die ersten 100 Jahre des Christentums 30–130 n.Chr.* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 531n257.

[127] Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 8.

Jewish community until the Jewish upheavals of 115–117 CE. In the 2nd century, another type of Christianity arose – a second rise of Christianity, as it were, with strong ties to the earlier, Jewish stage. The two "rises" of Christianity in Alexandria are exceptional in emergent Christianity, a consequence of the unique political and cultural situation.