works or margins of a scroll on which there was writing. Even the passage in bShabb 116b, which seems to refer to Matthew v.17, is unlikely to have arisen straightforwardly from a reading of that Gospel. Because Murcia believes that many of the traditions about Jesus belong to the latest levels of the redaction of the Talmud, at least in their final form, he is more open than some to contemplate the idea that rather than the *Toledoth Yeshu* being dependent upon rabbinic material, on occasion evidence of dependence is reversed.

Much more could be said about this book, not least about its author's understanding of the relationship of the figure of Ben Stada to Jesus (possibly important in the development of the idea of Jesus as someone who misleads the people and is a magician) and the biblical figure of Balaam, too, on his fascinating views on the character of rabbinic polemic against Jesus and on the character of the coded language used by the Talmud's authors to engage in anti-Christian polemic; and on the complex development of these traditions. One hopes that this book will be the subject of longer and more detailed reviews than this one.

The book has no over-arching theory about the Talmud's view of Jesus. The facts that references to Jesus remain scattered, rare and always incidental (they are always part of a wider halakhic discussion), and that the rabbis never sought to oppose the figure of Jesus (at least ostensibly) in a detailed way, remain unresolved. The appeal of Schäfer's view, irrespective of its precise details, is that it can be seen to assume that these scattered references are part of a larger engagement with the life of Jesus, which one might think by the time of the writing down of the Talmudim, was likely (and indeed Murcia is clear that the nature of the attacks upon Christianity are bitter and sarcastic in the face of a heresy [minut] that the rabbis regard as a threat). But this merely begs the question about the level of interaction between rabbis and Christians, not least those living in Babylon, away from ostensible Christian influence. From the Christian side, it is, I would contend, a striking feature of *adversus Judaeos* literature that rarely are subjects relating to Jesus' life explicitly discussed – in fact most of the discussion relates to the Tanak or the Christian Old Testament. But Murcia's avoidance of a theory about Jesus in the Talmud, in spite of some bold proposals along the way, is a sober reflection of the difficulty of the sources. After reading this book, what is clear is that any future student of the subject of Jesus in the Talmud, and many other subjects related to the development of rabbinic literature and Jewish-Christian relations, will be compelled to take account of this monumental work.

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Matthaeus Adversus Christianos. The use of the Gospel of Matthew in Jewish polemics against the divinity of Jesus. By Christoph Ochs. (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe, 350.) Pp. xvii + 423. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013. €94 (paper). 978 3 16 152615 2; 0340 9570

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Christopher Ochs has enriched the scholarly world with a medieval Jewish reception history of the Gospel of Matthew. I invite scholars from a broad range of

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fields – including late antique and medieval Jewish and Christian history, New Testament studies, Rabbinics and Jewish-Christian relations – to look past some of this impressive monograph's methodological issues, and to welcome an important contribution to the history of Jewish-Christian interactions. Ochs's seven main medieval witnesses to the Jewish use of the New Testament are the Arabic *Qiṣṣat Mujādalat al-Usquf* ('Account of the disputation of the priest'), written in the eighth or ninth century under Muslim rule; its Hebrew translation known as *Sefer Nestor ha-Komer* ('Book of Nestor the priest'), written before 1170 CE; the twelfth-century *Milḥamot ha-Šem* ('The wars of God'); *Sefer Yosef ha-Meqane* ('Book of Joseph the Zealous') and the *Sefer Niṣaḥon Yašan* ('Book of the old confutation'), both composed in the late twelfth to thirteenth century; the *Even Boḥan* ('Touchstone') and *Kelimat ha-Goyim* ('Disgrace of the Gentiles'), both written in fourteenth-century Spain; and finally *Sefer Ḥizuq Emunah* ('Book of the strengthening of the faith'), a Karaite work written in Lithuania in the late sixteenth century. Ochs carefully presents the historical context of each of these works, and illustrates how they used Christian literature, and especially the Gospel of Matthew, for their refutation of Christianity, focusing on the incarnation. Ochs's main rationale for focusing on Matthew is simply that this Gospel features more prominently in Jewish polemical works than any other Christian text. The most likely reason for the prominence of Matthew, Ochs plausibly argues, is that Jewish polemical works often challenge the allegation of Jesus' divine genealogy, as well as Christology more broadly. Given the prominence of these themes in Matthew, it is no surprise to find many medieval Jewish citations of contemporaneous translations of this Gospel. Ochs generally notes the polemicists' use of other Christian materials meticulously, be they Scriptural or ecclesiastical documents. The author goes much further than that; he presents and carefully explains the understanding of Matthew reflected in each Jewish work under consideration, often comparing a particular view to previous Jewish readings of Matthew. In passing, Ochs thereby carves out what I would call a Jewish polemical tradition of reading the Gospel of Matthew, which he masterfully illustrates to stand in partial continuation with late antique 'pagan' anti-Christological discourse (as exemplified by Emperor Julian, Porphyry and others). The strongest contribution of this new monograph may be the way in which it illustrates how the Jewish reading of the Gospels has grown not only as an internal Jewish tradition, but has also been formed by centuries of interaction between Jewish polemicists and the Christian exegetical tradition – Ochs's examples range from Tertullian and Origin, to Jerome and Cyril of Jerusalem, and all the way to Rabanus Maurus and Aquinas.

The monograph's focus on Matthew is certainly helpful for those who are interested in a reception history of this Gospel. Still, in this focus, and in its emphasis on comprehensiveness over a broader cultural analysis, it does at times become obvious that the monograph is a slightly revised PhD dissertation in New Testament studies. (It was written at the University of Nottingham, in the department in which I myself am teaching. It was supervised by Roland Deines; my own involvement was limited to a few friendly yet informal exchanges with the author.) Ochs candidly admits that his reading of the medieval Jewish polemical writings does not serve the purpose of investigating 'the historical and cultural

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contexts of their authors' (p. 22), but rather uses these polemics as a 'touchstone for Christian interpretation' of the New Testament, namely as 'less christologically biased interpretations' serving as 'corrective to various interpretive extravagances' (p. 19) among contemporary Christian exegetes.

The present review is not the place to discuss the hermeneutical and ethical implications of reading Jewish texts as witness to Christianity (let alone the Jewish compositional context of the 'original' Gospel). The following brief consideration of one example of how this reading affects the study itself is intended as an invitation to scholars to value the monograph's lasting scholarly contribution despite the narrowness of its immediate focus: the richness of the material it discusses, the contextualisation of the anti-Christian polemics in a 'deep' intellectual history of Christian, Jewish and 'pagan' discourse, and most of all its palpable, if imperfect, fervour for a better understanding across religious lines. Ochs goes as far as to reorganise the citations that he finds in the polemical works 'following the order of the Gospel of Matthew', allegedly since many of the [Jewish] polemical works 'are seemingly random collections of exegetical arguments' (p. 26, a view repeated repeatedly, for example at p. 141). Ochs considers the structure of the Jewish works under consideration, and the responsibility for the lack of studies on the (admittedly not always dominant) literary features of the medieval works can hardly be laid at his feet. This reviewer still wonders, however, whether it may be Ochs's rearrangement of the passages, and his focus on Matthew, that sometimes lead him to perceive as truncated and random the logically quite coherent material in the originals. A passage of Rabbi Joseph ben Nathan's *Sefer Yosef ha-Meqanne*, for example, discusses a reading of the Vulgate of Matthew xi.11, which Rabbi Joseph translates into Hebrew as 'a son born by a woman is not greater than John the Baptist' (153, §1 in Ochs's list at pp. 138–40). Rabbi Joseph teases out a contradiction in the Latin Christian Scripture: he posits that *mulier* denotes a woman that had had intercourse (*b'wlh*). He leaves the issue open for the moment, and in §2 seemingly diverts to the issue of Jesus' failure to act as a creator, since he could not produce bread at the Wedding of Cana in John ii.3. Rabbi Joseph then notes that Jesus, in the Gospel of John, himself addresses his own mother as a *mulier*. He concludes triumphantly that Scripture's own choice of words shows that Mary is 'a woman who had had intercourse (*b'wlh*)' (see Rosenthal's edition, 125), concluding the topic first broached in §1. Ochs duly notes the relevance of John's Gospel (p. 154), but, bound to the use of Matthew alone, does not engage with Rabbi Joseph's argument deeply enough to illustrate its stringency and cohesion. Rabbi Joseph's citations, throughout his work, are by no means random, but show an interlinked progression of topics, reminiscent of classical rabbinic ring compositions: §3, for example, concludes that only God, not Jesus, is a creator, the topic already raised when Jesus' imperfect powers as creator are discussed in §2; Jesus' use of wine, a topic equally raised in §2, is used against him again in §4, and so on. The work's inner coherence is constituted by a tight web of thematic and 'scriptural' cross-references whose appreciation is prerequisite to a full understanding of the work. Ochs's interpretation of the said passage (pp. 153–5) remains helpful, rich and learned; indeed it breaks new territory in the study of a neglected yet important medieval Jewish work. Overall, Ochs has carefully edited and translated his Hebrew sources (marred by

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a few minor and generally inconsequential errors), meticulously availing himself of manuscripts and critical editions (whose inaccuracies he does not tend to correct). Yet the choice of considering, like Augustine (in his *Commentary on Psalm 59*, 19), only the scattered witness of the Jews, is a consequential one. I will leave it to the reader to fathom how much more effective Ochs's analysis could have been had he also engaged with the living letters of *Sefer Yosef ha-Meqanne* as a whole, in addition to reading it as a witness to the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Gospel of Matthew. Regardless, future studies of both Matthew's *longue durée* and of medieval Jewish polemics will clearly benefit from this solid piece of scholarship.

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Theophilus of Alexandria and the first Origenist controversy. Rhetoric and power. By Krastu Banev. (Oxford Early Christian Studies.) Pp. x + 233. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. £55. 978 0 19 872754 5

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There have been so many vindications of Origen in recent years that a book which explains, as this one purports to do, how he came to be condemned at all seems more than timely. Banev undertakes to show that Theophilus triumphed by the use of rhetoric, an art which in his time was regarded not as a form of intrigue but as a courtesy to one's hearers and a proof of one's intellectual qualifications. He rightly observes that Paul himself, employing the tools of rhetoric without being able to name them, set the example to Christian orators (pp. 54–9); at the same time he compiles a useful dossier of the handbooks that were used to train men of a certain class in the art of public speaking. An analysis of prose passages from Theophilus reveals that, whether or not he knew the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle at first hand, he understood its precepts well enough to reinforce his proofs from reason by appealing to known authorities and working upon the passions of his audience. Cyril's assault on Origen is found to observe the fourfold scheme prescribed by Aristotle: first the *lusis* or dissolution of the counter-plea, then the *epikheirêma* or statement of one's own case, then the *ergasia* or proof and so to the *enthumêma*, or concluding demonstration (p. 130). An enthymeme contains an unspoken premise: the art of the prosecutor is to insinuate a premise which is not shared by his opponent, but is likely to be accepted without reflection by his audience so long as it is not expressly stated. Thus, by relying on presuppositions which were norms of orthodoxy in his own day but not in Origen's, Theophilus can maintain that his teaching on prayer subordinates the Son to the Father (pp. 154–5), that he belittles the Holy Spirit (p. 158) and that his notion of a universal fall of souls into bodies implies that Christ's soul too has fallen (pp. 142–3). Having shown that Theophilus was always a respected figure in ascetic literature, Banev concludes that, rather than co-opting monasticism for his own ends as Athanasius did (p. 191), this patriarch gave a voice to the collective abhorrence of Origen's intellectual temerity, his resistance to authority and the heresies that follow unavoidably when his teachings are grafted on to post-Nicene doctrines. This argument, I fear, is an enthymeme whose premise eludes me. If he were the demagogue that some take him to be, Theophilus will certainly have professed to speak for the whole religious community of Egypt, and if he were

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