

nature of the (Christian) literary sources, which have been so influential in past generations of scholarship, especially in connection with the field of Christian archaeology. Since we now have a well-established (sub)discipline of late antique archaeology, which tends to have a wider scope in looking at the entire archaeological record of this period, one may well wonder whether 'Christian archaeology' has a future, and if so, in what form; some more reflections on this issue beyond the fleeting ones in the introduction would have been in order. Throughout the book, one also notes a certain looseness in the terminology used, such as 'pagan'/'paganism', which is employed throughout without qualification or even quotation marks. None the less, due to its vast coverage this book will be a useful reference work for scholars and students of various backgrounds.

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The sources of Celsus's criticism of Jesus. Theological developments in the second century AD.

By Egge Tjsseling. (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 108.)

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As the title of this book suggests, its author wishes to elucidate the question of the sources the second-century pagan critic of Christianity, the elusive Celsus, used in his attack upon Jesus in his work the *True word*, which is partially preserved by Origen in his well-known work *Contra Celsum*, written possibly eight decades after Celsus published his own book in the middle to the later middle of the second century. Much of the discussion of its author, Egge Tjsseling, though not all of it, is taken up with the origins of Celsus' use of a Jew in the first two books of Origen's long work.

The book divides itself into six chapters excluding a foreword. The first of these is methodological, though this only runs to two pages, and presents a discussion of well-known issues relating to attribution (when to attribute words about Jesus to Origen, Celsus, or the so-called Jew), though little of real methodological substance emerges. The results of Tjsseling's deliberations are found in an appendix at the back of the book running to some 177 passages. The next chapter entitled 'Status quaestionis' looks at introductory questions, ranging from the date of Celsus' *True word* (about 160 CE, according to Tjsseling), to the authenticity of the Jew and the extent to which Celsus is quoting from a work the Jew wrote (broadly positive answer), to matters relating to Celsus' attitude to Christianity. A chapter then follows on Plato's influence on Celsus. In a workmanlike way, Tjsseling demonstrates what is widely accepted, though in different and nuanced ways by different scholars: that Celsus is a Platonist (not an Epicurean, as Origen claims) and that some of his criticisms of Jesus, especially those which relate to God, evil and ethics, derive from Plato. Because Tjsseling thinks that Celsus' main reason for attacking Jesus derives from his philosophical assumptions, this chapter, in broad terms at least, relates to the question of sources about Jesus. The main chapter (ch. v) examines under different headings aspects of Jesus' life referred to mainly by Celsus' Jew as quoted by Origen in the first two chapters of the *Contra Celsum* (oftentimes Celsus is not clear whether the opinions he is repeating come from him or the Jew but Tjsseling seems to assume that virtually every

opinion expressed about Jesus in these chapters is by the Jew). In the process questions are raised about Celsus' knowledge of the canonical Gospels (Tijsseling seems to think that this is either mediated through the Jew or through some form of oral tradition) and the character and origins of the Jewish attacks upon Jesus. The next chapter examines Celsus' objections to Christian ideas about Jesus as these relate to Christology. The book ends with a relatively short chapter in which Tijsseling argues strongly for the view that Celsus had access to a Jewish source, which was the first edition of the so-called *Toledoth Yeshu*, a set of Jewish folk tales about Jesus of both a humorous and polemical kind, which accounts for the traditions about Jesus he records, which seem not to have derived from the canonical Gospels. The Jewish source, which was written in response to Jews becoming followers of Christ, and dependent upon oral traditions about Jesus disseminated amongst the Jewish community, was probably written in Alexandria where it was read by Celsus. The Jew mentioned by Celsus may have written the source, or simply personify its author.

Tijsseling has performed a useful task in writing a broadly systematic account of Celsus' sources for Jesus' life, especially as these relate to opinions attributed to a Jew. He has not, it seems to me, advanced the arguments for the authenticity of the views attributed to the Jew, their origins or the original format in which they may have been written. In this context it is a pity that although he mentions Maren Niehoff's much-cited article on Celsus' Jew, he does not discuss in greater detail her arguments both in favour of the Jew authoring a continuous written source or the view that the latter's opinions arose from detailed interaction with the Gospel, reflecting a text-critical training, observations which call into question the idea that he had access to a developed pre-existing body of traditions concerning Jesus, sometimes implied by Tijsseling. There are strange *lacunae* in the bibliography (no mention, for instance, of William Horbury's important publications on the origins of *Toledoth Yeshu*, including his unpublished dissertation in which he seeks to argue for evidence from the second-century and beyond for a proto-*Toledoth*, here citing writers such as Justin, Tertullian, Lactantius as well as Celsus and other *adversus Judaeos* authors; or of Philip Alexander's numerous publications on what he has termed early evidence for a Jewish counter-narrative of Jesus' life). Related to this is the title of the monograph. This mentions 'theological development in the second century' but aside from a cursory mention of Andresen's theory about Justin as a possible source for Celsus, or at least one to which he responds, there is no mention of other second-century material either of a Christian or Jewish kind. It is, of course, difficult to pen a broader picture of the Jewish context precisely because after Josephus we have no evidence for Jewish literature in Greek and very little information about the Jewish community in the western diaspora (for instance, information about the Jewish community in Alexandria dries up after the Trajanic revolt, a point which Tijsseling barely alludes to and yet, following Niehoff and others, he situates Celsus' Jew in Alexandria) and beyond. Tijsseling would have done well to situate Celsus' use of a Jewish source within wider anti-Christian pagan polemic – in fact it is striking that Celsus' polemical use of Jewish material as well as the accusation that Christians are rebels from Judaism appears out the blue, or at least seems to (almost no pagan writer before Celsus links Christians to Jews, so Celsus appears

somewhat of a maverick). Tijsseling's attempts to associate the Jew's work or source (he remains ambivalent on this point) with a first edition of the *Toledoth* is surely an overly-ambitious conclusion on the basis of the evidence, even if the current reviewer is broadly sympathetic to that thesis (*inter alia* it is also notable in this respect that for whatever reason the claims of Celsus' Jew, let alone his own work, finds very little imprint in later anti-pagan polemic – if it was a first edition of the *Toledoth*, it was a generative work and we might expect more reference to it). In arguing his case, not only does Tijsseling make some false assertions (for instance, the earliest manuscripts of the *Toledoth* are not fourth-century [p. 237], but date from some six centuries later) but he also fails to take sufficient account of the objections some have raised to this kind of a thesis (there is no clear presentation of Schäfer's arguments on this matter, though Schäfer and Meerson's work is cited). His decision to focus on the *Toledoth* for parallels to what the Jew says about Jesus is valid (specific and exclusive parallels are not as great as he maintains, however) but he barely mentions other anti-Jesus traditions found in the rabbinic literature, which are similar to claims we find attributed to Celsus' Jew but often distanced by scholars from the *Toledoth* stream. Finally, it was not entirely clear to me what was added by the chapter on Plato. The criticisms of Jesus Celsus derives from Plato are generally of a different order to those we find mentioned by the Jew (the Jew does appear Hellenised, even if his criticisms of Jesus by and large are not of a philosophical kind); and few would doubt now that Celsus is some kind of a Platonist.

In spite of these criticisms, this volume remains a useful addition to the burgeoning literature on Celsus' sources for his account of Jesus. Its achievement, however, lies more in the systematic presentation of the evidence than in the originality of the conclusions reached.

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The Oxford handbook of Origen. Edited by Ronald E. Heine and Karen Jo Torjesen.

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This collection of thirty essays examines the life, work and legacy of Origen of Alexandria, the polarising third-century 'man of the church', whose industry as a biblical exegete, homilist and speculative theologian earned him both fame and notoriety in the Christian tradition. The seven articles in Part I ('Origen in his Contexts') paint a portrait of the historical context in which Origen developed his approach to scriptural studies and record his debt to Greek philosophical traditions as well as individual thinkers like Clement of Alexandria and Philo Judaeus. The contribution by Arthur P. Urbano on the scattered evidence for Origen's life and the difficulty of reconstructing his biography is admirable in its thoroughness and clarity. The three essays in Part II ('Origen and Hermeneutics') are uneven, ranging from an English *précis* of Bernhard Neuschäfer's 1987 monograph *Origenes als Philologe* to an illuminating case study by Geoffrey D. Dunn, which demonstrates Origen's