

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

By the mid-second century the movement inaugurated by followers of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth had existed for over a century. Emerging from its roots in Jewish Palestine, it had spread widely across the Roman Empire and established itself in a number of locations.¹ From the outset, Christianity sought to make converts and was consequently brought into close contact with the wider non-Jewish population of the Empire.² Its adherents were few in number compared with the total population and Christian communities were small-scale when set against those of the Jews.³

Christians inherited from their Jewish origins authoritative texts, which are referred to here as the Jewish scriptures⁴ and which came to be called the Christian Old Testament. From an early date Christians also produced their own texts. Some of these were later gathered together to form the collection now known as the New Testament,

1. M.M. Mitchell et al., 'Part IV: Regional Varieties of Christianity in the First Three Centuries', in CHC1, pp. 295-412; M.J. Edwards, 'Christianity A.D. 70-192', in CAH12, pp. 573-88.
2. CHC1, pp. 314-412; R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (A.D. 100-400)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).
3. For the size of the Jewish population in antiquity, see M. Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135-425*, trans. by H. McKeating (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 33-34; for numbers of Christians, see R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), and F. Trombley, 'Overview: The Geographical Spread of Christianity', in CHC1, pp. 302-13.
4. This term describes the Jewish scriptures translated into Greek which were used by early Christians (sometimes referred to as the Septuagint or the LXX).

while other Christian texts were written, copied and preserved.⁵ It has therefore fairly been said that ‘the earliest Christians . . . created a literary culture.’⁶

A number of texts extant from the mid-second century onwards, commonly referred to as apologetic, mark a new stage in Christian literature. They were, at least ostensibly, addressed to Graeco-Roman⁷ audiences; whether these were their real audiences will be considered below. At least some of their authors were converts to Christianity who had received a Graeco-Roman literary education. A striking feature of some of these texts is the extent to which they refer to the Jewish scriptures⁸ and it is not immediately obvious why this should be so. In debates with Jews, Christian writers, understandably, discussed the Jewish scriptures; both parties were familiar with the texts concerned and how they should be interpreted was part of the dialogue between them.⁹ The position was not the same when the Christian gaze moved from the Jewish to the broader Graeco-Roman world. For, if knowledge of the Jewish scriptures did not extend beyond Jewish communities before the advent of Christianity – an assumption which will be tested below – it is reasonable to ask why a Christian apologist in debate with non-Jewish non-Christians would refer to these texts so extensively.¹⁰

The Greek Apologists

Apologetic works either promote Christianity to non-Jewish non-Christians or defend it against criticism from them. Such a text cannot stand alone since it must form part of a dialogue between a

5. E.g. B.D. Ehrman, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, LCL 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
6. M.M. Mitchell, ‘The Emergence of the Written Record’, in CHC1, pp. 177-94, 191.
7. The term ‘Graeco-Roman’ is used throughout to describe the people and culture of the Roman Empire in the second century CE (excluding Jews and Christians) and denoting, somewhat imprecisely, the mainstream culture of the time. It can be criticised on grounds of accuracy – Jews and Christians may also be described as Graeco-Romans – but is preferred to the term ‘pagans’ which has too many extraneous connotations.
8. Noted in J. Carleton Paget, ‘The Interpretation of the Bible in the Second Century’, in NCHB1, pp. 549-83, 562, but not pursued further.
9. J.M. Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1996), pp. 280-81.
10. E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols (London: Dent, 1910), 1, p. 498, asserted long ago that such an argument would be ineffective: ‘But this mode of persuasion loses much of its weight and influence when it is addressed to those who neither understand nor respect the Mosaic dispensation.’

Christian writer and a person or persons located outside the Christian community, even if there were no other written elements in the dialogue, or if whatever did exist does not survive. The emphasis here is on the arguments put forward in apologetic texts, so it is the contents of the works and the intentions behind them (so far as they can be captured) that are important, rather than the form in which a text is framed and the identity of the addressee(s) named in it.

Scholars have debated how the term ‘apologetic’ should be used, which works should be included within its scope and which authors should be referred to as apologists. They have reached different conclusions. The earliest apologetic works of which notice survives, those by Quadratus and Aristides, were addressed to the Emperor Hadrian on behalf of Christians.¹¹ Later works were also addressed to the emperor, notably, Justin Martyr’s *Apologies*, and the term ‘apologetic’ can be restricted to petitions on behalf of Christians addressed to emperors or others in authority. Thus, Parvis defines apologetic texts as works ‘that address those with the power to decide policy concerning the execution of Christians, at either an empire-wide or a local level’.¹² She restricts the term to a series of texts beginning with Justin Martyr and ending with Tertullian, excluding, for example, works by Tatian and Theophilus of Antioch which are not addressed to figures in authority. In contrast with this attention to the *form* of a text, however, other scholars emphasise the *intentions* of the authors. Norris, for instance, while recognising the genesis of second-century Christian apologetics in petitions to the Emperor, favours a broader definition. He describes the apologists as ‘a series of authors who in the course of the second century composed and circulated addresses and pleas . . . to emperors and others in public authority on behalf of their fellow Christians’¹³ but goes on to point out that: ‘apology in this narrow sense might, of course, pass over into direct refutation of critics of Christianity or attempts to establish the superiority of the Christian faith.’¹⁴

Similar sentiments are found in works by Grant and Young, both echoing the emphasis on argument and intention. Thus, Grant describes the apologist as a writer located within a minority group

11. R.M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (London: SCM Press, 1988), pp. 35-39.

12. S. Parvis, ‘Justin Martyr and the Apologetic Tradition’, in S. Parvis and P. Foster, eds, *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), pp. 115-27, 117.

13. R.A. Norris Jr, ‘The Apologists’, in F.M. Young, L. Ayres and A. Louth, eds, *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 36-44, 36.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

seeking to interpret the culture of that group to wider society¹⁵ and includes within his *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* all Greek Christian writings of the period addressed to non-Christian non-Jewish audiences.¹⁶ Young's survey covers a similarly wide range of texts, her definition being that: "apology" is . . . the end or purpose of a speech, particularly a speech for the defence in court, and then more loosely a defence or excuse offered in a less precise context or genre'.¹⁷ The approach adopted here reflects the broad descriptions of apologetic offered by these two scholars.

Apologetic Writings and Their Audiences

Who the apologists' audiences were is a difficult issue which has been much discussed, although it has never been clearly resolved. Arguably, however, it is unnecessary to reach a definitive conclusion for the purposes of this book, since the main concerns here are with the contents of the apologetic texts and the arguments they contain. Each text can therefore be examined as a repository of arguments which have been framed for the purposes of dialogue between Christians and non-Christians whatever the precise context in which it was written.

The precise contexts in which the apologetic texts were written are unknown. The form in which these works are couched is that they address named audiences outside Jewish and Christian communities and that they refer to questions posed and objections raised by the non-Christian addressees. Texts appear to assume some prior knowledge of the matters under discussion and to be part of an ongoing debate; issues are introduced without background explanation and the audience is presented as having at least a degree of prior knowledge of Christianity. Some commentators have been inclined to treat apologetic works at face value: Daniélou, for instance, describes them as 'the missionary literature of the second century, the presentation of the Gospel to the pagan world', contrasting them with internally-directed works of 'catechetical literature' aimed at 'expounding the faith to converts'.¹⁸ A

15. Grant, *Greek Apologists*, p. 9.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

17. F.M. Young, 'Greek Apologists of the Second Century', in M.J. Edwards, M.R. Goodman, S.R.F. Price and C. Rowland, eds, *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 81-104, 91.

18. J. Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. by J.A. Baker (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), p. 9.

similar view is espoused by Grant, who argues that: ‘apologists wrote for non-Christian groups or individuals to tell outsiders about Christian truth.’¹⁹

The form of a text in the ancient world could, however, merely be the frame in which an author presents his material²⁰ and it is possible that, despite appearances, the audiences for apologetic works were actually to be found among Christians. The apologists make frequent use of techniques of literary artifice that were part of the rhetorical discourse of the time and the putative addressees could quite plausibly not be the real audiences.²¹ Thus, some scholars have been inclined to treat the texts not so much as part of actual dialogues between Christians and Graeco-Romans, but rather as works that were in practice read wholly (or overwhelmingly) by Christians.²² Sceptical positions of this kind reflect the terms of a similar debate on writings of the Hellenistic-Jewish period²³ and particularly the contribution of Tcherikover. In a widely-quoted article he argued that, although such literature was externally-directed apologetic in form, it was not, in fact, part of a dialogue between Jews and non-Jews but was written predominantly, if not exclusively, for – and read by – internal Jewish audiences.²⁴

Even if, in spite of these arguments, apologetic works were aimed at non-Christians, it does not necessarily follow that they ever reached, or, *a fortiori*, significantly influenced, their intended audiences. As the editors of the 1999 collection, *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* put it: ‘matter and style ensured that the apologists would not have been much read outside the Church.’²⁵ No reference to specific Christian apologetic texts is found in surviving non-Christian literature of the period, although this is an argument from silence, and the low rate of textual survival,

19. Grant, *Greek Apologists*, p. 11.

20. A good example is pseudonymous letter collections, see P.A. Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions: The Letter in Greek Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 193-233.

21. M.J. Edwards, M.R. Goodman, S.R.F. Price and C. Rowland, ‘Introduction: Apologetics in the Roman World’, in Edwards et al., eds, *Apologetics*, pp. 1-13, 8-9. For apologists’ use of rhetorical discourse, see R.M. Grant, ‘Forms and Occasions of the Greek Apologists’, *SMSR*, vol. 52 (1986), pp. 213-26.

22. E.g. M.J. Edwards, ‘Apologetics’, in S.A. Harvey and D.G. Hunter, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 549-64, 550-51.

23. The term ‘Hellenistic’ refers to the period from the fourth century BCE to the second century CE.

24. V. Tcherikover, ‘Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered’, *Eos*, vol. 48 (1956), pp. 169-93.

25. Edwards et al., ‘Introduction’, in Edwards et al., eds, *Apologetics*, p. 9.

coupled with the Christian bias to what does survive, prompts caution in drawing firm conclusions. Some non-Christian authors of the second century display an awareness of arguments in favour of Christianity, notably Galen²⁶ and Celsus,²⁷ although their writings do not reveal the sources of their knowledge and do not refer to specific Christian works. Some modern scholars, notably, Andresen and, following him, Droge,²⁸ have argued that the late second-century, anti-Christian writer Celsus wrote in response to Justin's *Apologies* and must therefore have known the latter's work directly. The case is, however, based on perceived similarities in the arguments discussed by Justin and Celsus, rather than on any close textual connections or references, leaving many scholars unconvinced.²⁹ Indeed, the most direct links between Justin and Celsus proposed by Andresen have been undermined very effectively by detailed critical scrutiny of the surviving texts.³⁰

To regard the apologists' audiences as necessarily *either* internal or external may, however, be to oversimplify. These works may have been intended for both Christian and non-Christian readerships, rather than exclusively for one or the other; or it may be that texts aimed primarily at external readerships were extensively read internally. Moreover, the

26. Galen's writings date from the mid- to late second century CE. He is best-known for his work on medicine, but he also had a strong interest in philosophical issues. A few references to Christianity found in the large quantity of his surviving *oeuvre* betray a curiosity about Christian apologetic arguments, see R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949). For Galen's *oeuvre*, see R.J. Hankinson, 'The Man and His Work', in R.J. Hankinson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Galen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 1-33.
27. Celsus was an anti-Christian writer on philosophical issues of whom very little is known. His work, *True Doctrine*, is normally dated to the late second century and survives in significant quantity because the Christian writer Origen composed a comprehensive refutation of it in the mid-third century – *Against Celsus* – which included extensive quotations from Celsus' work. However, while he certainly betrays considerable knowledge of Christian ideas, Celsus makes no references to specific apologetic works, see Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. by H. Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1953).
28. C. Andresen, *Logos und Nomos: Die Polemik des Kelsos wider das Christentum* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1955), pp. 345-72; A.J. Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989), pp. 76-77.
29. E.g. E.F. Osborn, *Justin Martyr* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1973), pp. 168-70.
30. G.T. Burke, 'Celsus and Justin: Carl Andresen revisited', *ZNW*, vol. 76 (1985), pp. 107-16.

boundaries between Christian and non-Christian were not necessarily clear,³¹ and target audiences could have been located somewhere on the border between the Christian and the non-Christian, among new or potential converts, or among existing Christians considering abandonment of their new faith. It is to readings of this kind that recent scholars, such as Nyström and Pretila, have been drawn.³²

Scholarly debates over the nature of the original audiences may, however, be less important than they initially appear to be. The subject matter of these apologetic works clearly lies in debates then current between Christians and non-Christians, since their authors would hardly have devoted their energies to discussing issues which were not live at the time. It is, however, quite possible that the apologists fashioned for use within their own communities texts which addressed concerns arising in externally-facing debates; so, even if their texts were written entirely for internal consumption, they were still concerned with issues of controversy between Christians and non-Christians, with how best to promote a Christian case to an external audience and how to respond to objections raised. Thus, even where uncertainty persists concerning the nature of its original audience, examination of the contents of a text and of the arguments it contains can still fruitfully be undertaken.

The term ‘audience’ can be used in a number of different senses and the discussion by Barclay, in the introduction to his translation of the Jewish writer Josephus’ apologetic work *Against Apion*, written at the end of the first century,³³ provides helpful clarification on the issue. He distinguishes three senses of the term ‘audience’: the declared audience, that is those who are addressed by the text; the implied audience, that is the ideal readers presupposed or ‘constructed’ by the text; and the intended audience, that is those whom the author hopes will read it. Barclay points out that, while the declared and implied audiences are ‘products’ of the text itself, determining who the intended audience is may involve drawing on evidence from outside the text – where this is available – and it is the most difficult audience to identify.³⁴ Applying

31. J.M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 98-146.

32. D.E. Nyström, *The Apology of Justin Martyr: Literary Strategies and the Defence of Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), pp. 19-66; N.W. Pretila, *Re-appropriating ‘Marvellous Fables’: Justin Martyr’s Strategic Retrieval of Myth in 1 Apology* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2014), pp. 25-32.

33. Text in Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, ed. by H. St J. Thackeray, LCL 186 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926); trans. in Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, by J.M.G. Barclay (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

34. Barclay, *Against Apion*, pp. xlv-li.

Barclay's categories to Christian apologetic texts, the declared audiences are the named Graeco-Roman addressees, while the implied audiences are to be found among educated Graeco-Romans more generally. The intended audiences are, however, not so straightforwardly defined; they may be found either among non-Christian Graeco-Romans or among members of Christian communities or, perhaps, among both.

Barclay's category of implied audience fits best with the approach to audiences for apologetic texts which is adopted here. What constitutes such an audience can therefore be determined from within the text itself. Audiences will, however, always be referred to here as if they are external to Christianity; this is primarily a matter of convenience, designed to avoid the convoluted phraseology that would be necessary to recognise at every turn the different possibilities for actual audiences which have been discussed here. It is also in line with the way the texts present themselves.

Apologetic Texts

This book does not try to deal with apologetic arguments as a whole but, specifically, with the use they make of the Jewish scriptures. 'Use' can take a number of forms and all of them will be found in different contexts in the works of the Greek apologists. First, there are direct quotations from the scriptural texts – which can be of varying lengths – that are included to support apologetic arguments and are often accompanied by explanations indicating how the texts should be read. Then, there are allusions to specific texts, some more and some less obvious, which again are employed to support the arguments being put forward. Finally, there are allusions which, in the course of an argument, refer to a literary tradition as a source rather than to a specific text. The terms used here to describe use of the scriptures should not be seen as precise definitions, however. In his *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* Hays categorises scriptural references by employing the terms 'quotation', 'allusion' and 'echo', although he also adds the wise cautionary note: 'These terms are approximate markers on the spectrum of intertextual linkage, moving from the most to the least explicit forms of reference.'³⁵

Of the Greek Christian apologetic texts which are extant from the second century three stand out because they are substantial in themselves and because they make extensive use of the Jewish scriptures: Justin Martyr's *First Apology*, Tatian's *Oratio ad Graecos* and the *Ad Autolycum*

35. R.B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), p. 10.

of Theophilus of Antioch.³⁶ Other texts (or what survives of them) are either too brief – such as the works of Apollinaris and Melito³⁷ – or, if more substantial, rule themselves out because they refer to the Jewish scriptures only very sparingly; thus, Aristides' *Apology*³⁸ and Athenagoras' *Legatio*,³⁹ both of which present arguments in favour of Christianity, but neither of them on the basis of Jewish scriptural references,⁴⁰ exclude themselves from consideration. Limiting examination to three texts enables issues to be examined in detail and allows comparisons and contrasts to be explored which enrich understanding of the texts, individually and collectively. The following three chapters do contain some discussion of the authors of the texts although, in reality, relatively little is known about them, particularly when compared with authors from later centuries. So, it is the texts themselves, surviving as they do more or less complete, rather than their authors, that are the focus of this book.

Apologetic works are read here as texts about texts and, more specifically, as Christian texts about Jewish scriptures. The apologists present portraits of Christianity which are constructs that may reflect reality, in whole or part, but that are also a representation of reality created by their authors, and it may be hard to see where reflection finishes and creation begins. The Jewish scriptures which these authors discuss, quote from and interpret to their audiences are a central feature of the 'reality' of Christianity which they describe, and, to some extent, create,⁴¹ so an appreciation of the way they portray the scriptures is important for a proper understanding of these works. How they present and make use of the scriptures is not predetermined; it is likely to vary

36. Bibliographical references to the texts are given in the relevant chapter.

37. Apollinaris is mentioned in Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, trans. by G.A. Williamson, rev. and ed. with a new introduction by A. Louth (London: Penguin, 1989) (*HE*), 4.27 and 5.5. Extracts from Melito are quoted in Eusebius, *HE* 4.26. Grant, *Greek Apologists*, pp. 83-99 discusses both authors.

38. *The Apology of Aristides on Behalf of the Christians*, ed. by J.R. Harris with an Appendix by J.A. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891).

39. Athenagoras, *Legatio and De Resurrectione*, ed. by W.R. Schoedel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

40. *Apology of Aristides*, ed. by Harris, pp. 82-84, in the Appendix by Robinson, he identifies a mere eight references to 'Scripture', only one of which is to the Jewish scriptures (2 Maccabees 7:28), the remainder being to New Testament texts. Twelve references to the Jewish scriptures are listed in Athenagoras, *Legatio*, p. 154.

41. For the role of texts in creating identities, see Lieu, *Christian Identity*, pp. 27-61.

according to the context in which an author is making his argument. So, similarities and differences in the texts' handling of the scriptures, and how these relate to the literary contexts from which the texts emerged, need to be explored.

The Apologists and the Jewish Scriptures

Given the centrality of the Jewish scriptures for this book, it is necessary to understand something of their nature and of the form in which they might have been available to Christian apologists. It is also important to appreciate the significance of describing them as scriptures.

The Jewish scriptures were the products of ancient Jewish communities, originally composed largely in Hebrew over an extended period of time.⁴² Texts came to be grouped as Torah,⁴³ Prophets and the much looser category called Writings and to be regarded by the Jews as authoritative scriptures. The processes by which this happened – and where the boundaries lay, around and between the different groupings of texts – are recognised by scholars as complex and controversial issues.⁴⁴ There were also texts, now commonly referred to as 'apocryphal', because they were ultimately excluded from some later biblical canons,⁴⁵ which may also be included under the umbrella heading of Jewish scriptures.

The Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek, probably by the Jews themselves, during, or after, the third century BCE and probably over several centuries.⁴⁶ It is these Greek texts, circulating

42. Recent summaries of the issues, with references to some of the extensive literature, are E. Ulrich, 'The Old Testament Text and its Transmission', and J. Schaper, 'The Literary History of the Hebrew Bible', in NCHB1, pp. 83-104 and 105-44, respectively.

43. 'Law' is a common translation for Torah, although some scholars prefer 'Teaching', see B.M. Metzger and M.D. Coogan, eds, *The Oxford Guide to Ideas and Issues of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 493.

44. For a recent summary of the scholarly debates, with copious references to the literature, see J. Barton, 'The Old Testament Canons', in NCHB1, pp. 145-64.

45. J.J. Collins, 'The "Apocryphal" Old Testament', in NCHB1, pp. 165-89.

46. There is a large literature on the origin and development of the Jewish scriptures in Greek. General works containing extensive references to the scholarship are: G. Dorival, M. Harl and O. Munnich, *La Bible grecque des Septante: Du Judaïsme hellénistique au Christianisme ancien* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1988); N. Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible*, trans. by W.G.E. Watson (Leiden: Brill, 2000); K.H. Jobes and M. Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000); and J.M. Dines, *The Septuagint* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2004). For the broader cultural role of the Septuagint in ancient Judaism, see T.

among Hellenistic-Jewish communities, which were familiar to early Christians⁴⁷ and which are referred to as the Jewish scriptures. They are sometimes called the Septuagint, a term originally applied only to the Greek translation of the Torah,⁴⁸ although commonly used in modern literature to refer to Greek translations of the Hebrew scriptures more generally.⁴⁹ The term 'Septuagint' is helpful in distinguishing that set of translations from other renderings into Greek undertaken from the second century CE onwards, such as those of 'the Three', which were used by Jews (generally) rather than Christians.⁵⁰ The Jewish scriptures in Greek were the core texts of Hellenistic-Jewish culture; they were regarded as authoritative by Jews, as is evident from surviving Hellenistic-Jewish literary works from the second century BCE to the first century CE, such as the *Letter of Aristeas*⁵¹ and the works of Philo⁵² and Josephus.⁵³ The term 'Jewish scriptures' is imprecise, however, and

Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

47. Considered in literature on the development of the 'Christian Bible', e.g. M. Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon*, trans. by M.E. Biddle (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2002). For a perspective from a scholar of Judaism, see Rajak, *Translation*, pp. 278-313.
48. The earliest surviving version of the so-called 'legend of the Septuagint', in the *Letter of Aristeas*, identifies seventy-two translators (later versions of the legend amended the number to seventy – hence, Septuagint) and refers only to the translation of the Torah, see *Aristeas to Philocrates: Letter of Aristeas*, ed. and trans. by M. Hadas (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1951), and A. Wasserstein and D.J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint from Classical Antiquity to Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
49. As is shown by the titles of some of the works on the Greek Jewish scriptures noted above, see Rajak, *Translation*, pp. 14-16.
50. The relationship between the translations of 'the Three', Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion, and the Septuagint is discussed in Jobes and Silva, *Invitation*, pp. 37-43, Fernández Marcos, *Septuagint*, pp. 109-54 and Rajak, *Translation*, pp. 290-313.
51. *Aristeas* is discussed below. The text contains lavish praise of the scriptures, e.g. on the part of the Egyptian King, see *Aristeas*, paras. 312-20.
52. Seen generally in the respectful way in which Philo approaches the Greek scriptures in his various commentaries (J.R. Royse, 'The Works of Philo', in A. Kamesar, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009] pp. 32-64) and specifically in his account of the legend of the Septuagint; Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, ed. by F.H. Colson, LCL 289, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 2, 25-44.
53. Seen in the way Josephus retells the scriptural narrative in his *Jewish Antiquities*, ed. by H. St J. Thackeray, R. Marcus and L.H. Feldman, LCL, 9 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930-1965), and in his comments on the scriptures in *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay, 1.37-42.

should not be taken to indicate that there was necessarily a defined set of texts grouped into a collection whose make-up was clearly established by the second century CE.⁵⁴

The earliest Christians were, of course, Jews and invoking the scriptures inherited from Judaism was a significant feature of early Christian texts. This is seen in different ways in New Testament texts – in the canonical gospels, the letters of Paul and in Revelation – and, in acknowledgment of this, study of ‘the Old Testament in the New Testament’ is a recognised area of scholarship.⁵⁵ The significance of the Jewish scriptures is also evident in other first- and second-century Christian texts, such as those written by the authors known as the Apostolic Fathers.⁵⁶

The importance of the scriptures for Christians was in large measure associated with the promotion of Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah. Their distinctly Christian interpretations of the scriptures differed from, and, indeed, placed them in conflict with, those Jews who retained an allegiance to the traditions of Judaism. In the second century the Jewish scriptures have thus been described as being *inter alia* ‘a tool in polemical encounters with Jews’⁵⁷ in the hands of Christian writers. A notable example is the *Epistle of Barnabas* which argues forcefully in favour of Christian and against traditional Jewish interpretations of the scriptures.⁵⁸ Use of these texts was therefore not something new in the apologists’ writings; what was novel was reference to them in texts addressed, ostensibly at least, to audiences outside Christianity or Judaism.

Christian authors of the second century did not necessarily have access to complete texts of the Jewish scriptures and material may have reached them through extracts, summaries, or perhaps orally, or possibly through quotations and references in the writings of others. Written texts were scarce in the ancient world; ‘publication’ was only achieved by manual copying⁵⁹ and the Jewish scriptures represented a large corpus

54. L.M. McDonald, ‘Canon’, in J.W. Rogerson and J.M. Lieu, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 777-809; and M.W. Holmes, ‘The Biblical Canon’, in Harvey and Hunter, eds, *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, pp. 406-26.

55. Examples of the extensive literature are: C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1952); and S. Moyise, *Evoking Scripture: Seeing the Old Testament in the New* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2008).

56. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

57. Carleton Paget, ‘Interpretation of the Bible’, p. 549.

58. J. Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1994), pp. 69-70.

59. H.Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early*

of texts. Indeed, scholars recognise that handbooks and collections of extracts were forms in which material from literary and philosophical works was transmitted⁶⁰ and there is evidence that among Jews ideas and texts from the Jewish scriptures were accessed in the form of extracts or summaries.⁶¹ Such practices influenced emerging Christianity and the theory that *testimonia*, or collections of prophetic proof-texts from scripture, were in circulation in early Christian communities has gained considerable currency. This was initially prompted by the work of Dodd⁶² and then developed by other scholars; Albl has provided a review of this scholarly field.⁶³ The most notable application of the *testimonia* thesis to the second century is Skarsaune's work on the sources used by Justin, which shows how his scriptural quotations were derived from more than one distinct testimonial tradition.⁶⁴

Scripture

The term 'scripture' has been used up to now in the phrase 'Jewish scriptures' without explanatory comment. It is a modern term, and a term of convenience, which is useful in the current context, although its meaning requires clarification.⁶⁵ In the context of the debate on the development of the biblical canon Ulrich⁶⁶ has provided the following helpful definition: 'A book of scripture is a sacred authoritative work

Christian Texts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

60. H. Chadwick, 'Florilegium', in RAC, 7, pp. 1131-43, and M.C. Albl, '*And Scripture Cannot Be Broken: The Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimonia Collections*' (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 73-81.
61. Albl, '*And Scripture Cannot Be Broken*', pp. 81-93. For Qumran evidence, see G.J. Brooke, 'Thematic Commentaries on Prophetic Scriptures', in M. Henze, ed., *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 134-57.
62. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, especially pp. 28-110.
63. Albl, '*And Scripture Cannot Be Broken*', pp. 7-69 for a literature review and pp. 97-158 for Christian *testimonia* collections. A note of caution is, however, struck in Carleton Paget, 'Interpretation of the Bible', p. 556: 'In the absence of unambiguous evidence for the existence of testimony books, certitude about their existence is impossible.'
64. O. Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), pp. 139-242.
65. This is not always provided in the literature. The chapter entitled 'The Uses of Scripture in Hellenistic Judaism' in Rajak, *Translation*, pp. 210-38, uses the term 'scripture' without discussing what it means.
66. E. Ulrich, 'The Notion and Definition of Canon', in L.M. McDonald and J.A. Sanders, eds, *The Canon Debate* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), pp. 21-35.

believed to have God as its ultimate author, which the community, as a group and individually, recognizes and accepts as determinative for its belief and practice for all time and in all geographical areas.⁶⁷

This is quite a precise definition, which views scripture as necessarily determinative for belief and practice, not simply as inspired (and inspirational) text. Use of the word 'authoritative', however, begs the question as to what that term means; again, Ulrich provides a definition: 'An authoritative work is a writing which a group, secular or religious, recognizes and accepts as determinative for its conduct, and as of a higher order than can be overridden by the power or will of the group or any member.'⁶⁸

Once more the idea of a text being determinative for conduct is present, and it is striking that both definitions stress what a group or community 'recognizes and accepts'. Thus, there is not something inherent in a text which qualifies it as scripture; what is critical is the attitude taken towards it and how it is viewed and treated by those who possess or use it.

These definitions fit well the texts sacred to the Jews and the term 'Jewish scriptures' is therefore appropriately applied to them. It is worth noting, however, that the Graeco-Roman literary tradition did not have an analogous set of sacred texts fitting the definition of scripture employed here.⁶⁹ The Homeric epics have sometimes been seen as a parallel for the Jewish scriptures, but the comparison is a misleading one. Finkelberg and Stroumsa draw a helpful distinction between literary and religious canons, placing the works of Homer in the first category and the Jewish scriptures in the second.⁷⁰ In a further work Finkelberg⁷¹ has developed the concept of the 'foundational text' which she defines as having three

67. Ibid., p. 29.

68. Ibid.

69. There were, of course, religious texts outside the Jewish tradition, but neither the Egyptian priestly records referred to by Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, ed. by C.H. Oldfather, LCL, 12 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933-67), 1, 69.7, nor the Roman *Books of the Pontifices* referred to in ancient sources (J.A. North, 'The Books of the *Pontifices*', in C. Moatti, ed., *La mémoire perdue: recherches sur l'administration romaine* [Rome: École Française de Rome, 1998], pp. 45-63) are analogous to the Jewish sacred texts.

70. M. Finkelberg and G.G. Stroumsa, 'Introduction: Before the Western Canon', in M. Finkelberg and G.G. Stroumsa, eds, *Homer, the Bible and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 1-8.

71. M. Finkelberg, 'Canonising and Decanonising Homer: Reception of the Homeric Poems in Antiquity and Modernity', in M.R. Niehoff, ed., *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters* (Brill, Leiden 2012), pp. 15-28.

criteria: that it occupies the central place in education; that it is the focus of exegetical activity aimed at defending it from any form of criticism; and that it should be the vehicle by which the identity of the community to which it belongs is articulated.⁷² She claims that both Homer and the Bible meet these criteria and that both should therefore be seen as foundational texts. The standard for scripture set out above is, however, much more exacting than the one Finkelberg sets for her ‘foundational text’; it includes the notions that a text is ‘believed to have God as its ultimate author’ and that it is recognised and accepted ‘as determinative for its belief and practice for all time’. These features are characteristic of the Jewish scriptures but not the Homeric epics; so, while both texts may be described as foundational, the latter cannot be described as scripture.

The Jewish Scriptures and the Graeco-Roman World

It has been the implication so far that non-Christian non-Jews were not familiar with the Jewish scriptures already and that the apologists brought these texts to their attention for the first time. This assumption needs to be tested, however, and there are a number of ways of doing this. First, the question can be asked whether Judaism was a proselytising religion; if it was, then the scriptures, which were central to Judaism, would doubtless have featured in any dialogues with non-Jews that aimed to attract converts. Second, Hellenistic-Jewish literature can be explored to see whether it shows Jewish writers actively promoting their scriptures to non-Jewish audiences. Third, Graeco-Roman writings can be examined to establish whether their authors reveal knowledge or awareness of the Jewish scriptures. Analysis of these three strands of evidence will show that the extent to which the apologists’ Graeco-Roman audiences were familiar with the Jewish scriptures before the advent of Christianity was at best very limited.

Alexander the Great’s conquests in the fourth century BCE provided the impetus to accelerate the movement of Jews outside Palestine and encourage the growth of diaspora Jewish communities in Greek cities of the Eastern Mediterranean.⁷³ This brought Jews into close proximity with non-Jews and, although the extent to which they integrated or remained separate has been debated,⁷⁴ opportunities clearly existed for

72. Ibid., p. 16.

73. J.M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996).

74. Analysed by Barclay in *ibid.*, pp. 92–102, in terms of assimilation, acculturation and accommodation.

proselytising activity. Some scholars, from Harnack onwards, have argued that such activity was significant and, indeed, successful.⁷⁵ Studies by McKnight⁷⁶ and Goodman⁷⁷ have, however, concluded (independently) that Jewish missionary activity was not of great significance in the ancient world. For both scholars, the argument is essentially the same: that the evidence is simply insufficient to support the case. They acknowledge that Jews may have been receptive to proselytes and that there are examples of non-Jews becoming sympathisers towards, or even converts to, Judaism; but they both regard such evidence as limited and insufficient to support the contention that missionary activity was widespread; and their conclusions have been endorsed in another, more recent, work by Riesner.⁷⁸ Other scholars, notably, Bird⁷⁹ and, especially, Carleton Paget,⁸⁰ have supplied something of a corrective in suggesting that missionary activity was perhaps a more significant phenomenon than McKnight and Goodman allowed for. Importantly, however, this has not led them to contend that any such missionary activity provided a route by which the Jewish scriptures became well known outside Jewish circles to any significant extent, and that is the critical point at issue here.⁸¹

75. A. Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. by J. Moffat, 2 vols (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904-05), 1, pp. 1-18; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC-AD 135)*, Vol. 3.i, ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Goodman, new English rev. version (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), pp. 150-76; more recently, L.H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 288-382.
76. S. McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).
77. M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytising in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
78. R. Riesner, 'A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission?', in J. Ådna and H. Kvalbein, *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), pp. 211-50.
79. M.L. Bird, *Crossing Land and Sea: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010).
80. J. Carleton Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), pp. 149-83.
81. That Judaism could embrace a 'universalist' outlook has been well argued by T.L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), in which universalism is identified with four factors: a spectrum of sympathisers, converts, ethical monotheism and participants in eschatological redemption. Donaldson is, however, clear that universalism does not necessarily entail proselytism.

Surviving Hellenistic-Jewish literature provides some evidence of Jewish history and culture being promoted to external audiences. This did not entail bringing the scriptures to their attention to any marked extent, however, and where the externally apologetic impetus is clearest – with Josephus – there is no apparent desire to promote the actual texts of the scriptures to non-Jews.

The most substantial item of Hellenistic-Jewish literature, the Septuagint translation, made it possible for Greek-speaking non-Jews to read the Jewish scriptures, at least if they were able to gain access to it. The text itself provides scant clues as to why translation from Hebrew into Greek was undertaken. There is one tantalising reference in the Prologue to Sirach, at a point where the author is discussing translation and says: ‘it is necessary that . . . those who love learning be capable of service to outsiders, both when they speak and when they write.’⁸² This could be taken to indicate that translation into Greek was, at least in part, undertaken for the benefit of those outside Jewish communities, although the reference is ambiguous and far from conclusive. *The Letter of Aristeas* which is the earliest surviving text to contain a version of the so-called ‘legend of the Septuagint’ was probably written in the second century BCE.⁸³ It describes how the translation project was initiated by Ptolemy of Egypt in the third century BCE so that a copy of the Greek version could be deposited in the famous Library at Alexandria, where it would be available for non-Jews to read.⁸⁴ It thus provides evidence of a tradition – clearly extant in the ancient world – that the Septuagint was regarded from its inception as performing an apologetic function. There are obviously fictional elements to *Aristeas*⁸⁵ and some elements of its narrative do not appear very credible.⁸⁶ The whole account is not without historical value, however, for it appears to preserve a tradition of early interest in the translation of the Jewish scriptures into Greek on the part of the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt. Some scholars have treated the essence of the story as quite plausible, not least because they have found

82. *NETS*, Sirach, Prologue, 5.

83. Dating can only be tentative; scholars place the text somewhere in the second century BCE. For discussion of the debate, see Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 3.i, pp. 677-84.

84. *Aristeas*, paras. 38 and 317.

85. The author presents himself as a Greek royal emissary, although modern scholars are unanimous in the view that he was an Alexandrian Jew. The arguments are summarised in *Aristeas*, Introduction, pp. 3-9.

86. E.g. the lengthy account of the philosophical question-and-answer sessions involving Ptolemy and the Jewish scholars and the detailed description of the gifts Ptolemy sent to Jerusalem, see *Aristeas*, paras. 182-300 and 51-82.

it difficult to conceive that such a large-scale literary enterprise could have been carried through by Alexandrian Jews without royal support.⁸⁷ With or without such assistance, however, the Septuagint translation has tended to be regarded by modern scholarship as an initiative of the Jewish community of Alexandria itself, carried out not to support proselytising activity, but for the benefit of Greek-speaking Jews themselves.⁸⁸

In addition to the Septuagint, fragments of Hellenistic-Jewish literature survive in the works of later Christian authors. These fragments are thought to date from between the third and first century BCE and to emanate from Alexandria,⁸⁹ although their fragmentary nature means that the original works cannot be judged as whole entities. As they are, however, these texts do not constitute strong evidence that their authors were promoting the scriptures to non-Jews. Their contents do include material clearly derived from the Jewish scriptures⁹⁰ – sometimes with additions to, and sometimes with quite marked divergences from, the scriptural accounts – but the surviving fragments at least do not quote from the scriptures or even refer to them as sources.

These works are couched in Hellenistic-Greek literary forms⁹¹ but diaspora Jewish communities were extensively Hellenised, writing in Greek and with a culture strongly influenced by Greek traditions,⁹² so it

87. S. Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria: A Study in the Narrative of the Letter of Aristeas* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 136-39; Rajak, *Translation*, pp. 64-91.

88. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean*, pp. 424-26; Rajak, *Translation*, pp. 210-38.

89. *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, ed. by C.R. Holladay, 4 vols (Chico and Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1983-96), *Volume 1: Historians* (1983) and *Volume 2: Poets* (1989). Individual texts are discussed in: Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 3.i, pp. 513-66; P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 1, pp. 687-716; J.J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 29-63; E.S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 110-88.

90. For example, Demetrius the Chronographer deals predominantly with events in Genesis and Exodus, Eupolemus largely with Solomon and the building of the Temple and Artapanus mainly with material from Exodus, see Holladay, *Fragments 1*, pp. 51-243.

91. Chiefly historical forms, e.g. Eupolemus and Pseudo-Aristeas, see Holladay, *Fragments 1*, pp. 93-156 and 261-75, but also poetic drama, e.g. 'The Exodus' of Ezekiel the Tragedian, see *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, ed. by H. Jacobson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), and Hellenistic-Oriental romance, e.g. Artapanus, see Holladay, *Fragments 1*, pp. 189-243, and M. Braun, *History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1938), pp. 26-31.

92. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean*, pp. 88-124.

cannot be assumed that they were written with an intended audience in view which was among non-Jews as opposed to Hellenised Jews.⁹³ They are probably best seen as akin to the 'Rewritten Bible' texts which were a prominent feature of the literature of Second Temple Judaism and which were written for internal Jewish consumption.⁹⁴

The work of the first-century-CE Alexandrian Jew Philo⁹⁵ survives in impressive quantity, much of it comprising commentaries on the Pentateuch of various kinds written in Greek.⁹⁶ There is no external evidence to indicate who Philo's audience was, nor does he himself say for whom he was writing, so judgements on these issues must be made from evidence in the texts themselves.⁹⁷

Philo's surviving texts which relate to the scriptures are conventionally divided into three groups: the Allegorical Commentaries, the Questions and Answers and the Exposition of the Law. The Allegorical Commentaries appear to assume prior knowledge of the Pentateuch; they do not provide introductions to the texts but are written to deepen readers' understanding of their meaning. Scholars have therefore understandably concluded that these texts were written for already

93. The argument in the influential article by Tcherikover, 'Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered', has already been noted. G.E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) argues that Jewish historical literature is aimed at self-definition rather than external presentation.

94. G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies*, 2nd rev. edn (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 67-126; P.S. Alexander, 'Retelling the Old Testament', in D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson, eds, *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars*, SSF (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 99-121; D.A. Machiela, 'Once More, with Feeling: Rewritten Scripture in Ancient Judaism – A Review of Recent Developments', *JJS*, vol. 61 (2010), pp. 308-20.

95. For family and personal background, see D.R. Schwartz, 'Philo, His Family, and His Times', in A. Kamesar, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 9-31.

96. Roysse, 'The Works of Philo', pp. 32-64.

97. There is a large literature on Philo. The following are useful for the issues discussed here: E.R. Goodenough, 'Philo's Exposition of the Law and his *De Vita Mosi*', *HTR*, vol. 26 (1933), pp. 109-25; P. Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); E. Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism in Philo's Thought: Israel, Jews and Proselytes* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996); D.M. Hay, ed., *Both Literal and Allegorical: Studies in Philo of Alexandria's Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991); D.T. Runia, *Exegesis and Philosophy: Studies on Philo of Alexandria* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990); M. Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

believing Jews. The Questions and Answers – those on Genesis and Exodus survive – are simpler works, which explain the sacred texts in a question-and-answer form and at a much more basic level.⁹⁸ They appear best fitted to being an educative tool for use in a catechetical context within Jewish communities and this is how scholars have come to regard them.⁹⁹

The Exposition of the Law is the set of Philo's texts which could most plausibly be directed at an audience external to Judaism and could therefore be a vehicle for bringing the scriptures to the attention of a Graeco-Roman audience. Some Philo scholars have been drawn to the idea of such an audience, for instance, Goodenough¹⁰⁰ in the early twentieth century and Runia¹⁰¹ in the late twentieth century. More recently, Niehoff has also argued that the Exposition texts were aimed at a Graeco-Roman audience, although she has done this in the context of a biographical reading of Philo's *oeuvre* which remains extremely controversial among scholars.¹⁰² In one of the Exposition texts, the *Life of Moses*, Philo expresses the wish that the Jewish scriptures should become better known among non-Jews¹⁰³ and should indeed be accepted by them; he even suggests that the rationale for the Septuagint translation was to bring the scriptures to the attention of Greeks.¹⁰⁴ Comments of this kind are, however, very

98. Philo, *Questions on Genesis*, trans. by R. Marcus, LCL 380, and *Questions on Exodus*, trans. by R. Marcus, LCL 401 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).

99. M. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 152-68.

100. Goodenough, 'Philo's Exposition of the Law'.

101. Runia, *Exegesis and Philosophy*, argues for an audience of both Jews and non-Jews.

102. M. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018). She presents an 'intellectual biography' of Philo suggesting that his visit to Rome in 38-41 CE led to a shift in the audience at which his works were directed from internal Jewish to external Graeco-Roman, with the texts of the Exposition of the Law (which she argues were composed later in Philo's life) as externally-directed. The thesis is speculative, not least since Philo's texts do not provide any clear evidence for dating or even sequencing.

103. 'But, if a fresh start should be made to brighter prospects, how great a change for the better might we expect to see! I believe that each nation would abandon its peculiar ways, and, throwing overboard their ancestral customs, turn to honouring our laws alone': Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, 2, 44.

104. 'Then it was that some people, thinking it a shame that the laws should be found in one half only of the human race, the barbarians, and denied altogether to the Greeks, took steps to have them translated': Philo, *De Vita Mosis*, 2, 27.

rare in Philo's extant works and they are probably best read as the wishes and hopes of a fervent Jew, rather than as evidence of a serious apologetic intention.

In the *Life of Moses*, as indeed in other Exposition of the Law texts, Philo's practice is not to quote from the Jewish scriptures, as such, but rather to paraphrase or summarise them. Thus, even if Philo's audience was external to the Jewish community in Alexandria, little or no support is provided for the argument that he wishes to encourage non-Jews to become directly acquainted with the sacred texts. So, like the fragmentary text survivals discussed earlier, Philo's writings do not furnish evidence that the Jewish scriptures were becoming known outside Jewish communities.

The final Hellenistic-Jewish writer to consider is Josephus, who wrote as an exile in Rome towards the end of the first century CE¹⁰⁵ and who addresses a non-Jewish audience. In his *Jewish Antiquities*¹⁰⁶ Josephus re-presents scriptural material as a historical narrative in the Graeco-Roman manner, and the story of the Jewish people is told as a series of lives of great men whose deeds exhibit cardinal virtues.¹⁰⁷ He appears to want to acquaint his audience with the contents of the Jewish scriptures but not to expose them to the actual texts. He acknowledges his debt to the scriptures as the prime source for his history of the Jewish people.¹⁰⁸ However, the actual wording of his account is not close to that of the scriptures. He paraphrases and elaborates rather than translating.¹⁰⁹ In *Against Apion*, his apologetic work on behalf of Judaism, Josephus writes to demonstrate the antiquity of the Jewish people to a Graeco-Roman audience¹¹⁰ but he deliberately draws on evidence from non-Jewish historical sources rather than from the Jewish scriptures.¹¹¹

105. For Josephus generally, see T. Rajak, *Josephus, the Historian and His Society* (London: Duckworth, 1983).

106. Complete text in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, LCL. Translations and commentaries in: Flavius Josephus, *Judean Antiquities: Books 1-4*, trans. by L.H. Feldman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), *Judean Antiquities: Books 5-7* and *Judean Antiquities: Books 8-10*, trans. by C.T. Begg and P. Spilsbury (Leiden: Brill, 2005). See also L.H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), and L.H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

107. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, pp. 74-131. This literary form has been termed 'apologetic historiography': Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, pp. 226-310.

108. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.17.

109. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, pp. 14-73.

110. Barclay, *Against Apion*, pp. xlv-liii.

111. *Ibid.*, 1.73-218 discusses Egyptian, Phoenician, Chaldean and Greek evidence

Josephus wants to tell his audience about the scriptures and praises them lavishly¹¹² but he does not quote from them and refers to them only in general terms. He says that non-Jewish writers do not read the Jewish scriptures¹¹³ and he is neither encouraging nor expecting his audience to read them directly.

As well as writings from Hellenistic Judaism, the surviving corpus of non-Jewish Graeco-Roman literature can be examined for evidence as to whether the Septuagint was known outside Jewish circles before the advent of Christianity. Some of these works reveal a positive interest in the history and culture of the Jews. References to the Jewish scriptures are, however, isolated and fragmentary, and insufficient to demonstrate strong familiarity on the part of the Graeco-Roman authors. Indeed, it seems likely that exposure to the Jewish scriptures outside Jewish communities was only ever very partial. The volume of the scriptural texts is, of course, very large; the early chapters of Genesis feature significantly in the examples quoted below, so this material may have been better known than the rest. It is also possible that collections of extracts or summaries or paraphrases circulated rather than full texts and that, while the Jewish scriptures may have been the ultimate source for some Graeco-Roman writers, their contents were mediated through shorter or more simplified texts rather than being derived from the scriptures themselves.¹¹⁴

Surviving references to the Jews in Graeco-Roman literature have been conveniently collected by Stern.¹¹⁵ Notable examples are: Strabo's *Geography*, which devotes extensive space to the history, religion and political arrangements of the Jewish people;¹¹⁶ Alexander Polyhistor's *On the Jews*, which is known to have been a well-researched account of the Jewish people;¹¹⁷ Book IV of Plutarch's *Table Talk*, which discusses Jewish

for the history of the Jews, rather than Jewish, arguing that these will be credible to a Graeco-Roman readership whereas Jewish sources would not be (1.69-72).

112. Ibid., 1.37-42.

113. Ibid., 1.217.

114. Rajak, *Translation*, p. 269, says as much of Pseudo-Longinus (discussed further below): 'Longinus will have read, if not the Greek Bible, at least a form of rewritten Bible which, for my argument, is worth almost as much.'

115. *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, ed. by M. Stern, 3 vols (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974-84).

116. Ibid., 1, pp. 261-315. Strabo is dated by Stern from the 60s of the first century BCE to the 20s of the first century CE.

117. It only survives in fragments: *ibid.*, pp. 157-64. Alexander Polyhistor dates from the first century BCE.

religion;¹¹⁸ and Book V of Tacitus' *Histories*, which displays considerable curiosity about the history of the Jews, recounting no fewer than six different versions of their origins as a people.¹¹⁹ Graeco-Roman interest in the Jews coalesced around a number of themes: their antiquity and their foundation story in the Exodus from Egypt, the figure of Moses their founder and great leader,¹²⁰ certain customs peculiar to the Jews (abstention from pork, circumcision and Sabbath observance) and their severely aniconic monotheism.

The material on which Graeco-Roman writers drew must in large part have come ultimately from Jewish traditions but whether to any extent from the Jewish scriptures themselves is unclear. Reticence in Graeco-Roman texts about the sources being drawn on makes judgement difficult; the Jewish scriptures are not quoted or even cited as a source but references to them have been detected in some works. Cook, who has made a special study of the subject, argues that Nicolaus of Damascus 'undoubtedly had access to a LXX even if he did not know it well'¹²¹ and, somewhat more cautiously, that Apollonius Mollon¹²² and Pompeius Trogus¹²³ had access to scriptural traditions, if not actually to the Septuagint. Graeco-Roman writers sometimes mention the Jewish sacred books, showing at least that they were aware of their existence: Diodorus Siculus writes of the Jewish holy books 'containing the xenophobic laws' when relating the story of the profanation of the Temple by Antiochus IV,¹²⁴ Alexander Polyhistor refers to Jewish sacred books¹²⁵ and the poet Juvenal to Moses' 'secret tome'.¹²⁶ There are also a few allusions to the text of the Jewish scriptures in surviving Graeco-Roman works, in Ocellus Lucanus, Pseudo-Ecphantus and Pseudo-Longinus. The work of Ocellus Lucanus dates from the second century BCE and contains an

118. Ibid., pp. 545-76. Plutarch dates from the 40s of the first century CE to the 20s of the second century.

119. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 2, pp. 1-93.

120. The subject of a study in its own right: J.G. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972).

121. J.G. Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), p. 20.

122. Ibid., pp. 11-13; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1, pp. 148-56. Apollonius Mollon dates from the first century BCE.

123. Cook, *Interpretation*, pp. 23-25; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1, pp. 332-43. Pompeius Trogus dates from the end of the first century BCE to the beginning of the first century CE.

124. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1, p. 183; Cook, *Interpretation*, pp. 16-18.

125. Ibid., pp. 13-15; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1, p. 158.

126. Juvenal, *Satires*, ed. by S.M. Braund, LCL 91 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 14.102.

apparent reference to Genesis 1:28;¹²⁷ the quotation is not exact but the verbal similarity signals the connection to be a very plausible one (to Stern a ‘probable allusion’).¹²⁸ Two texts in Pseudo-Ecphantus, noted by Stern, also appear to exhibit semantic similarities – again not exact – with Genesis 2:7 and 1:26, respectively.¹²⁹ In *On the Sublime* by Pseudo-Longinus,¹³⁰ a reference to Genesis 1:3, 9 and 10, which is described as being from a work by ‘the lawgiver of the Jews,’¹³¹ that is, Moses, is much clearer. The introduction of this reference, with minimal explanation, suggests that the Genesis passage was familiar, not just to the author, but also to his readers; it is noteworthy not only that the reference is made, but that Moses is described as ‘no mean genius,’¹³² with his ideas being described in positive terms.

In a somewhat different category is the work already referred to of the anti-Christian polemicist, Celsus. His *True Doctrine* is important because it is the only anti-Christian work of any substance to survive from the second century. Extracts from it included in Origen’s *Against Celsus* – written to refute it – show that Celsus was well-informed about Christianity and had some knowledge of the contents of the Jewish scriptures, notably of parts of Genesis and Exodus.¹³³ There is, however, only one actual scriptural quotation in the extensive surviving extracts from *True Doctrine* and it therefore cannot be said with any certainty that Celsus had direct knowledge of the Jewish scriptures. Cook’s conclusion that his knowledge of the Jewish scriptures was ‘very spotty’¹³⁴ is well-judged. Like the Graeco-Roman authors already discussed, Celsus appears to have had some, albeit limited, familiarity with the contents of the Jewish scriptures; but this could easily have been acquired from intermediate sources and traditions, rather than from the texts themselves.

127. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1, pp. 131-33.

128. Ibid., p. 131. Cook, *Interpretation*, pp. 8-9, argues that it could be an allusion to the Septuagint but notes Dorival’s view that it might be verbal coincidence.

129. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 3, pp. 33-37. Dating of Pseudo-Ecphantus is uncertain, Stern suggesting ‘First to second centuries C.E.’? Cook, *Interpretation*, pp. 34-35, again acknowledges the possibility of verbal coincidences.

130. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1, pp. 361-65; ‘Longinus,’ *On the Sublime*, ed. by D.A. Russell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 11-12 (text) and 92-94 (commentary); Cook, *Interpretation*, pp. 32-34. The work is dated by Stern to the first century CE, albeit tentatively. The quotation from Genesis is not exact – it combines elements from three verses – but the reference is unmistakable.

131. ‘Longinus,’ *On the Sublime*, p. 93.

132. Ibid.

133. Cook, *Interpretation*, pp. 55-149.

134. Ibid., p. 57.

Scholars have varied in their overall assessments of the evidence from Graeco-Roman literature for their authors' familiarity with the Jewish scriptures before the advent of Christianity. Reference has already been made to the work of Tcherikover, who argued for a minimalist position: 'The fact, however, is that the translation of the Holy Scriptures into Greek made no impression whatever in the Greek world, since in the whole of Greek literature there is no indication that the Greeks read the Bible before the Christian period.'¹³⁵

Cook takes a much less negative view and, while acknowledging that the evidence is very limited, concludes with due caution that some pagan authors 'are aware of the LXX (or the Jewish books of laws) although extant quotations are sparse' and that others 'seem to be aware of the existence of the LXX'.¹³⁶ The most recent review of the evidence, by Rajak, is even more positive.¹³⁷ Of the Graeco-Roman texts discussed here, she refers only to those by Ocellus Lucanus and Pseudo-Longinus; she concludes that cultural contact between Jews and non-Jews was in fact considerably more extensive than has been generally supposed:

It would be absurd to claim the books of the Bible, in whatever language, were literature in which pagans without a special interest would be able to immerse themselves. . . . There were literate pagans, above all philosophers, who, quite simply, did have an interest sufficient to take them some distance into the Jewish writings. . . . They were able to do so because the books of the Bible were part of their world and were not an unknown entity.¹³⁸

The difference between Cook and Rajak is perhaps one of emphasis rather than substance. Both acknowledge the limited and fragmentary nature of the evidence. Nevertheless, they both conclude that *some* Graeco-Roman authors had *some* familiarity with the Jewish scriptures, Cook being the more cautious in his assessment, Rajak the more expansionist.

135. Tcherikover, 'Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered', p. 177.

136. Cook, *Interpretation*, p. 52.

137. Rajak, *Translation*, pp. 267-70. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, pp. 311-14, takes an even more optimistic view, arguing that the Septuagint positively *was* known to the Graeco-Roman world, but his suggestion that all the Greek and Roman authors who wrote about the Jews must have had direct access to the Septuagint strains credibility.

138. Rajak, *Translation*, p. 270.

The Scholarly Context

This review of the ancient literature suggests that the Jewish scriptures were probably very little known outside Jewish and Christian circles before the apologists wrote their texts. Before going on to explain how the apologists' works will be approached in this book, however, previous scholarship will be considered. Works on individual texts are discussed in the relevant chapter, so it is those which relate to more general themes that are reviewed here. Second-century apologetic writings have been the subject of much critical attention but surprisingly little of it has been devoted to the concerns addressed in this book. This may be because analyses of apologetic arguments are here brought together with discussion of approaches to biblical interpretation; previous scholarship has tended to address only one or other of these issues.

Scholarship on arguments in apologetic texts has, unsurprisingly, been concerned with the analysis of ideas, and frequently with placing them in a wider context. Themes that recur in the literature include efforts to identify material which can help either to chart the development of Christian theology¹³⁹ or to relate the contents of Christian writings to prevailing Greek philosophical ideas.¹⁴⁰ Other scholarly work which draws heavily on apologetic texts has been thematical in nature, exploring, for example, Christian doctrines of Creation¹⁴¹ or relations between Christians and Jews.¹⁴² These works examine ideas in apologetic texts but they do not, to any significant extent, consider the way the scriptures are employed in apologetic arguments.¹⁴³

Scholarly literature has also discussed second-century scriptural interpretation and done so extensively, with general surveys of the field

139. E.g. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 4th edn (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968); E.F. Osborn, *The Emergence of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

140. E.g. H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement and Origen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).

141. G. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought*, trans. by A.S. Worrall (London: T. & T. Clark, 1994).

142. Lieu, *Image and Reality*, pp. 155-97.

143. As is evident from general works on ancient Christian apologetics: M. Fiedrowicz, *Apologie im frühen Christentum: Die Kontroverse um den christlichen Wahrheitsanspruch in den ersten Jahrhunderten* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000); B. Pouderon and J. Doré, eds, *Les apologistes chrétiens et la culture grecque* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1998); M. Pellegrino, *Studi su l'antica apologetica* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1947).

by Grant and Tracy,¹⁴⁴ Simonetti¹⁴⁵ and Carleton Paget.¹⁴⁶ More specific studies have looked at individual authors or schools and what emerges strikingly is the variety in approaches that have been identified, with different strands of second-century Christianity approaching the Jewish scriptures very differently.¹⁴⁷ There is only space here to touch on the work of three second-century writers, Valentinus, Marcion and Irenaeus, to illustrate this. In the Valentinian *Gospel of Truth*,¹⁴⁸ the narrative of Genesis is merged with Gnostic myth in a way that ‘erases the line between text and commentary, as interpretation becomes new composition’;¹⁴⁹ Marcion’s approach to the Jewish scriptures has been characterised as treating them as ‘a primary evidential authority, although not a moral or spiritual one’;¹⁵⁰ while in the work of Irenaeus emphasis is placed on interpreting the scriptures in the light of the gospels proclaimed by the Apostles.¹⁵¹ These are clearly very different. The objective in this book is not, however, to present a further approach to scripture to set alongside them, but rather to show how the writers considered here approach the scriptures and to relate what they say to their apologetic context.

Where scholars have discussed the apologists’ use of the scriptures, they have tended to discuss specific textual issues, such as identifying the form of the scriptural texts to which the authors are referring, understanding how the individual texts cited are being interpreted, the nature of the sources for particular textual readings and how *testimonia* traditions are drawn on.¹⁵² What has tended to be ignored is the use

144. R.M. Grant and D. Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 2nd edn, rev. and enlarged (London: SCM Press, 1984), pp. 39-51.

145. M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, trans. by J.A. Hughes (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), pp. 1-33.

146. Carleton Paget, ‘Interpretation of the Bible’.

147. Modern scholarship emphasises the diversity to be found in the different Christian ‘schools’ in the second century: W.A. Löhr, ‘Das antike Christentum in zweiten Jahrhundert – neue Perspektiven seiner Erforschung’, *TLZ*, vol. 127 (2002), pp. 247-62.

148. ‘The Gospel of Truth’, ed. by E. Thomassen and M. Meyer, in M. Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), pp. 31-47: discussed in D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 145-70.

149. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, p. 128.

150. J.M. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 357.

151. J. Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 124-40.

152. These issues are discussed further in the chapters on individual authors.

made of the scriptures in apologetic arguments.¹⁵³ There are two brief exceptions to this, the first being an article by Horbury¹⁵⁴ which includes a section on the apologists' use of scripture.¹⁵⁵ The discussion is necessarily very short but Horbury does address the role of the scriptures in the arguments of apologetic texts directed towards the Graeco-Roman world and highlights some of the themes which will feature in this book: the perceived antiquity of the scriptures, their function as prophecy and the significance of the moral precepts they contain. The second work to note is a short article by Boccabello on the use Justin and Theophilus make of the Book of Zechariah,¹⁵⁶ in which he links references to texts from Zechariah with the apologetic intentions of authors interacting with Graeco-Roman audiences (or at least purporting to do so). He suggests, somewhat cautiously, that Christian writers could find the Jewish scriptures useful in providing support for their arguments in debates with non-Christians:

it is probably best to draw rather limited conclusions – the apologists saw Zechariah as useful in addressing issues which were clearly raised by the Christian interaction with paganism. This is true regardless of the extent to which these texts themselves represent just such an interaction. We can see perceived usefulness whether they are talking to pagans or merely talking to each other about pagans.¹⁵⁷

Looking more broadly at scholarship in the field, there are two significant and influential works, by Droge and Young, which in some measure bear on the subject matter of this book, even if the apologetic use of scripture is not precisely their concern. One merit of both of them is the emphasis they place on the Graeco-Roman context in which Christian apologists wrote and the way their works engage intensively with Graeco-Roman culture. They both present Christianity as being at once in dialogue but also in competition with the mainstream culture.

153. E.g. Grant and Tracy, *Short History*, pp. 39-51, discuss second-century biblical interpretation without reference to the apologists' use of scripture.

154. W. Horbury, 'Old Testament Interpretation in the Writings of the Church Fathers', in M.J. Mulder, ed., *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988), pp. 727-87.

155. *Ibid.*, pp. 740-44.

156. J.S. Boccabello, 'Why Would a Pagan Read Zechariah? Apologetics and Exegesis in the Second-Century Greek Apologists', in C. Tuckett, ed., *The Book of Zechariah and Its Influence* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 135-44.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

Droge's theme¹⁵⁸ is the development by second-century Christian apologists of a distinctive interpretation of the history of culture which emphasises the antiquity of the traditions inherited from the Jews. This is an important theme in second-century apologetic writings but, while Droge necessarily draws on the apologists' use of the scriptures as an important source for their arguments, he does not overtly discuss how they read and understand the scriptures as texts, which is the key concern in this book. Droge's contribution is, nevertheless, one of the essential building blocks for this work.

The overarching theme of Young's work,¹⁵⁹ which ranges across the whole patristic field from the first to the fifth century, is how Christian literary culture came to supersede that of the Graeco-Roman tradition, absorbing in the process many features of the culture it replaced. At the core of the new Christian culture were the scriptures, both Old and New Testament, the seminal texts around which Christian learning coalesced. Much of Young's work is concerned with the later patristic centuries but one section discusses the second century.¹⁶⁰ Her key theme is the 'battle of the literatures'¹⁶¹ or the way Christian writers promoted their scriptures as an alternative to challenge the dominance of the long-established Graeco-Roman literary tradition. This is, again, an important theme in second-century apologetic writings and highly relevant to the consideration here of the way the scriptures are used; Young's contribution therefore provides a second essential building block for this work.

Christian Apologists and the Graeco-Roman Literary Context

Previous scholarship, and particularly the work of Droge and Young, provides the background and context for this book which explores the part played by the Jewish scriptures in the literary strategies of three chosen texts. The approach taken here entails treating seriously and centrally the apologetic form and nature of these texts and reading them as they present themselves. More specifically, the focus is on two issues: the place of the Jewish scriptures in apologetic arguments and the portrait of the Jewish scriptures which emerges from those arguments. Each text presents itself as a dialogue between a Christian writer and

158. Droge, *Homer or Moses?*

159. F.M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

160. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-57.

161. *Ibid.*, p.57.

a non-Christian Graeco-Roman audience, so the relationship between texts and their audiences is critically important. Ideally, the texts would be examined in the context of the intellectual milieu from which they emerged, with each text viewed as one component in an exchange of ideas and arguments with other parties, rather in the way that a text from a later century would be examined in its 'argumentative context' when significantly more evidence is available.¹⁶² The specific contexts in which each of these apologetic texts was written and the nature of the audiences to which they were first addressed remain unknown, however, or at least matters of speculation. It is not now possible to access any of the other elements in the dialogues of which they may originally have formed a part, since any that did exist do not survive. The contents of the texts may or may not reflect discussions that actually took place and, while each text gives some account of arguments and criticisms levelled against the author and to which he is responding, this material is only available in the form in which he himself presents it, and so cannot be treated as a source that is independent of the writer of the text.¹⁶³

There are clearly dangers in reading texts without a knowledge of their actual contexts. Writing about seventeenth-century English political texts David Wootton puts the point well:

To read them in isolation, without attention to the views of their contemporaries, is to lose sight of the arguments they were trying to overcome and the causes they were trying to assist. It is comparable to listening to the prosecution or the defence in a criminal trial without hearing the other side's case: without some sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the opponent it is impossible to grasp why apparently promising lines of argument are never pursued, while at other times what seem to be trivial distinctions and secondary issues are subjected to lengthy examination.¹⁶⁴

162. Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 103-27, cited phrase on p. 116. The potential value for early Christian studies of the work of the so-called 'Cambridge School', and specifically that of Skinner, is highlighted in C. Marksches, *Christian Theology and Its Institutions in the Early Roman Empire: Prolegomena to a History of Early Christian Theology*, trans. by W. Coppins (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2015), pp. xiii-xiv.

163. This contrasts sharply with Origen's *Against Celsus* in which the arguments of Celsus are presented verbatim.

164. D. Wootton, *Divine Right and Democracy: An Anthology of Political Writing in Stuart England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 10.

Wootton here draws attention to some real difficulties which arise in the reading of apologetic texts. There are, however, ways of addressing them. For it is possible, despite the limitations, to examine second-century Christian apologetic works in a contemporary context and to see them against the background of the Graeco-Roman literary environment of the time but one that is conceived more generally. The apologists' textual strategies can be examined for the way they would have engaged with the concerns and interests of an audience educated in the Graeco-Roman literary culture of the second century, about which a considerable amount is known. Audiences are presented in these texts as having a measure of education, with references to literary works and to mythological and philosophical ideas from the Graeco-Roman tradition introduced without comment or explanation. Justin, Tatian and Theophilus were themselves all converts to Christianity who had received a Graeco-Roman education before their conversion. Thus, the authors and their implied audiences share a common Graeco-Roman cultural background and this provides the generalised argumentative context in which their engagement with each other can be examined.

The nature of Graeco-Roman literary culture is therefore all-important. Education in the Graeco-Roman world was highly structured and centred on the study of a corpus of classic texts,¹⁶⁵ with works written in Greek centuries before still being very much read and studied in the second century CE. From an early stage of its existence the Greek tradition categorised texts;¹⁶⁶ a basic distinction was drawn between poetry and prose,¹⁶⁷ with texts then being classified into a number of distinct forms including, most prominently, epic, comedy, tragedy, oratory, philosophy and history.¹⁶⁸ There was also a well-established tradition of literary criticism, involving the self-conscious examination

165. For discussion of the nature of ancient Graeco-Roman education: H.I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. by G. Lamb (London: Sheed & Ward, 1956); M.L. Clarke, *Higher Education in the Ancient World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971); T.J. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); H.G. Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World: Philosophers, Jews and Christians* (London: Routledge, 2000).

166. E.g. the comparison drawn between tragedy and epic in Aristotle's *Poetics*, see *Ancient Literary Criticism: The Principle Texts in New Translations*, ed. by D.A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 123-25.

167. See Aristotle's separate treatments of poetic and prose styles, the former in his *Poetics* and the latter in his *Rhetoric*, in *ibid.*, pp. 85-132 and 134-70.

168. D.A. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity*, 2nd edn (London: Duckworth, 1995), pp. 148-58.

of literature and the application of critical techniques to the study of classic texts. This tradition included both theoretical works, concerned with the classification of texts and with what made for good literature or a good literary style – notably, in the field of rhetoric¹⁶⁹ – and also works of practical criticism, including commentaries and other works which interpreted classic texts.¹⁷⁰

A pronounced bias in favour of the traditional and a high regard for what was ancient and long-established over what was novel and without precedent strongly influenced attitudes towards both ideas and works of literature.¹⁷¹ In Young's apt phrase: 'Nothing could be both new and true.'¹⁷² Moreover, a number of cultural developments occurred in the late Hellenistic period that were concerned in some way with looking back to the past. The first was a revival, and an intensification, of interest in the ancient founding texts of the Greek philosophical schools¹⁷³ and in their authors, most notably Plato and Aristotle,¹⁷⁴ together with an interest in the very earliest thinkers, those proponents of Ancient Wisdom who were believed to have pre-dated the emergence of the various philosophical schools.¹⁷⁵ The second was a burgeoning interest

169. See, generally, G.A. Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World 300 BC-AD 300* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), and, more specifically, R.N. Gaines, 'Roman Rhetorical Handbooks', in W. Dominik and J. Hall, eds, *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 163-80.

170. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity*, and Russell and Winterbottom, eds, *Ancient Literary Criticism*.

171. A.H. Armstrong, 'Pagan and Christian Traditionalism in the First Three Centuries A.D.', in E.A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica* (SP), vol. 15, no. 1 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984), pp. 414-31; G.R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of Its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

172. Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, p. 52.

173. M.A. Frede, 'Epilogue', in K. Algra, J. Barnes, J. Mansfeld and M. Schofield, eds, *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 771-97, 784-85 has been influential. See also G. Betegh, 'The Transmission of Ancient Wisdom: Texts, Doxographies, Libraries', in L.P. Gerson, ed., *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 25-38; M. Hatzimichali, 'The Texts of Plato and Aristotle in the First Century BC', in M. Schofield, ed., *Aristotle, Plato and Pythagoreanism in the First Century BC: New Directions for Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 1-27.

174. D. Sedley, 'Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco-Roman world', in J. Barnes and M. Griffin, eds, *Philosophia Togata: Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 97-119, refers to 'a virtually religious commitment to the authority of a founder figure' (p. 97).

175. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy*.

in primeval history, in the origins and early history of humankind, with sometimes lengthy works written which charted the history of human affairs from very earliest times.¹⁷⁶ The third was the literary and cultural phenomenon known as the Second Sophistic, which fostered a conscious referencing back to the literature of ancient Greece and spawned texts imitating the language and style of highly-esteemed classical Athenian literature.¹⁷⁷

Into this literary environment stepped the apologists introducing discussion of texts which, although translated into Greek, had their origins in an alien, barbarian culture outside the Graeco-Roman literary tradition. The strategies which the apologists adopted for presenting these texts in their engagement with audiences from a Graeco-Roman cultural background are at the core of this book. As well as analysis of the arguments deployed, other issues to be addressed include the nature and provenance of the scriptures, the source of their authority and the techniques used to interpret them. This book therefore enters the territory of literary criticism where it engages with questions such as the way in which admired literary works were discussed in the Graeco-Roman tradition and the critical approaches which were used to comment on and explain them.

To achieve their objectives the apologists created their own literary works. This book explores the forms and styles which they chose to employ to frame their material in various different ways and how these relate to the Graeco-Roman context in which their works were presented. It also considers how they used rhetorical and other strategies from the Graeco-Roman literary tradition to assist with making their arguments.

The apologists' writings feature two obvious protagonists, Christian and non-Christian, but there is also a third, namely the Jews, since it is their scriptures which are being promoted. The apologists present these texts as Christian. However, they know, and their audiences know, that the texts derive from the Jews who originally produced them, to

176. R. Mortley, *The Idea of Universal History from Hellenistic Philosophy to Early Christian Historiography* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996).

177. G. Anderson, *The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1993); S. Goldhill, ed., *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); T. Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). The relevance of the Second Sophistic for understanding early Christian literature is increasingly recognised, e.g. A.P. Johnson, 'Early Christianity and the Classical Tradition', in D.S. Richter and W.A. Johnson, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of the Second Sophistic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 625-38.

whom they are still sacred and who are still very much present in the Graeco-Roman world. The strategies the apologists adopt to position Christianity relative to Judaism in their dialogues with Graeco-Roman audiences therefore also form an important ingredient in the discussion.

The next three chapters examine in turn apologetic works by Justin Martyr, Tatian and Theophilus of Antioch. Discussion will show the part that the Jewish scriptures play in the writings of each and will identify similarities and differences. The final chapter will then draw out some concluding themes.

SAMPLE