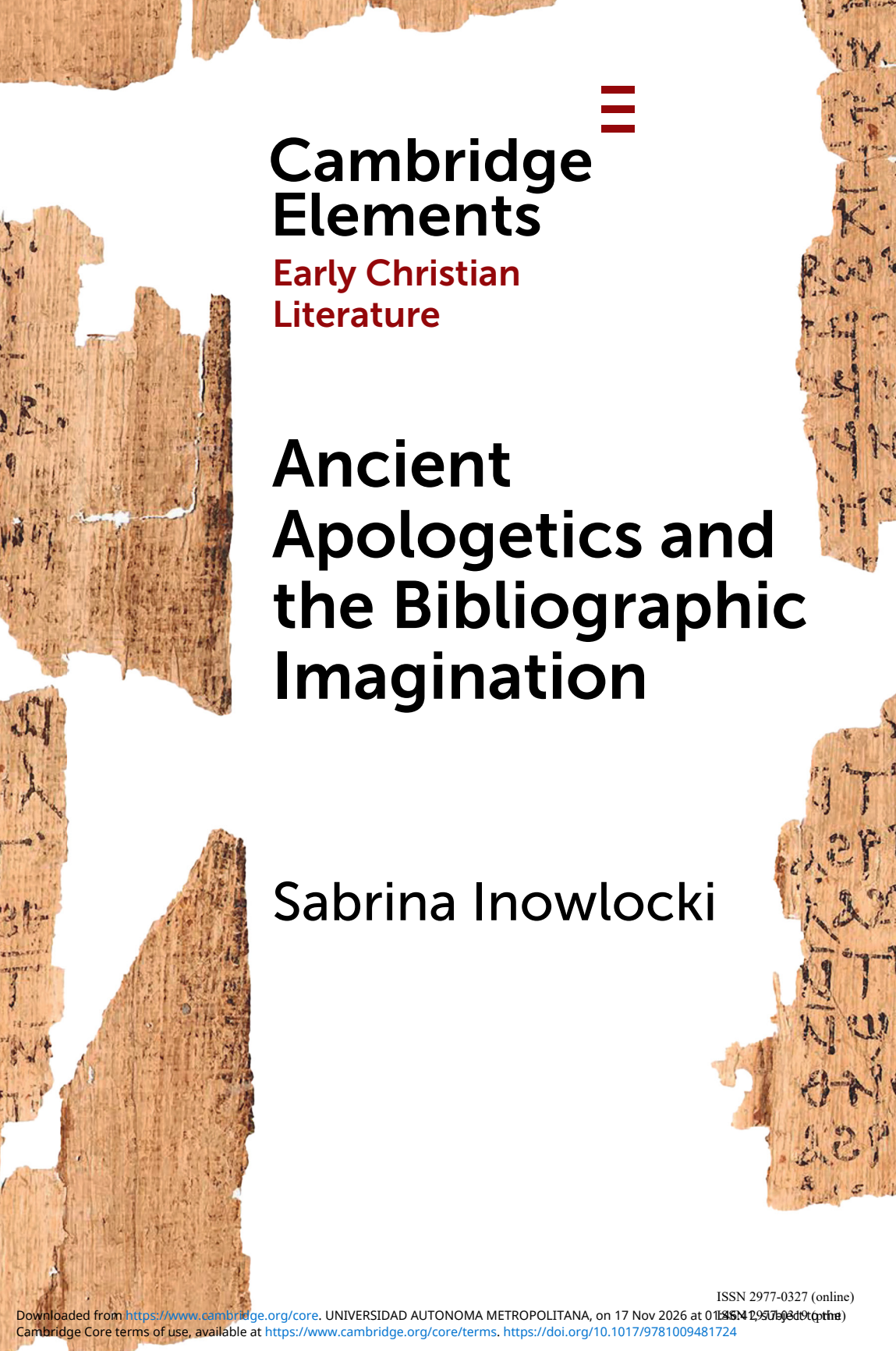


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Ancient Apologetics and the Bibliographic Imagination

Sabrina Inowlocki

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Abstract: Ancient apologetics is usually treated as a literary genre or a branch of early theology. This Element offers a different account. It argues that many Jewish and Christian texts conventionally labeled "apologetic" are better understood through a bibliographic and archival lens: They produce authority not only by defending doctrines, but by organizing books, constructing corpora, mobilizing archives, and regulating interpretation. Tracing a trajectory from the Letter of Aristeas to Jerome's De viris illustribus, this Element shows how citation, collection, cataloguing, and textual ordering made traditions appear authoritative. Examining Aristeas, Josephus, Tatian, Justin, Origen, Pamphilus, Eusebius, and Jerome, it argues that apologetics is best understood as a form of curatorial power through which ancient communities learned to think with books. This title is also available as open access on Cambridge Core.

Keywords: apologetics, early Christianity, bibliography, libraries, Hellenistic Judaism

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1 Introduction, Definitions, and Method

Apologetics after Genre: Why Bibliography Matters

What is "apologetics"? Enough studies have attempted to provide definitions, going back to the Greek etymology of the term *apologia*, which intertwines legal and philosophical defense, with Plato's *Apology of Socrates* as the starting point of a tradition that turned out quite successful in early Christianity.[1] Apologetics is also a branch of theology, which has occasionally made the term suspicious, because it blurs the line between confessional vindication and critical inquiry, importing into historical analysis a vocabulary shaped by theological self-description. For a historian, "apologetics" is therefore not a neutral category: It risks explaining texts by the later traditions that canonized them rather than by the cultural conditions in which they were produced. From the postcolonial angle that has reshaped the study of early Christianity and Judaism, the term can sound like the relic of an older scholarship, too ready to take "defense," "truth," or "Christian identity" as stable givens and too slow to register the asymmetries of power, the work of cultural translation, and the porous boundaries between Jews, Christians, and "Hellenes." In that sense, apologetics may seem a category best left in the archive of past historiography.

And yet this very discomfort is a reason to return to it. If "apologetics" names anything historically real, it is not a genre with fixed borders but, for many texts, a repertoire of practices, selection, excerpting, citation, reframing, comparison, and the construction of authoritative lineages, by which communities made themselves legible within imperial ecologies of knowledge. Precisely because the term is compromised, it forces us to ask better questions: Who is speaking, to whom, under what constraints, with what claims to learning, antiquity, and legitimacy and by what textual technologies are those claims stabilized? These operations are never purely formal. In many of the texts examined here, claims to truth, antiquity, and

[1] Important contributions include, after Geffcken, *Zwei griechische Apologeten*, 1–300; Edwards, Goodman, Price, and Rowland, eds., *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, 1–40; Fiedrowicz, *Apologie im frühen Christentum: Die Kontroverse um den christlichen Wahrheitsanspruch in den ersten Jahrhunderten*, 15–78; Fredouille, "L'apologétique chrétienne antique: métamorphoses d'un genre polymorphe," 201–216; Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, 1–25; Wlosok et al., *L'apologétique chrétienne gréco-latine à l'époque prénicénienne: Sept exposés suivis de discussions*, 1–30; Engberg, Jacobsen, and Ulrich, eds., *In Defence of Christianity: Early Christian Apologists*, 9–36; and Ulrich, Jacobsen, and Kahlos, eds., *Continuity and Discontinuity in Early Christian Apologetics*, 1–27.

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authority are negotiated through the status of Jewish scriptures, which are at once preserved, reclassified, and contested. The bibliographic and archival practices of ancient apologetics are therefore also implicated in larger processes of appropriation and displacement: they help construct Christianity as the legitimate heir to an older textual past, even as that claim often depends on supersessionist readings of Judaism and on the relocation of interpretive authority from Jews to Christians. In that sense, a Cambridge Element on ancient apologetics is justified not despite the category's problems, but because it can show why apologetics matters when treated as a historical operation rather than a theological badge.

In this framework, how to define "apologetics"? In early Christian studies, a minimalist definition has often presorted a heterogeneous body of second-century texts, many framed as petitions or addresses to emperors, into a putative genre of "Apologies." A broader view, however, must include Jewish and "Pagan" writings as well, dispersed across genres yet deploying recognizably apologetic strategies: defending a cause, positioning a community, and negotiating authority before real or implied audiences.[2]

Although Eusebius of Caesarea is often treated as the architect of a category "apologetic literature,"[3] the label is not an ancient classification, and the *Historia ecclesiastica* does not formally posit a class of "apologists." True, Eusebius titles Book 4, chapter 3 as Οἱ κατὰ Ἁδριανὸν ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ἀπολογησάμενοι, but the phrase functions as a narrow, literal descriptor: "those who defended the faith under Hadrian," and in practice it refers only to Quadratus and Aristides. Elsewhere, when Eusebius uses the same verb, it simply denotes the act of defending oneself or one's community against accusations; it does not name a stable literary category.[4]

The most forceful evidence for the consolidation of a corpus of apologies comes instead from the manuscript tradition, the tenth-century Codex Apologetarum commissioned by Arethas,[5] which materially

[2] This is the viewpoint adopted by Swain, "Defending Hellenism: Philostratus, *In Honour of Apollonius*," 157–196.

[3] See, for example, Verdoner, "The Defenders of Christianity in the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius," 239–252.

[4] Pace Verdoner, "The Defenders of Christianity in the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius," 239–251.

[5] Parisinus gr. 451; dated 914. The Arethas codex included contents: 1. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepicus*; 2. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*; 3. *Justini epistulam ad Zenam*; 4. Justin, *Cohortatio ad gentiles*; 5. Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* bks 1–5; 6. Athenagoras, *Apologia*; 7. Athenagoras, *De resurrectione*; 8. Eusebius, *Contra Hieroclem*. Even though many of what we consider as early apologists are not included, it gives a sense that ancients perceived the connection between these works.

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gathers a group of "apologists" into a single collection and so retroactively encourages the impression of a bounded genre. It is only in the mid eighteenth century that the Maurist Benedictine Prudentius Maran's 1742 Paris edition offered an influential printed "apologetic" corpus (including Justin, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Hermias), helping to stabilize the category in early modern scholarship.[6] The term "apologist" was in fact first used in the middle of the nineteenth century von Otto to label a range of second-century authors he considered to be apologetic.[7] Thus, "apologetics" too easily functions as a retrospective label that explains texts by later traditions of compilation and canonization, rather than by the cultural conditions in which they were produced.[8]

Defining a text as "apologetic" in the sense of a literary genre has its own problems: formally they take various shapes and forms, from *logos presbeutikos*, to dialogue, protreptic work, or anthology. I adopt, in this respect, the methodological stance articulated by Edwards, Goodman, Price, and Rowland:[9] rather than using genre primarily as a classificatory box, they insist that "apologetic" is better approached through the strategies writers and readers deploy in concrete situations – strategies that defend a cause, position a community, and negotiate authority before real or implied audiences. This shift matters because the older, narrower canon, often limited to second-century "apologies" formally framed as petitions or addresses to emperors, has tended to cordon off "apologetics" as an intra-Christian dossier and, in practice, to marginalize both Jewish texts and large swathes of early Christian literature that do apologetic work without looking like an "apology" in the textbook sense.

Laura Nasrallah's study on Tatian and Justin also usefully unsettles the habitual framing of second-century Christian apologetics as a

[6] *S. P. N. Justini philosophi et martyris opera quae exstant omnia. Necnon Tatiani adversus Graecos oratio, Athenagorae philosophi Atheniensis Legatio pro Christianis, S. Theophili Antiocheni tres ad Autolycum libri, Hermiae Philosophi Irrisio Gentilium Philosophorum: Item in Appendice suppoſita Justino Opera cum Actis illius Martyrii et Excerptis operum deperditorum ejusdem Justini et Tatiani et Theophili. Cum Mss. Codicibus collata, ac novis Interpretationibus, Notis, Admonitionibus et Praefatione illustrata, cum Indicibus copiosis. Opera et studio unius ex Monachis Congregationis S. Mauri. Parisiis, Sumptibus Caroli Osmont, via San-Jacobaea, MDCCXLII*. See Nasarallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture*, 23–26.

[7] Otto, *Corpus apologetarum christianorum saeculi secundi* as noted by Skarsaune, "Justin and the Apologists," 121.

[8] On this, see, for example, Young, "Greek Apologists of the Second Century," 81–104; and more fully, Kinzig, "Der 'Sitz im Leben' der Apologie in der Alten Kirche," 291–317.

[9] See Edwards et al., *Apologetics in the Roman Empire*, Introduction, 1–15.

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coherent literary genre.[10] "Apologetic," she argues, is largely a modern taxonomic label, one that can obscure what writers like Justin are doing by isolating them from the wider second-sophistic struggles over *paideia*, authority, and cultural legitimacy.[11]

In that sense, in the Roman Empire, apologetics also consists in deploying *paideia*, curating sources, organizing literary knowledge, producing authority by ordering texts, voices, and traditions into intelligible and hierarchized forms, and experimenting with forms of intellectual authority that were intelligible within imperial and elite worlds. Thus, Tim Whitmarsh also recently proposed, "We should be speaking of a 'field' rather than a 'genre': a broad cultural space, opened up by the emergence of an educated Christian elite in an era when rhetoric and the display of educational παιδεία were paramount in pagan culture."[12]

Following the approach articulated by these scholars, I use "apologetics" not as a rigid genre label but as a descriptive shorthand for a form of discourse that emerges in situations of exposure and contestation: discourse oriented toward self-definition, the reinforcement of communal boundaries, and the defense of a tradition against external critique. So understood, apologetics is not confined to a specific literary genre, but designates a set of literary practices operating within a wider cultural field, where claims to authority, antiquity, and credibility must be negotiated before real or imagined audiences.

This makes an "archival" or "bibliographic" approach especially relevant to reading these texts. This is the angle chosen in this study: I am reading ancient texts of the Roman empire (roughly from the Flavians to Constantine) generally considered as "apologetic" by looking at how they use bibliography and archive as a mode of producing authority. The bibliographic angle offers set of practices through which authors define where truth resides, who is entitled to interpret it, and how traditions are stabilized and transmitted across time. Apologetic discourse, in this sense, does not merely defend beliefs; it builds the intellectual infrastructure that makes claims legible and credible by assembling corpora, staging acts of reading, and regulating access to archives, canons, and genealogies of learning.

[10] Nasrallah, "Mapping the World: Justin, Tatian, Lucian, and the Second Sophistic," 283–314.

[11] Instead, she proposes reading Justin (alongside Tatian and Lucian) through the lens of "geographical thinking": their texts function as mappings of the empire's epistemic terrain – locating truth, assigning who may speak it, and exposing the sites where power produces violence against knowledge.

[12] Whitmarsh, "Justin, Tatian and the Forging of a Christian Voice," 124.

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2 Apologetics in an Archival World

Why Apologetics is Bibliographic

Recent scholarship has emphasized how, from the early imperial times on, Roman rule intensified practices of recordkeeping and expanded the institutional reach of archives.[13] In the eastern provinces, where encounters with decrees, inscribed letters, and administrative writing had already grown in the Hellenistic age, the Roman state further scaled up documentary systems. The army, in particular, generated an immense and routine paperwork regime: recruits were required to provide written proof of status (and, for certain posts, citizenship), and annual reports such as the *pridianum* depended on continuous record management across the Empire.[14] Even if full literacy remained limited, large segments of the population lived among documents: letters, tablets, receipts, registers, and official correspondence. The material presence of writing thus became a constant feature of daily life, not the exclusive property of elites. The social reach of documents was not merely practical but conceptual. Political actors could exploit the documentary aura of sealed, deposited, and safeguarded texts: When Octavian claimed to read Antony's will, he leveraged not only the rhetoric of revelation but also the institutional guarantees attached to a document authenticated by signatures, seals, custody, and law. In such cases, documentary form itself carried credibility.[15]

A second, equally significant development is the literary and cultural reaction to this documentary environment. The imperial period witnessed a robust "documentary consciousness": Authors write about documents, write with them, and imitate them, as the landscape of inscriptions, letters, tablets, wills, recorded debts, and petitions becomes an ordinary horizon of social experience. Unlike much earlier Greek literature, where inscriptions and public texts could be treated with relative indifference, imperial writers increasingly register documents as pervasive social facts

[13] See, most recently Nasrallah, "A Formation of a Christian Archive?: The Case of Justin Martyr and an Imperial Rescript," 179–202; Arthur-Montagne, DiGiulio, et al., *Documentality: New Approaches to Written Documents in Imperial Life and Literature*; Letteney, *Christianization of Knowledge*, 87–124. For a different view, that is, the rejection of documentality by Justin and Suetonius, see Geue, "Keeping/Losing Records, Keeping/Losing Faith: Suetonius and Justin Do the Document," 203–222.

[14] Arthur-Montagne, et al., *Documentality*, 15. I thank Jeremiah Coogan for fruitful conversations and drawing my attention to the importance of the army in this context.

[15] Arthur-Montagne, et al., *Documentality*, 17–18. See also Meyer, *Legitimacy and Law in the Roman World: Tabulae in Roman Belief and Practice*, 21–43.

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and as potent technologies of proof, memory, and belonging. This sensibility also requires a long chronological lens. From the early empire into late antiquity, documentary, literary, and oral modes increasingly overlap, as new genres and hybrid forms emerge and as documentary habits intensify rather than disappear.

It is within this documentary and administrative environment, from the late first century to the late fourth century CE, that apologetic writing finds fertile ground. The imperial regime is not merely the backdrop against which apologists speak; it conditions the very repertoire of moves they can make. Apologetics becomes a historically specific mode of persuasion that thrives when empire operates as a knowledge producer, when authority is routed through records, authenticated texts, archives, and procedures of proof, and when cultural legitimacy can be won by demonstrating control over documents, written traditions, and the means of transmission. In the imperial times, the Roman world claimed to know universally, through censuses, archives, catalogs, official communications, and the promise of retrievable records.[16] Early Christian apologetic texts are shaped by this ecology of documentation, this "documentary impulse":[17] they do not only argue, they stage verification, imagine consultation, and mobilize documentary authority.

Tertullian, in his *Apologeticus*, for this reason, recasts apologetics as a juridical act. His apology is a defense dossier that demands procedural fairness and documentary scrutiny.[18] The *Apologeticus* imagines Christian truth as a case to be judged: Sources function as witnesses, publicity becomes a criterion of credibility, and the reader is trained to read like a jurist. Even the Septuagint tradition, often used by Greek apologists to secure their tradition, is redeployed as a chain-of-custody argument: Scripture is shown to have entered public circulation under recognizable institutional conditions, that is, the royal library of Alexandria and its apparatus.

This documentary impulse also thickened into an archival, bibliographic imagination. By "bibliographic imagination" I mean the habit of thinking with books: using the titles, authors, and textual collections that populate an author's cultural world as tools for organizing knowledge and producing authority. Apologetic authority is built by citing

[16] Kolbeck, "Read it in Rome: Miracles, Documents, and an Empire of Knowledge in Justin Martyr's First Apology," 21–48.

[17] Arthur-Montagne, et al., *Documentality*, 20.

[18] See also Lactantius' declaration in *Inst. div.* 1.12 where he compares *Instutiones ciuilis iuris* with his own writing project.

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texts, by arranging corpora, in sum: not only by refuting an opponent, but by curating a library. It is at this point that apologetics encompasses the literary. What comes into view is a mode of writing that treats books as infrastructure (citations, catalogs, anthologies, chains of witnesses, canons, and bio-bibliographies) as the very medium through which truth is stabilized and Christianity is made to appear continuous, learned, and publicly verifiable.

Needless to say, the apologists were not the only ones to use bibliographic imagination to anchor their preoccupations, whether antiquarian or philosophical.[19] Gellius, as it has been claimed in a recent book, also had a "fantasy of the Roman library."[20] Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Philosophers* models a philosophical apologetic strategy by producing an inventory of its intellectual elites. In that sense, the *Lives* are a classic case where biography becomes bibliography, a canon-forming technology.[21] Likewise, the ordering of literary knowledge was at the center of attention of other authors, such as Galen, with respect to medical lore: "Galen's literary compositions reproduce processes and patterns of empire,"[22] in a way that is not dissimilar to our apologists. The conversation of Athenaeus' *deipnosophistae* is underwritten by an endless library, and therefore lack the discriminatory reading of Galen or the apologists.[23]

As Jeremiah Coogan has pointed out in an article on Matthew and the Gospel of Hebrews,

> Bibliography is seldom, even never, just about cataloguing the library. Again and again, bibliographic thinking provides a way for people to organise wide vistas of knowledge and experience – including phenomena that are not bookish in and of themselves.[24]

This is why Justin, and, later, Eusebius and Jerome, think naturally in terms of libraries, memoirs, acta, and collections. Apologetics, in this sense, is a mode of knowledge production that thinks archivally and bibliographically, translating theological truth into forms legible within the imperial regimes of record and proof.

[19] On the idea of the library among ancient writers, see Too, *The Idea of the Library in the Ancient World*.

[20] See the original project of Gunderson, *Nox Philologiae: Aulus Gellius and the Fantasy of the Roman Library*.

[21] On Diogenes and his *Lives*, see Warren, "Diogenes Laërtius, Biographer of Philosophy," 133–149.

[22] Flemming, "Galen's Imperial Order of Knowledge," 257.

[23] Wilkins, "Galen and Athenaeus in the Hellenistic Library," 81.

[24] Coogan, "The Ways that Parted in the Library: The Gospels according to Matthew and according to the Hebrews in Late Ancient Heresiology," 473–490.

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This approach rests on a theoretical premise: Archives are not neutral containers of the past. They are regimes of authority that determine what can count as evidence and who is entitled to say it. In Foucault's sense,[25] the archive is not primarily a place but a principle of formation: The historically specific system that governs the appearance, circulation, and legibility of statements. Read this way, apologetic writing is not simply reactive defense: It is an intervention into the conditions of intelligibility. Apologists attempt to reconfigure their world by proposing where truth is to be found and how it is to be authenticated.

Derrida's reflections also sharpen the political and affective dimension of this work.[26] The archive, for Derrida, is inseparable from *arkhē*: origin and command. Archiving is an act of institution, that is, an authorization that establishes custody and interpretive jurisdiction, while also generating anxiety about loss, falsification, and control. The archive is thus haunted by a constitutive tension: It promises stabilization of memory, yet it is driven by the very possibility of erasure, corruption, and dispute. This tension maps closely onto apologetic polemic, where opponents are regularly framed as counterfeiters or forgers, or even "bad readers." The "archival imagination" at stake in apologetics is therefore not an antiquarian taste for documents but a struggle over the jurisdiction of memory.

Taken together, these approaches justify the central wager of this study: to read apologetics as a set of practices that produce authority by producing an archive and a library,[27] constructing the conditions under which Christianity and its Jewish and polytheistic interlocutors can appear as a coherent, continuous, and publicly credible tradition. What follows therefore treats "archive" and "bibliography" not as metaphors but as analytic categories for tracing how apologetic discourse organizes statements, controls memory, and makes truth legible in an imperial world increasingly oriented toward documents, custody, and proof.

This perspective dovetails naturally with an approach to apologetics as "bibliographic imagination." Roger Chartier helps specify what is distinctively bibliographic about this struggle.[28] Chartier's work on the "order of

[25] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 126–134.
[26] Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*.
[27] I consider that in the context of Roman antiquity, there is no need to differentiate between archive and library: concretely they represent storage of writings; metaphorically, they embody written memory. In a Christian sense, the documentary and the literary belong to the same realm.
[28] Chartier, *L'ordre des livres: lecteurs, auteurs, bibliothèques en Europe entre XIVe et XVIIIe siècle*, 1–88.

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the books" insists that textual authority is never reducible to abstract "ideas": it is produced through material forms (codex, roll, anthology, and paratexts, as Genette has shown), institutional sites (libraries, schools, and scriptoria), and practices of appropriation (reading aloud, excerpting, compiling, and annotating). Meaning and legitimacy emerge not only from what texts say but from how they are made present to communities. This perspective is crucial for apologetics because apologetic claims to antiquity and credibility are repeatedly realized through bookish operations: excerpting, aligning testimonies, arranging corpora, displaying genealogies of authors and teachers, and transforming libraries into theaters of verification. In Chartier's terms, apologetic persuasion often works by imposing an "order" on books, which is at once epistemic, social, and institutional (where texts belong and how they are accessed).

Bibliographic imagination thus matters for understanding ancient apologetics because it is a contest over textual authority, over which writings count as evidence, who has preserved them intact, who has custody, and which communities have the competence and right to interpret them. Many apologists therefore do "library work" as much as they do theology or philosophy. Their polemics routinely take bibliographic form with opponents often portrayed as counterfeiters, excisers, forgers, or undisciplined readers: In a world where public credibility increasingly depended on documents, citation, and demonstrable antiquity, truth had to be made archivable. Seen this way, apologetics is not a preface to Christian scholarship but produces it. The habits forged in apologetic controversy, such as collecting proof texts, comparing versions, naming authoritative authors, distinguishing genuine from spurious works, and tracing lineages of teaching through books, mature into canon-consciousness, heresiological catalogs, and eventually full-scale Christian literary history and biobibliography. A bibliographic lens thus explains why apologetics so often looks like documentation: it is the process by which Christianity makes itself publicly legible as a tradition with a trustworthy corpus, a regulated memory, and a defensible intellectual pedigree.

Seen from this angle, ancient apologetics participates in a broader transformation of intellectual and bookish culture, including the rise of the codex among Christian readers.[29] Apologetic works are especially

[29] See, on these transformation of knowledge in relation to writing and reading Chin, *Grammar and Christianity in the Late Roman World*; Chin and Vidas, eds., *Late Ancient Knowing: Explorations in Intellectual History*; Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea*; Stefaniw, *Christian Reading: Language, Ethics, and the Order of Things*; Crawford, *The Eusebian Canon*

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revealing sites for observing this shift because they are moments of heightened self-reflection, in which authors are compelled to explain not only what they believe but also why their books, their sources, and their ways of reading deserve trust.

Of course, not all apologies are book obsessed, and not all of them resort to bibliographic imagination as their main pillar: the *Epistle to Diognetus*, the works of Arnobius of Sicca or Minucius Felix, for instance, make no remarkable use of bibliographic arguments. Even Origen starts his *Contra Celsum* by asserting the greater power of facts over writing. Yet even in texts that are (in their actual preserved form) less "bibliographic," such as Aristides' *Apology*, books are always central because in many cases, they frame the conversion of the author. Aristides' apology preserved in Greek does not just mention Christian teaching: The Christian story "is taught in the gospel … and you [the king] also, if you will read therein, may perceive the power which belongs to it."[30] Authority is not only asserted but also located in a readable object, and the audience is imagined as a reader who can verify.

Apologetic works which do intensively appeal to bibliographic and archival arguments frequently map religious difference onto a classificatory ethnographic grid such as "Barbarians," "Greeks," "Jews," "Christians," and then rank these groups by relocating authority in what each is imagined to possess: texts, traditions, and archives.[31] That is a classic bibliographic move: difference is not only asserted but also organized, and credibility is made to appear verifiable because it is anchored in books, collections, and legible bodies of tradition.[32] Bibliographic imagination concerns both the material existence of texts and the symbolic work they perform: how libraries are imagined as guarantors of continuity, how citation becomes a moral and epistemic act, and how the ordering of writings itself generates intellectual legitimacy. Apologetics, from this perspective, is also a form of library work. The apologetic author appears not simply as a debater, but as a curator, that

Tables: Ordering Textual Knowledge in Late Antiquity; Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist: Rewriting the Fourfold Gospel in Late Antiquity*; Ayres, Champion, and Crawford, eds., *The Intellectual World of Late Antique Christianity: Reshaping Classical Traditions*.

[30] Aristides, *Apol*, 2.6.

[31] See, for example, Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica*; Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors: His Citation Technique in an Apologetic Context* and "Eusebius' Construction of a Christian Culture in an Apologetic Context: Reading the *Praeparatio Evangelica* as a Library," 231–252.

[32] See, for instance, Coogan, "The Ways that parted in the Library;" Yun Lee Too, *The Idea of the Library*, 50–80.

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is, someone who knows which texts matter, how they should be read, and how they belong together.

The scope of this study runs from the *Letter of Aristeas* (henceforth *Aristeas*) to Jerome's *De viris illustribus* (henceforth *Vir. ill.*). This frame is not merely chronological. *Aristeas* – whatever one calls its genre or however one defines its readership – cannot be understood apart from its apologetic function, and it is programmatic in the way it binds persuasion to books, libraries, and regimes of textual legitimation.[33] It is seminal, first, because its narrative of translation and royal patronage becomes a template repeatedly retold and repurposed by later Jewish and Christian writers.[34] More fundamentally, it inaugurates an "apologetic order of the book": It makes the imperial Hellenistic library the privileged theater in which cultural credibility is staged and secured. In *Aristeas*, the library materializes an image of Jewish learning, identity, and antiquity translated into the idiom of an empire that recognizes authority through collections, catalogs, and curated corpora.

From *Aristeas* onward, this study focuses on a corpus of texts commonly classified as "apologetic," but approached here through the bibliographic operations that structure their persuasion: archival movements, library-shaped collections of books, practices of citation, and the production of *pinakes*. The itinerary, which does not target exhaustivity, runs from Josephus and Tatian the Assyrian, through Theophilus of Antioch and Justin of Rome, to Tertullian, Clement, Origen, Pamphilus and Eusebius. By tracing the variety of these bibliographic imaginations, the inquiry closes with Jerome's *Vir. ill*. It is there that the convergence of apologetics and bibliographic imagination reaches a decisive point of transformation. After the Caesarean moment, when apologetic authority is secured through archives, lists, and controlled corpora, Jerome pushes the logic to its limit: Bibliography does not merely serve apologetics; it increasingly takes its place. The defense of Christianity is staged above all as the construction of a literary world. In *Vir. ill*, identity itself becomes library: belonging is asserted through names, books, and genealogies of

[33] On *Aristeas*, see, for instance, Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria*, 19–37; Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria: A Study in the Narrative of the Letter of Aristeas* (*Aristeas* as "charter myth" for the LXX); Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora*, which focuses on Greek Torah and diaspora legitimacy; De Crom, "The Letter of Aristeas," for a good bibliography; and Inowlocki, "What Caesarea Has to Do with Alexandria. The Christian Library between Myth and Reality," 1–19.

[34] On its reception, see Wasserstein, and Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today*, 95–173.

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reading, and Christian truth appears less as a thesis to be proved than as a canon to be displayed and inherited.[35]

What follows from this reconceptualization of apologetics through bibliographic imagination is a methodological choice. This study does not offer a series of close readings of individual apologetic works, nor does it attempt to provide a comprehensive history of ancient apologetics as a genre. Instead, it proposes to look at a set of recurrent bibliographic operations through which apologetic discourse produces authority. The aim, therefore, is not to privilege one canonical apologetic text over another, but to identify the shared procedures that underlie apologetic writing in antiquity. These operations form a repertoire rather than a rigid system. Individual texts may activate several of them at once, or emphasize one at the expense of others. What matters is not their uniformity, but their recognizability as strategies of intellectual legitimation. This approach allows apologetics to be read comparatively, without dissolving historical specificity. A Jewish historian defending the antiquity of his tradition, a Christian theologian responding to philosophical critique, or a late antique scholar curating the legacy of a contested master may differ sharply in context, audience, and stakes.

In sum: Scholarship on ancient apologetics has often proceeded in a largely descriptive and theological mode; apologetic texts are read as sequences of arguments responding to identifiable "pagan" attacks and are situated within an internal history of Christian doctrine, organized around questions such as providence, creation, the Logos, or Christology. This approach has yielded indispensable insights, but it also encounters clear limits. Apologetic writings are frequently reticent, oblique, or uneven in their engagement with precisely those theological issues modern readers expect to find at their center; decades of discussion over the conspicuous absence of explicit reference to Jesus in Theophilus of Antioch's *Ad Autolycum* are a telling example. Rather than resolving such phenomena by appeal to authorial psychology, dissimulation, or an assumed developmental stage of doctrine, this study proposes a different explanatory frame. It approaches apologetics not primarily as the defense of propositions but as a set of historically situated practices

[35] On Jerome's *Vir. ill.*, see, for example, Vessey Forthcoming. "Jerome between history and scripture: The event of the De viris illustribus / De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis."; Vessey, "Vera et aeterna monumenta: Jerome's catalogue of Christian writers and the premises of Erasmian humanism," 351–375. Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship*; SanPietro, "The Making of a Christian Intellectual Tradition in Jerome's *De viris illustribus*," 231–259.

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through which authority itself is produced and made credible. By shifting attention from *what* apologists argue to *how* they organize, authenticate, and stage knowledge this approach situates apologetic writing within the documentary and archival ecologies of the Roman Empire. Apologetics thus emerges less as a theological genre than as a repertoire of bibliographic operations, shared across Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman texts, through which communities negotiate custody, competence, and jurisdiction over the past. Seen in this light, apologetic discourse does not merely respond to criticism; it constructs the infrastructures of credibility that allow a tradition to appear continuous, legible, and publicly verifiable, and in doing so, it lays the groundwork for later Christian scholarship, canon-consciousness, and literary history.

3 The Politics of the Library

From Aristeas to Josephus

Just as today, the library in antiquity was not merely a place of storage or organization, but a powerful icon of culture, authority, and intellectual legitimacy; within this framework, it occupies a primary and highly contested place in the earliest apologetic writings, from *Aristeas* to Tatian, and through the intermediary and contrasting positions of Philo and Josephus.

Across these four apologetic moments, "the library" functions less as a physical institution than as a symbolic regime of cultural validation – sometimes courted, sometimes resisted, sometimes inverted.

Aristeas offers a particularly important and fertile instance of bibliographic imagination in an apologetic context: The Torah is made "world-knowable" and politically legible once it is translated and placed among the king Ptolemy's books, so that imperial collection itself becomes an apologetic endorsement. Because it proved so influential for both Jews and Christians, its legend recurring across much of what modern scholarship labels "apologies", and because *Aristeas* so sharply crystallizes the problem of apologetic discourse,[36] I begin this study with that text and its reception. It supplies a foundational template of bibliographic imagination for many later writers: a way of locating authority in books and libraries, staging their authentication, and narrating their movement into regimes of public access and cultural prestige.

[36] The landmark for this assessment of *Aristeas* is Tcherikover, "The Ideology of the Letter of Aristeas," 181–207.

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From its beginnings in Jewish literature, ancient apologetics establishes authority by defining where authentic knowledge is stored and who is entitled to curate it. Seen from this perspective, *Aristeas* provides an ideal point of departure. While not an apology *stricto sensu*, it unmistakably deploys apologetic strategies. These strategies do not merely defend Judaism or promote the Septuagint; they imagine Judaism as the bearer of an ancient, authoritative body of written knowledge whose value is finally recognized through its bibliographic elevation. While recent scholarship has rightly moved away from treating Hellenistic Jewish texts wholesale as "apologetic," the category remains analytically productive when understood not as a rigid genre but as a set of strategies for negotiating cultural authority – strategies that will be repeatedly reworked in Jewish and Christian literature.

I will not rehearse the long-standing debates over the historicity of the Ptolemaic commission or Demetrios' role.[37] It is sufficient to note the broad scholarly consensus that *Aristeas* is a Jewish work, composed in the second-century BCE, in a period of relative prosperity for Alexandrian Jews. Earlier interpretations have often assumed a non-Jewish readership, casting *Aristeas* as missionary propaganda or outward-facing apologetics. Tcherikover's influential intervention shifted the focus inward,[38] arguing that the text primarily addressed a confident Jewish community and sought to consolidate communal identity around the Torah. Subsequent work has further situated the work within Alexandrian Jewish culture, highlighting its playful pride and its subtle engagement with Egyptian, Jewish, and Greek worlds, as well as with Alexandrian scholarship.[39] These approaches converge in

[37] See, for instance, Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*. Vol. 3; Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)*; Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*; Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*; Matusova, *The Meaning of the Letter of Aristeas: In Light of Biblical Interpretation and Grammatical Tradition, and with Reference to Its Historical Context*; Collins, *The Library in Alexandria and the Bible in Greek*.

[38] Tcherikover, "Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered," 169–193, which superseded Friedländer, *Geschichte der jüdischen Apologetik als Vorgeschichte des Christentums*; Causse, "La propagande juive et l'hellénisme," 397–414; Dalbert, *Die Theologie der hellenistisch-jüdischen Missionsliteratur unter Ausschluss von Philo und Josephus*.

[39] Gruen, *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism: Essays on Early Jewish Literature*, 413–436; Gruen, *History* and *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, 315–334; Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*, 219–220; Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition*, 189–245; Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria*, 19–37; Honigman, "'Jews as the Best of All Greeks': Cultural competition in the literary works of Alexandrian Judaeans of the Hellenistic period," 207–232 and Honigman, "Competition with Egyptian religious ideas in the Letter of Aristeas": 24–62.

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underscoring that *Aristeas* is less concerned with persuasion in a narrow sense than with imagining a position for Jewish knowledge within the structures of Hellenistic power.

Unlike earlier Jewish texts concerned with cultural self-definition, *Aristeas* is distinctive in making the production, translation, and institutional placement of texts, specifically the Torah, the very core of its narrative logic. The story's familiar framework is not incidental: A Hellenistic monarch, "Ptolemy," persuaded by his librarian Demetrios of Phaleron, commissions the translation of the Hebrew Law so that it may be incorporated into the royal library of Alexandria. Around this act cluster a series of symbolic gestures: manumission of Jewish slaves, lavish gifts to the Temple, the selection of seventy-two elders, philosophical symposia, curses against textual alteration, all of which function to dramatize the claim that Jewish law is worthy of imperial preservation.

Aristeas is best situated within Hellenistic "imperial epistemology," in which kings turned libraries into instruments of rule: Alexandria, and later Pergamon, staged sovereignty as the capacity to collect, translate, and order the writings of the world.[40] This universalizing ambition draws on an Aristotelian ideal of comprehensive knowledge, that is, dividing, classifying, and mastering the totality of *ta onta* through organized inquiry,[41] and it finds a concrete bibliographic analogue in Alexandrian scholarship itself, especially in Callimachus' *Pinakes*, whose bio-bibliographic architecture imagines literature as a knowable whole, mapped through catalogs.[42] *Aristeas* appropriates that totalizing horizon by inserting the Torah into the same regime of collection and classification: The Jewish Law becomes a text that the royal library must possess in order to be complete, and translation functions as the technology that makes this "world knowledge" legible within a Greek system of universal archives.

What matters here is not its factual reliability but the bibliographic imagination it deploys. The text functions as a cultural manifesto, asserting Jewish prestige through a fantasy of recognition at the highest institutional level of Hellenistic knowledge. From this perspective, *Aristeas* inaugurates a mode of apologetic reasoning in which bibliographic inclusion functions as cultural legitimation. Translation is indispensable, but it

[40] See, for example, Wyrick, *The Ascension of Authorship: Attribution and Canon Formation in Jewish, Hellenistic, and Christian Traditions*, 235–243.

[41] See, for instance, Broze, Busine, and Inowlocki, "Les catalogues de peuples sages: Fonctions et contextes d'utilisation," 131–144.

[42] The classic study remains Blum, *Kallimachos: The Alexandrian Library and the Origins of Bibliography*.

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is not the only goal.[43] Another decisive act is the Torah's admission into the royal collection. As Demetrios explicitly states, the laws of the Jews are "worthy of transcription and deserving a place in your library."[44] The rationale for translation is therefore instrumental: It enables the Law to exist "in the library, with the other royal books" (ἐν βιβλιοθήκῃ σὺν τοῖς ἄλλοις βασιλικοῖς βιβλίοις).

This bibliographic gesture establishes what might be called, following Roger Chartier, a new "order of the book," at least for the Jews. Royal endorsement elevates the Torah from a local ethnic text to an object of universal value, while simultaneously reconfiguring Judean political and social standing within the Ptolemaic kingdom. The liberation of Judean slaves and the material rewards described in the narrative give concrete form to this symbolic promotion. At the same time, the king's reverence for the books, culminating in acts of *proskynesis* and commands that they be guarded with exceptional care, introduces a theological dimension: The Jewish God is implicitly acknowledged through the sanctity of his written law.

The text further reinforces this logic through a revelatory narrative of absence and disclosure. Until their translation and archival inclusion, the scriptures were unknown to Greek poets and historians, not because of insignificance, but, allegedly, because of their holiness. Attempts to appropriate them prematurely resulted in divine punishment, as illustrated by the fates of Theopompus and Theodektes.[45] Protection and restriction thus work together: The Law is both untouchable and newly accessible, revealed to the world under controlled, royal auspices.

This double movement is central to *Aristeas*' apologetic force. On the one hand, the sanctity of the books explains their prior invisibility, countering claims of Jewish marginality. On the other, their admission into the royal library authorizes their future circulation within Greek cultural frameworks. The fantasy, as Nathalie Dormann has shown,[46] is that the Greek library desires the Torah.[47] Yet this fantasy is ambivalent. The

[43] On the connection between translation and library, see Chin, "Rufinus of Aquileia and Alexandrian Afterlives: Translation as Origenism," 617–647.

[44] *Aristeas* 9–10.

[45] *Aristeas* 312–318. διότι μέλλων τινὰ τῶν προηρμηνευμένων ἐπισφαλέστερον ἐκ τοῦ νόμου προσιστορεῖν ταραχὴν λάβοι τῆς διανοίας πλεῖον ἡμερῶν τριάκοντα.

[46] Dohrmann, "Jewish Books and Roman Readers: Censorship, Authorship, and the Rabbinic Library," 357–380.

[47] In his *Apologeticus* (18.8), written around 200 CE, Tertullian states that "Ptolemy's libraries, with the actual Hebrew writings" were still to be seen in the Alexandrian shrine known as the Serapeum.

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library is also a colonial instrument, and inclusion risks objectification. The Torah becomes, in Dormann's phrase, a "butterfly held by a pin,"[48] a prized specimen in an imperial collection.

It is precisely here that *Aristeas* displays a subtle irony. The king's exaggerated reverence for the physical Hebrew manuscript, its gold lettering, seamless joins, and visual splendor, can be read not only as homage but also as a gentle parody of bibliolatry, a misunderstanding of the law's true value.[49] Gruen's suggestion that the king is quietly derided opens the door to a more subversive reading:[50] The conqueror appears momentarily conquered, performing *proskynesis* before a Jewish fetish he does not fully comprehend. In this sense, *Aristeas* both participates in and destabilizes imperial bibliographic logic, exemplifying what postcolonial theory would later describe as hybridity.[51]

In the end, *Aristeas* is not only a "charter myth" for the Septuagint,[52] but also an early and sophisticated meditation on the relationship between bibliography, identity, and authority. By staging the inclusion of the Torah in the Alexandrian library, the text imagines a form of apologetic success grounded not in argument alone but in archival recognition. This imagination, at once aspirational and ambivalent, will leave a long afterlife, shaping the ways in which Josephus, Eusebius, Jerome, and others conceive of libraries, canons, and the defense of religious truth.

The royal library of Alexandria, the figure of the librarian Demetrius, and the act of translation itself are not incidental but central to the text's claims about the intellectual prestige and political legitimacy of Judaism in a Hellenistic world. In this sense, *Aristeas* inaugurates a tradition in which bibliographic rhetoric becomes a primary mode of cultural defense and promotion, a tradition later developed, adapted, and contested by authors such as Josephus, Eusebius, and Jerome.

Jewish Apologetics: In and Out of the Library

Aristeas was widely received in both Jewish and Christian worlds,[53] and with it, its bibliographic and cultural outlook on the cultural and religious power of sacred writings and archive. However, his emphasis on

[48] Dohrmann, "Jewish Books and Roman Readers," 417–419.
[49] *Aristeas* 317.
[50] Gruen, "19. The Letter of Aristeas and the Cultural Context of the Septuagint," 413–436.
[51] For a postcolonial reading of *Aristeas*, see Charles, "Hybridity and the Letter of Aristeas," 242–259.
[52] Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*.
[53] Wasserstein and Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint*, 27–173.

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archives and the centrality of the library was not followed by all. Philo, for instance, unlike *Aristeas*, and unlike Josephus later, is strikingly sparing in his use of bibliographic rhetoric. His apologetic imagination is less library centered than text centered, and even then only intermittently so. This restraint is especially visible in his narrative of the Septuagint tradition in *De vita Mosis* (2.25–44).

Philo's account of the translation of the Law is clearly related to the tradition represented by *Aristeas*, but direct literary dependence remains uncertain. If he did know *Aristeas*, he clearly rewrote its stakes. Where *Aristeas* frames translation as the condition for the Torah's institutional inclusion in the Alexandrian library, Philo suppresses the library altogether. The action shifts to Pharos; Demetrios is absent.[54] The monarch's collecting impulse is replaced by a different claim to authority: the translators' miraculous concord and the equal inspiration of the two versions. The Hebrew and Greek scriptures are not competing textual objects but "sisters", "one and the same" in sense and expression, worthy of reverence.[55] Likewise, the focus on the royal desire for the Jewish scripture is replaced by a more subtle account of a progressive spread of awareness of the Jews due to their daily practice, and strikingly, their law is presented not as a Judean phenomenon but a barbarian one, belonging to half of humanity. The effect is programmatic. Philo does not suggest that the Torah's prestige depends on its admission into an imperial collection. Instead, he recasts the Septuagint as a theological event whose authority is guaranteed internally by divine inspiration and textual equivalence rather than externally by royal curation.

This approach is probably rooted in the fact that he writes from a radically altered Alexandrian moment. The pogroms of 38 CE, the violence of Flaccus' regime, and the crisis under Caligula give his Jewish writing a different affective and political horizon from the self-confident bibliographic fantasy of *Aristeas*. Philo is not only a philosopher but also a communal advocate: The embassy to Caligula, the *Hypothetica* (preserved by Eusebius), and the lost works *Apology for the Jews* / *On the Jews* locate him squarely within apologetic labor.[56] Accordingly, Philo's climactic gesture is not bibliographic inclusion but universal desirability: The Law is shown to be "worth fighting for" in the eyes of all, "ordinary citizens and rulers

[54] As noted by Wasserstein and Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint,* 42.
[55] See Pearce, *The Land of the Body: Studies in Philo's Representation of Egypt*, 27.
[56] On the *Hypothetica*, see Sterling, "In Fragments: The Authenticity of the *Hypothetica*," 327–348.

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alike," even as the Jewish nation has not prospered for many years.[57] The contrast between the law's prestige and the people's vulnerability remains palpable. But crucially, Philo does not translate this contrast into the "order of the book" that *Aristeas* constructed. He is interested in the Law's status as divine λόγος. In fact, he repeatedly opposes the materialization of νόμος into a "lifeless" written object to νόμος as living reason "stamped … on the immortal mind" (*Probus* 46).[58] His valorization of "unwritten laws" embodied by the patriarchs reinforces the same tendency: What is authoritative is not a prestigious codex in a royal collection but the law as lived rational piety. Philo thus offers a counter-model to the *Letter of Aristeas*. He does not present the story of the Septuagint in bibliographical terms, as though the Mosaic law were simply one more prestigious book produced, archived, or displayed within the cultural machinery of empire. In this way, he resists treating the law as a collectible artifact of imperial culture and insists instead on its character as living, divinely inspired reason. Read in this light, Philo's narrative resists the bibliographic temptation.

And yet Philo does not abandon bibliography altogether. When he writes in a more overtly apologetic register, most notably in the *Hypothetica* as transmitted by Eusebius, he reactivates a distinctly "archival" argument: the immutability of the Mosaic text and the willingness to die rather than alter even a single word.[59] Here, the physicality of the written law and the fidelity of its transmission become proof of Jewish religious seriousness, and the old Maccabean idiom of dying for the law is linked to the integrity of the text's reproduction.[60]

Josephus' situation a few decades later separates him both from *Aristeas* and Philo: the loss of the Temple, the demise of the Jews, and the fall of Jerusalem; Josephus' own complex position as both a traitor and apologist to his coreligionists provides a complex background to his literary apologetic strategies.

[57] Transl. Thackeray revised, Text. *V. Mosis* 2.43.

[58] See the commentary of Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: Every Good Man Is Free*, 225–226. See also the episode of Calanos in Probus 92–97 (Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: Every Good Man Is Free*, 369–399).

[59] Eus., *Praep. Ev*. 8.6.

[60] The motif of dying for the law appears multiple times in the *C. Ap*.: 1.42–43, 190–191, 212; 2.146, 219–234, 272, 294. See Barclay, *Against Apion*, 32, note 175; Berthelot, *Jews and Their Roman Rivals: Pagan Rome's Challenge to Israel*, 230–232: "In short, neither the definition of courage as the ability to die for the law nor the other option that emphasised fighting for the law originated as a response to the Roman valorization of virtus, be it at the level of discourse or that of practice. Rather, they represent a reactivation of responses to imperial power that emerged in a Seleucid context."

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In the preface to the *Antiquities*, Josephus frames his project as a transposition of ancestral records into Greek, implicitly aligning his work with the paradigmatic act of translation that produced the Septuagint. The gesture is programmatic. Like *Aristeas*, Josephus stresses Greek interest in Jewish knowledge, an interest he explicitly recalls again in *Contra Apionem* 2.45–47.[61] There, he reminds his readers that the greatest compliment paid to the Jews by the Greek king lay in his desire "to know our laws and to read the books of our sacred scripture." Josephus conforms to *Aristeas*' logic: Greek desire is matched by Jewish willingness. In the preface, he emphasizes that Jewish tradition does not withhold its goods from others, and that Greek curiosity is met by priestly consent. Ptolemy and Eleazar thus emerge as paired figures – royal demand and sacerdotal authorization – whose interaction legitimates the circulation of Jewish texts. Josephus' compressed summary omits almost entirely the Alexandrian library. The drama is no longer staged primarily around an institution but around a negotiated exchange between sovereign and high priest. Bibliographic imagination is already at work here, but at the level of authorized mediation rather than physical storage. Authority derives less from where the books are kept than from who permits their transmission.

When Josephus returns to the *Aristeas* narrative in book 12 (11–118), however, the library reenters forcefully. Although he abbreviates the account, omitting, for instance, the list of translators and extended descriptions of Jerusalem, he sharpens the bibliographic stakes. Jewish writings are no longer merely "worthy of transcription," as in *Aristeas*, but explicitly worthy of inclusion in the royal library. The king's collection becomes the horizon against which cultural value is recognized. Josephus further intensifies the material dimension of the story: The Torah appears as a precious artifact, written on fine membranes in golden letters, eliciting prolonged admiration. Compared with Philo's account, which pointedly avoids the library and relocates authority in inspiration and the "living law," Josephus rematerializes scriptural prestige. His apologetic logic is transparent: in an imperial culture that adjudicates authority through textual accumulation, classification, and display, Jewish scripture can meet empire on its own bibliographic terms. This Aristean template also functions reflexively. Josephus' retelling of the translation of the law mirrors his own historiographic ambition. Like

[61] On *C. Ap.*, see Feldman, and John R. Levison, eds., *Josephus' Contra Apionem: Studies in Its Character and Context with a Latin Concordance to the Portion Missing in Greek*; Barclay, *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*.

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the Torah translated for the king, the *Antiquities* aspire to Roman recognition as a definitive Greek account of Jewish antiquity. Bibliographic imagination thus folds back upon the author himself.

However, while imperial endorsement can elevate a book (as he suggests with his own *War* in the *Vita*), it also risks reducing it to an object possessed by Empire: Josephus himself supplies the darker counterimage in his description of the Roman triumph after war, where the Torah is carried as spoil behind the golden vessels of the Temple.[62] The image functions as a reminder of the libraries taken as spoils during Roman conquests in the Republican times.[63] Between *Aristeas*' respectful royal desire and the triumphal display of conquered manuscripts lies the unstable reality of bibliographic prestige under domination. Josephus' works, like the sacred books of Jerusalem, are authorized, and thereby exposed, by imperial power.

The apologetic work performed by these various accounts is foundational for later Christian apologists. On one hand, they establish the library as an ambivalent locus of imperial domination and cultural authority and they allow for the articulation of Athens and Jerusalem: Eusebius' claim that Josephus' and Philo's writings were included in Roman libraries[64] (a testimony that has no external support) is one instance of this; on the other hand, they reroute that very locus of authority, appropriating its bibliographic prestige (translation, cataloging, citation, and collection-building) to authorize "barbarian" texts within imperial regimes of knowledge, so that the library becomes not only a tool of domination but also a site of negotiated legitimacy, counter-archiving, and cultural self-translation.

4 Re-Shelving the World

Archives, Ethnicity, and Competing Traditions

Josephus' sustained polemic in the *Contra Apionem* is the template of this argumentation.[65] Here Josephus confronts the charge that Jews lack antiquity and memorialization in Greek historiography. His response is not merely to supply counternarratives but to challenge the very criteria by which historical authority is measured. Greek historiography,

[62] Joseph, *BJ*., 7.148–152.

[63] On this theme, see Schultz, "Origin Stories: Plundered Libraries and Theories of Appropriation in Greek and Roman Imperial Literature," 389–430.

[64] Euseb., *Hist. eccl*. 2.18.8 and 3.9.2.

[65] See Kasher, "Polemic and Apologetic Methods of Writing in *Contra Apionem*," 143–186; Cohen, "History and Historiography in the *Against Apion* of Josephus," 1–11; Barclay, *Against Apion*.

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he argues, is recent, discordant, and methodologically unstable; "barbarian" traditions, Egyptian, Chaldean, and above all Jewish, possess ancient archives, disciplined transmission, and reliable custody. The polemic is fundamentally bibliographic: It concerns archives, records, copying practices, and the conditions under which writing becomes credible history. While the claims of second-century apologists and their opponents have long been framed as a "literary war,"[66] I argue that they were waging a bibliographic and archival war as well.

Before turning to this issue, it is worth widening the lens. The struggle over an "authoritative library" belongs to the broader documentary and intellectual ecology of the Roman world. A figure who will later carry unexpected weight for Christian apologists (Eusebius above all), is already, in the first-century BCE, the author of a work that styles itself a "library" (βιβλιοθήκη): Diodorus Siculus. Later on (probably in the imperial period, perhaps the first or second century CE), "Apollodorus" will also author a βιβλιοθήκη.[67] According to Yun Lee Too, such authors stage a fantasy of total knowledge while simultaneously revealing that such totality is impossible.[68] In the case of "Apollodorus," the βιβλιοθήκη is a meta-library that organizes, abstracts, genealogizes, and controls myth. In one word, it is management of stories, turning them into mythology.[69] This model is helleno-centric, ignoring Rome the way, say, Tatian ignores the Jews. Thus βιβλιοθήκη must be examined within the context of Greek responses to Rome during the second sophistic.[70] It provides an important (but neglected) point of comparison for second-century apologies.

Pliny draws attention to the title of Diodorus' work and to what it implies. Unlike writers who, as he puts it, "play" (*nugari*) with clever labels – "Honeycomb" (*kērion*), "Horn of Plenty" (*keras Amaltheias*), "Violets," "Muses," "Receptacles of Everything" (*pandektai*), "Handbooks" (*encheiridia*), "Meadow" (*leimōn*), "Tablet" (*pinax*), or "Improvisation" (*schedion*) – Diodorus chooses the programmatic name βιβλιοθήκη.[71] The point is that his history gathers accounts of multiple peoples and regions, materials that could have circulated as separate books, and binds them into a single ordered whole. By calling the work

[66] Young, *Apologetics in the Roman Empire*, 93.
[67] I use the quotation marks here because his identity is subject to debate.
[68] Too, *The Idea of the Library*, 116–142.
[69] Too, *The Idea of the Library*, 116–142.
[70] See Fletcher, "Systematic Genealogies in Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* and the Exclusion of Rome from Greek Myth," 59–91.
[71] Pliny, *Natural History*, preface 24–25.

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a "library," Diodorus claims more than comprehensiveness, he claims curatorial authority, that is, the right to assemble disparate cultural histories into one repository that can stand in for them.[72] As Yun Lee Too analyzes:

> There is, furthermore, also a sense in which Rome's cosmopolitanism is enacted by the literary library […] For, it may be the case that the βιβλιοθήκη stands as a self-conscious analogy for the Rome of the work, represented as enacting justice and law throughout the inhabited world, but, more importantly, also for Diodorus' *Library of History*, a work that submits to its audience the works, whether just or unjust, of leaders and other men for scrutiny as to their effects upon the community of the inhabited world"[73]

Diodorus is a reminder that the cultural work later performed by Josephus and Christian apologists did not originate with them. Diodorus' βιβλιοθήκη treats compilation as a claim to universality: By gathering heterogeneous traditions into a single "library," he converts dispersion into order and makes the world legible from within a Roman horizon. In other words, the "library" functions as a political–cultural technology before it becomes a Jewish or Christian apologetic one, an instrument for integrating peoples, synchronizing histories, and authorizing a totalizing perspective. When Eusebius later aligns Rome's imperial success with the global expansion of Christianity, he is not inventing the link between universal history and hegemonic order; he is Christianizing an older Greco-Roman assumption that bibliographic enclosure can underwrite cosmopolitan authority.

Yet, for apologists such as Josephus and other Christian writers, inclusion in the Greek library "*Aristeas*' style" is no longer the ultimate badge of worth. Instead, Josephus, the first one, proposes an alternative order of the book, in which Jewish scripture explicitly belongs to a superior archive whose authority is intrinsic rather than conferred. Yet the reversal is hybrid. Josephus attacks Greek historiography with Greek tools. Comparison, source criticism, and methodological polemic. As Shaye Cohen has observed,[74] he assaults Greek historical culture using weapons forged within it. Plato's conception of Egypt as the paradigm of archival antiquity and cultural stability is appropriated by Josephus to his own ends: Egyptian priests preserve ancient knowledge in temple records while Greek catastrophes erase memory, making Greek learning comparatively "young"

[72] On Diodorus' Library as a bibliography project, see Too, *The Idea of the Library in the Ancient World*, 95–118.
[73] Too, *The Idea of the Library in the Ancient World*, 95–118 and 168–169.
[74] Cohen, "History and Historiography in the *Against Apion* of Josephus," 1–11.

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and dependent (*Timaeus*). Plato also locates key "arts" like writing in Egypt (*Phaedrus*) and presents Egypt as a society that stabilizes tradition by fixing cultural forms and banning innovation (*Laws*). Bibliographic imagination here is not an escape from Hellenism but a reconfiguration from within.

Josephus also challenges the narrative according to which the Jews have not been considered worthy of memorialization by Greek historians (τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν ἱστοριογράφων μνήμης ἠξιῶσθαι) and contests their antiquity, which we have also encountered in *Aristeas*. His argument relies on a comparative analysis (σύγκρισις) between Greek and Barbarian approaches to historiography. Josephus argues that historiography is a deeply rooted ethnic tradition among Barbarians but not among Greeks, who lack formal archives (ἀναγραφή) and adopted writing later. ἀναγραφή and its cognates appear numerous times in the *Against Apion*,[75] the "record" or archive, is the foundation of the barbarian and Jewish order of the books he opposed to that of the Greeks, who provide what could be termed as literary or fictional narratives: mythology and praise.

One of Josephus' most consequential moves is the presentation of the Jewish corpus as a canon of twenty-two books, carefully ordered, divinely inspired, and preserved without alteration.[76] Textual stability is guaranteed by institutional custody: priestly genealogies, prophetic succession, and scrupulous copying.[77] Jews, he insists, would die not only for their laws as norms but also for the books themselves. Martyrdom becomes an argument about textual integrity.

This canon is curated. Josephus presents Jewish writing as coextensive with scripture and he omits any "Jewish Hellenistic" non-scriptural writing. The simplification is strategic. By comparing a unified sacred corpus with the proliferating mass of Greek secular writings, he constructs a bibliographic asymmetry that favors Jewish antiquity and discipline.[78] The move is apologetic rather than descriptive, but its force lies precisely in its manipulation of bibliographic categories.

The tension within Josephus' project becomes most visible in his engagement with hostile Egyptian intellectuals such as Manetho, Chaeremon,

[75] ἀναγραφή, -ῆς, ἡ: 26 occurrences; ἀναγράφω: 6 occurrences, according to a TLG search.

[76] Joseph., *C. Ap*. 1.38–42. See Mason, "Josephus and His Twenty-Two Book Canon," 110–127; Ossandón Widow, *The Origins of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible: An Analysis of Josephus and 4 Ezra.* I am not entering the debate of the Jewish canon here. Suffice it to say, with Mason, that the passage is a rhetorical claim of institutional reliability and cultural stability, not evidence for a neatly delimited canon with recoverable internal shape.

[77] Joseph., *C. Ap*. 1.29–43, especially 1.29–31, 1.37–41, and 1.42.

[78] Compare the criticism of the terminology of "Bible" in Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity*, 19–50.

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and Apion. Josephus argues that these figures do not merely attack the Jews: The problem is that they subsume Jewish origins into Egyptian historiography,[79] subordinating Judean history to another archive. Josephus responds by refining his bibliographic criteria. Egyptian sources are reliable only when they adhere to their own ancient annals and become mendacious when they deviate from them.[80] Apion, despite his status as *grammatikos*, is condemned for mishandling sources, innovating without warrant, and preferring calumny to recognized historians.[81] Correct history, Josephus implies, depends on ethnic and archival propriety: each author must remain within the ethnic archive to which he belongs.

This logic ultimately serves to validate Josephus' own enterprise. The *Antiquities* are presented as a controlled transcription of the Jewish archive;[82] the *War* as autoptic history. Bibliographic imagination thus culminates in authorial self-fashioning, as in many manuscripts, the *Vita* becomes the appendix of the *Antiquities*. Josephus constructs himself as the authorized mediator of Jewish history, positioned between ancestral records and imperial readership.[83] In his hands, apologetics becomes inseparable from the construction of the archive itself: A struggle not only over what Jews believe or do, but over where their books belong, who may speak for them, and under what conditions their texts can claim authority in an imperial world.

Against the Greek Library: Tatian, Theophilus, Origen, Pseudo-Justin

Josephus' reorganization of the archive is not something later authors can simply assume. Origen suggests that even Celsus, while prepared to concede the weight of a "barbarian" tradition and to treat it as an authoritative repository, refuses to grant the Jews a place on those shelves: They are singled out for exclusion, omitted from the very library whose authority he otherwise acknowledges.[84]

Nevertheless, a certain number of second-century apologists will pick up Josephus' trailblazing reasoning, exploiting their barbarian

[79] Joseph., *C. Ap*. 1.73–74.
[80] Joseph., *C. Ap*. 1.227–229.
[81] Joseph., *C. Ap*. 2.2–3.
[82] On Josephus' representations of the past, see most recently Göppinger, *Moribus antiquis res stat Iudaea virisque: Exempla in Flavius Josephus' Antiquitates Iudaicae*, 2025.
[83] See especially Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, and Mason, "Josephus as a Roman Historian."
[84] Origen, *Cels.* 1.14. On Celsus, see the recent volume, Carleton Paget, and Gathercole, eds., *Celsus in his World: Philosophy, Polemic and Religion in the Second Century*.

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proclaimed identity in a second-sophistic mode, paralleled by Philo of Byblos or Lucian of Samosata. If Josephus works within the imperial library, translating Jewish authority into its languages of citation, antiquity, and cultural parity, Tatian (c.120–180) marks a sharp turn.[85]

A self-proclaimed Assyrian, a "heretic" encratite according to Irenaeus, or a proto-manichean gnostic for some scholars, as well as the author of a gospel harmony,[86] Tatian seems at once at the margins of the empire, of "orthodox Christianity," and often enough, of modern scholarship.[87] Yet Eusebius confirms that he had written many works and he values his apologetic work in particular. In the last decades, in spite of the lingering obscurity of his biography, he has been recognized as a figure worth investigating.[88]

His *Oratio ad Graecos* (c. 150–178 CE) is especially important to my argument for two reasons: first, because it is centered on writing (τὴν διὰ γραμμάτων παιδείαν). Second, because instead of trying to establish a connection between the archive of "scriptures" and the Greek library, as his Jewish predecessors and Christian contemporaries did, including his teacher Justin,[89] he refuses admission to the Greek library and instead harshly attacks it as a regime of books: derivative, proliferating, and epistemically unstable:[90]

[85] As Laura Nasrallah "*Mapping the World: Justin, Tatian, Lucian, and the Second Sophistic*," 283–314 has shown, Tatian' project fits very well within the Second Sophistic, especially aligning with Lucian's reflections on his own identity and critique of his cultural world. Josephus, Tatian, and Lucian have more in common, as shown by Niehoff "Parodies of Educational Journeys in Josephus, Justin Martyr and Lucian." See also Whitmarsh, "Justin, Tatian and the Forging of a Christian Voice."

[86] It has been argued that Tatian's ascetic, encratite identity was a construction: See discussion in Koltun-Fromm, "Re-imagining Tatian: The Damaging Effects of Polemical Rhetoric," 1–30; Crawford, "The Problemata of Tatian: Recovering the Fragments of a Second-Century Christian Intellectual," 542–575.

[87] But see now: Crawford, "The problemata of Tatian: Recovering the fragments of a second-century Christian intellectual, 542–575; Lössl, "1 The Religious Innovator Tatian: A Precursor of Mani in Syrian Christianity?"; Adler, "The Creation of Christian Elite Culture in Roman Syria and the Near East," 900. For Tatian's "barbarism," see also Antonova, *Barbarian or Greek? The Charge of Barbarism and Early Christian Apologetics*, 146–162. On Tatian's Oratio in general, see Nesselrath, Heinz-Günther, ed., *Gegen falsche Götter und falsche Bildung: Tatian, Rede an die Griechen. Eingeleitet, übersetzt und mit interpretierenden*.

[88] See, in addition, Fojtik, "Tatian the Barbarian: Language, Education and Identity in the Oratio ad Graecos;" Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, 261–263; Gemeinhardt, "Tatian und die antike Paideia. Ein Wanderer zwischen zwei (Bildungs-) Welten," 247–286.

[89] See Gemeinhardt, "Tatian und die antike Paideia," 264: "Hatte dieser (wie die meisten Apologeten) die christliche 'Philosophie' als Bestandteil, ja Kern des griechischen Bildungskosmos zu erweisen versucht, so dass die Griechen gerade im Christentum das Ziel ihrer eigenen philosophischen Suche erblicken sollten, so forderte Tatian die Hellenen zur Rückkehr zur, barbarischen Bildung' auf, der sie doch alles verdankten, was bei ihnen wertgeschätzt werde."

[90] Text from Nesselrath, *Gegen falsche Götter und falsche Bildung: Tatian, Rede an die Griechen. Eingeleitet, übersetzt und mit interpretierenden*, 82. My transl.

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> 26.1 Παύσασθε λόγους ἀλλοτρίους θριαμβεύοντες καὶ ὥσπερ ὁ κολοιὸς οὐκ ἰδίοις ἐπικοσμούμενοι πτεροῖς· ἑκάστη πόλις, ἐὰν ἀφέληται τὴν ἰδίαν αὐτῆς ἀφ' ὑμῶν λέξιν, ἐξαδυνατήσουσιν ὑμῖν τὰ σοφίσματα. 26.2 Ζητοῦντες τίς ὁ θεός, τίνα τὰ ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀγνοεῖτε· κεχηνότες δὲ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν κατὰ βαράθρων πίπτετε. Λαβυρίνθοις ἐοίκασιν ὑμῶν τῶν βιβλίων αἱ ἀναθέσεις*, οἱ δὲ ἀναγινώσκοντες τῷ πίθῳ τῶν Δαναΐδων.
>
> Stop triumphantly parading foreign works and, like the jackdaw, adorning yourselves with feathers not your own. Each city, if it takes away from you its own style, will render your sophistries powerless for you. Seeking who God is, and what the things in you are, you do not know; gaping up toward the sky, you fall down into chasms. The dispositions of your books resemble labyrinths, and those who read them are like the jar of the Danaids.

Thus, Greek βιβλία are not repositories of truth but generate of confusion. The metaphor is structural and rhetorical. Greek book culture is figured as a Roman (!) victor's triumphal parade over the vanquished (θριαμβεύοντες). This is a striking reversal of Josephus' depiction of the Torah being carried around during the Roman triumph after the victory over the Jews: In this metaphor, the Greeks are mocked as Romans conducting a cultural Roman triumph that only stresses their own theft. It produces endless circulation without resolution, perpetual reading without knowledge. Truth is rendered unreachable by the very architecture of discourse. The library, implicitly, is not a place of order but a maze that exhausts its readers.[91] The philosophers too have "divided up the truth" and given names to the parts of truth. Even linguistically, the grammarians have caused a "war of letters," creating the diversity of Greek dialects[92] and the privileged place of Atticism,[93] which all attest to the confusing multiplicity and division of Greek culture.

Like Josephus, Tatian opposes his civilization to that of the Greeks by using typically Greek arguments, mobilizing catalogs of authors, competing chronologies, and source criticism to expose the instability of Greek archives and to assert the priority, coherence, and divine inspiration of "barbarian" writings.[94] Tatian's anthropology and his bibliographic polemic are structurally parallel: The scattered self (σκορπίζων ἑαυτόν)[95] is the analogue of the Greek library-world he attacks as

[91] Compare Hippolyt., *Her*. 10.5.1: 'labyrinth of heresies' (τὸν λαβύρινθον τῶν αἱρέσεων).
[92] Tatian, *Or. Graec*. 1.
[93] Tatian, *Or. Graec*. 27.
[94] See Peter Gemeinhardt, "Tatian. Gegen falsche Götter und falsche Bildung."
[95] Tatian, *Or. Graec.* 30.1–2.

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labyrinthine, proliferative, and endlessly divisive. In both cases, multiplicity replaces unity, dispersion replaces gathering, and what should lead to truth instead produces wandering.[96] For Tatian, "one gains redemption through an intellectual soteriology, a soteriology discovered by reading the ancient scriptures."[97]

His own audacious textual intervention, the *Diatessaron*, translates his critique into practice.[98] By weaving four authoritative narratives (the gospels) into a single continuous account, Tatian does something programmatic with Christian textuality: He curates, harmonizes, and disciplines plurality. Even if the harmony is not presented as "apologetic" in the same register as the *Oratio*, it replaces the noisy abundance of competing logoi with a controlled, unified scriptural voice. In that sense the *Diatessaron* is a bibliographic act with apologetic stakes: It is not merely a tool for reading, but a claim about what a truthful corpus should look like: one narrative, one teaching, one rule of coherence made visible in the very form of the book. In a way, it resembles Josephus' strategy in presenting "Jewish literature" as a stable canon of twenty-two books.

This conversion also seemingly includes turning away from Rome, which is not portrayed in bibliographic terms, but provides the sociopolitical infrastructure for bad textuality:[99] Against Rome as a culture of display, patronage, and spectacle,[100] Tatian's "barbarian writings" are deliberately represented as anti-imperial texts: unadorned, unmonumental, unprofitable, and yet authoritative. Rome thus provides the negative background against which Tatian's bibliographic revaluation becomes intelligible.

The rejection of Greek paideia is not only literary: It is a rejection of cultic objects (statues) and rites (mysteries, cults) that Tatian claims to have personally experienced and abandoned in favor of barbarian

[96] Crawford has usefully analyzed the focus of Tatian on ordering knowledge in "'Reordering the Confusion': Tatian, the Second Sophistic, and the so-called Diatessaron," 235–236.
[97] Koltun-Fromm, "Re-imagining Tatian," 15.
[98] On the Diatessaron, see, Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship*; Crawford, "The Diatessaron, Canonical or Non-canonical? Rereading the Dura Fragment," 253–277 and Crawford and Zola, *The Gospel of Tatian: Exploring the Nature and Text of the Diatessaron*.
[99] Tatian, *Or. Graec.* 35.2.
[100] Tatian, *Or. Graec.* 19: "some of them receive from the king of the Romans 600 aurei yearly"; 28: "but by the Romans, who endeavour to collect herds of boys like grazing horses, it is honoured with certain privileges" and "having found among the Romans their Latiarian Jupiter delighting in human gore"; 34: "whom the Romans compared to a sow"; 35: "when sojourning in the city of the Romans, I inspected the multiplicity of statues"; "bidding farewell to the arrogance of Romans and the idle talk of Athenians."

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writings. His own conversion is narrated as his encounter with "barbarian books":[101]

> Περινοοῦντι δέ μοι τὰ σπουδαῖα συνέβη γραφαῖς τισὶν ἐντυχεῖν βαρβαρικαῖς, πρεσβυτέραις μὲν ὡς πρὸς τὰ Ἑλλήνων δόγματα, θειοτέραις δὲ ὡς πρὸς τὴν ἐκείνων πλάνην· καί μοι πεισθῆναι ταύταις συνέβη διὰ τε τῶν λέξεων τὸ ἄτυφον καὶ τῶν εἰπόντων τὸ ἀνεπιτήδευτον καὶ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς ποιήσεως τὸ εὐκατάληπτον καὶ τῶν μελλόντων τὸ προγνωστικόν καὶ τῶν παραγγελμάτων τὸ ἐξαίσιον καὶ τῶν ὅλων τὸ μοναρχικόν.
>
> And while I was reflecting upon serious matters, I happened to read certain barbarian writings, older in relation to the doctrines of the Greeks, and more divine in relation to their error. And I turned out to be persuaded by these, on account of the unpretentious character of the words, and the uncontrived character of those who spoke them, and the readily intelligible nature of the making of the whole, and the foreknowing character of the things to come, and the extraordinary character of the commandments, and the monarchic character of all things.[102]

While Tatian heavily relies on Mosaic scripture to establish Christian antiquity, as scholars have observed, he never mentions Jews or Judaism in the *Oratio ad Graecos*. His polemic is directed exclusively against Greek culture, and Jewish scripture functions only as an anonymous "barbarian" archive, detached from any living Jewish community. Tatian, like Josephus, self-fashions as a "barbarian," but his barbarian identity is strikingly unstable. He presents himself as ethnically Assyrian ("born in the land of the Assyrians"),[103] yet the archive he claims as authoritative is not Assyrian but Judean/Jewish: Moses and the scriptural tradition. In other words, his "barbarian" is not a single inherited identity (people and books) but a composite one, stitched together across ethnic and textual lines. Josephus can champion the archive of his own ancestry; Tatian must have been confronted with the question of why an Assyrian by origin and Greek by culture abandons the Greco-Roman cultural world in which he was trained in order to attach himself to a different barbarian lineage, anchored in Jewish scripture and now reframed as Christian truth. His

[101] On "barbarians" and Hellenism, see Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization*; Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity*, 112. As Laura Nasrallah has shown, Lucian is actually quite close to Tatian identity wise: Nasrallah, "Mapping the World: Justin, Tatian, Lucian, and the Second Sophistic," 283–314.

[102] Tatian, *Or. Graec*. 29.2. My translation.

[103] Tatian, *Or. Graec.* 42.

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answer to that question is, unlike his fellow apologists, strategic silence. The omission permits a bibliographic appropriation of Jewish antiquity without any ethnographic acknowledgment of Judaism or Judean-ness as a present community, thereby transforming a living tradition into a transferable archive.

The most important move by Tatian that impressed – if not Irenaeus – Clement and Eusebius is his chronographic proof: A staple of Christian apologetics, it demonstrates that "our philosophy" (the barbarian/Jewish-Christian tradition) predates Greek civilization. While scholars have often framed his arguments around the concept of *paideia*,[104] his procedure is also explicitly documentary and comparative: He selects Moses and Homer as chronological termini because each functions as the earliest authoritative node within a textual archive. In fact, he goes even further, seeking

> with all accuracy to make it clear that Moses is not only older than Homer, but than all the writers (συγγραφεῖς) that were before him – older than Linus, Philammon, Thamyris, Amphion, Musæus, Orpheus, Demodocus, Phemius, Sibylla, Epimenides of Crete, who came to Sparta, Aristæus of Proconnesus, who wrote the Arimaspia, Asbolus the Centaur, Isatis, Drymon, Euclus the Cyprian, Horus the Samian, and Pronapis the Athenian.[105]

While these characters are obviously not all historiographers or even writers, in Tatian's ironical (even humorous) speech,[106] συγγραφεῖς mean names that function as textual authorities in the Greek archive: poets, seers, even mythical figures under whom traditions circulate as attributed works. He deliberately flattens them into a bibliographic list so he can claim Moses is older than the whole Greek shelf of ancient, venerable authorities.

Tatian, like Josephus, claims not only that the Greek archive is later than Moses, but also derivative of it.[107] Derivation makes it not only

[104] See Gemeinhardt, "Tatian und die antike Paideia," 257–259.

[105] Tatian, *Or. Graec.* 41.1 Τὸ δὲ νῦν συνέχον, σπευστέον μετὰ πάσης ἀκριβείας σαφηνίζειν ὡς οὐχ Ὁμήρου μόνον πρεσβύτερός ἐστιν ὁ Μωυσῆς, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ συγγραφέων.

[106] See Inowlocki, "Laughing at the Greeks: Ridicule and Seriousness in Tatian's *Ad Graecos*."

[107] Tatian, *Or. Graec.* 40. On this idea, there is ample bibliography starting with Droge, *The Attic Moses: The Dependency Theme in Some Early Christian Writers* and Pilhofer, *Presbyteron kreitton: Der Altersbeweis der jüdischen und christlichen Apologeten und seine Vorgeschichte*.

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secondary but also damages it: Greek sophists misunderstand these writings and tamper with them, they appropriate them as their own, lying and bastardizing the pure doctrine of the logos. Tatian does not go as far as claiming theft, but he still understands the scripture as πηγή ("source") for the sophists and philosophers. Theophilus of Antioch uses κλέπτω ("to steal") to make sense of the similarities between the claims of the poets and "the law and the prophets."[108] Justin also considers that Plato has read and misinterpreted Moses,[109] referring to the Timaeus. In both cases, the borrowing is seen as a betrayal, a misinterpretation, a rupture with the original archive, not a legitimate continuation. The same idea, but devoid of polemical tone, is made explicit in Numenius of Apamea's famous saying, "what is Plato but Moses atticizing?"[110] No idea of theft in this question, which flattens the difference between the two while keeping Moses' precedence subtle.

Tatian's chronology is thus best read as comparative archival polemics: His chronographic proof certainly works through texts and authorities. His documentary sequencing serves a broader apologetic aim (anti-sophistic, anti-allegorical, and pro-"barbarian philosophy"), so chronology and bibliographic listing function as one powerful instrument within a larger cultural and theological polemic.

Theophilus of Antioch, while not claiming for himself any oriental roots like Tatian,[111] also inherits the Josephan apologetic apparatus. Theophilus, however, is difficult to situate geographically, chronologically, or even as a Christian with precision.[112] As a matter of fact, he is one of the earliest Christians to cite Josephus by name. He situates his exchange with Autolycus on bibliographic grounds, reproaching him to be an "investigator of all things" who would spend nights "in libraries," except when Christianity is concerned.[113] In other words, Theophilus must make Christianity legible for a reader indifferent to its library. This is why, one can surmise, he provides so many citations throughout.

[108] Theoph., *Ad Aut.* 2.37.
[109] Justin, *Apol* 1.60.1.
[110] Numenius F 8, des Places, pp. 50–51 (= Clement, *Strom.*1.50.4).
[111] On Theophilus, see R. Grant's works: "The Decalogue in Early Christianity," 1–17; "Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus," 227–256; "The Problem of Theophilus," 179–96; "The Bible of Theophilus of Antioch," 173–196.
[112] Scholarship has focused on his silence regarding Jesus Christ, including Grant, until Curry, "The Theogony of Theophilus," 324–325 and Schoedel, "Theophilus of Antioch: Jewish Christian?" 279–297.
[113] Theoph., *Ad Aut.* 3.4.15.

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Theophilus's chronological project in *Ad Autolycum* 3 is best read not simply as a smoother, less polemical version of the "Greeks are late" topos, but as an exercise in bibliographic imagination. Josephus, one of his most important sources, provides quotations of Berossus, Menander of Ephesus, and he also uses Manetho, Thallus, and Chryseros.[114] He explicitly targets the library habitus of the educated pagan (Autolycus) and reframes the stakes: It is not only that "our books" are older; it is that pagan libraries are morally and intellectually corrupting: they "fill libraries" with teachings that socialize vice from childhood.[115] In short, antiquity becomes an argument not only about when texts were written, but also about which library or archive deserves to train the reader. Meanwhile he offers a rival mode of learnedness: A compendious, ordered archive anchored in Moses/prophets and verified by chronographic lists and synchronisms.

Both Josephus and Theophilus use antiquity to perform "bibliographic sovereignty": They answer cultural marginality by claiming control over time, texts, and transmission. Josephus uses antiquity to elevate Jewish tradition into the empire's prestige economy, while Theophilus uses antiquity to recode pagan learning as corrupt and to install Christian reading as the true continuation and completion of that older, more ethical, archive.

His timeline is built out of texts, named historians, and archival locations: an Egyptian regnal sequence mediated through Manetho; Tyrian royal archives made by Tyrian kings[116] that allegedly still subsist; king lists preserved by Menander of Ephesus; Josephus, who has recorded the *War* brought to the Jews by the Romans, or Berossus who studied Chaldean philosophy.[117] Finally, Roman archives are also brought to the fore, even though Theophilus renounces spelling all consuls by way of avoiding dullness. He sends his reader back to the records compiled by Chryseros the Nomenclator, a freedman of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, that apparently included names and dates[118] before providing a chronology of the emperors derived from it.

This appeal to documentary repositories and preserved records as the infrastructure that makes dating possible allows for the biblical

[114] Manetho: *Ad Aut*. 3.20–21; Menander of Ephesus: *Ad Aut.* 3.22–23; Josephus: *Ad Aut*. 3.23; Chryseros: *Ad Aut.* 3.27; Thallus: *Ad Aut*. 3.29; Berossus: *Ad Aut.* 3.29.
[115] Theoph., *Ad Aut.* 3.6.19.
[116] Theoph., *Ad Aut.* 2.22.
[117] Theoph., *Ad Aut*. 3. 29.
[118] Theoph., *Ad Aut*. 3.27.

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chronology to be put on full display. Chronology here is produced by collation of writings and by the ability to move between archives and their custodians – Egyptian, Tyrian/Phoenician, Jewish, and Roman – so that historical time emerges as the outcome of a documentary network. In this sense, Theophilus turns a polemical demand (proving the antiquity of Christianity) into a broader claim about authority: The past becomes legible through the assembly of an interlocking archive, where books and records do the work that magistracies and festivals do in Roman and Greek civic historiography. The Greek (and Roman) library is thereby decentered, shifted to the side in favor of a more trustworthy repository of barbarian archives.[119]

Notably, this movement is not confined to the barbarian, Jewish, Greek, and Christian archives. Clement extends the same logic inward, treating heresy itself as a rival archive and, more precisely, as a rival genealogy of books.[120] When he distinguishes "true gnōsis" from false claims, he is not only evaluating doctrines but also policing lineages of transmission: which teachers, which interpretations, and which writings can legitimately claim continuity with the apostolic and prophetic deposit. Orthodoxy, in this perspective, is not simply a set of correct propositions but the right chain of custody: the right succession of readers, teachers, and texts, and therefore the right file to inherit. Scripture is authoritative only when read within its proper pedagogical and ecclesial frame, not when detached and reactivated within alternative textual constellations or private regimes of interpretation. This becomes especially clear in *Stromateis* VII, where Clement's portrait of the "true gnostic" is constructed through contrasts in reading practices and authorities: Stromateis 7.17.106.1–3: οἱ δὲ αἱρετικοὶ νεωτερίζουσιν, ἐπεισαγαγόντες ἑαυτοῖς δόγματα ἴδια, καὶ ἐκτὸς τῆς παραδόσεως τῆς ἀποστολικῆς:[121] "The heretics innovate,

[119] See Adler, "The Creation of Christian Elite Culture in Roman Syria and the Near East," 765–767: Africanus offers a clean counterexample to Theophilus's literary-chronological polemic: While Theophilus mobilizes regnal lists and archival authorities to prove Greek lateness and to graft Christianity onto an ancient Hebraic past, Africanus treats chronology less as cultural denunciation and more as a problem of historical method. He combines the Christian era "from Adam" with the Olympiad era, synchronizes king-lists and calendars, weighs evidence through autopsy and artifacts, and even consults variant biblical readings – reframing the issue not as "Greeks lack antiquity" but as how an integrated world history is possible when pre-Olympiad Greek records are "muddled".

[120] The classical study on that topic remains Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque, IIe–IIIe siècles*.

[121] Ed. Stählin–Früchtel, "*Clemens Alexandrinus, Band 3: Stromata VII und VIII* (GCS 17): 76" transl. ANF, adapted.

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introducing doctrines of their own, and thus stand outside the apostolic tradition." The true gnostic reads comprehensively yet hierarchically, integrating diverse materials into an ordered economy of truth; the false teacher absolutizes fragments, novelty, or isolated insights. He thereby produces not merely error but an illegitimate archive, a disordered and unauthorized configuration of texts.

Another strategy of shelf reorganization in an ethnic context is revealed in Ps.-Justin's *Cohortatio ad Graecos*. This author has been identified as Marcellus of Ancyra, Eusebius' foe in *Contra Marcellum*.[122] If this is correct, the treatise should be dated to the fourth century. In it he reconfigures the origins and, therefore, the archival status of two of his main sources: the oracles of the Sibyl of Cumae, and the Septuagint.

Introducing the Jewish/Christian pseudepigraphic oracles under the Sibyl of Cumae's name, he reanchors her authority in an explicitly eastern genealogy: She is said to be of "Babylonian origin, being the daughter of Berosus, the author of Chaldaean History,"[123] and only after "crossing over … into the region of Campania," to have delivered her oracles at Cumae.[124] This is the inverse of the standard dependency story: The Sibyl is not presented as a Greek witness who borrows (directly or indirectly) from Moses and the prophets; she is made to originate from the same geographic and ethnic zone, so that her prophetic authority appears native to that region and only secondarily transplanted into a Hellenic/Italian setting. The effect is a deliberate archival relocation. What Greek cultural memory treats as part of Italy's sacred landscape is reframed as the export of a Mesopotamian, "Chaldaean" world, now made available for Christian argument. The Sibyl's dossier is thus re-shelved as a Barbarian (and implicitly Jewish-adjacent) library, genealogically tethered to Berossus and his historiography rather than to the Greek canon.

[122] Ps. Justin has been identified as Marcellus of Ancyra by Riedweg (Riedweg, *Ps.-Justin (Markellos von Ancyra?), Ad Graecos de vera religione (bisher Cohortatio ad Graecos): Einleitung und Kommentar*), accepted by Pouderon (Pouderon, ed. and trans. *Pseudo-Justin: Ouvrages apologétiques: Exhortation aux Grecs (Marcel d'Ancyre?)*, *Discours aux Grecs, Sur la monarchie*) and others.

[123] Somewhat following Pausanias 10.12.9 (Jones and Ormerod, vol. 5: 293): "Later than Demo there grew up among the Hebrews above Palestine a woman who gave oracles and was named Sabbe. They say that the father of Sabbe was Berosus, and her mother Erymanthe. But some call her a Babylonian Sibyl, others an Egyptian."

[124] On the Sibyls, see Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles: With Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on the First and Second Books*; Lafontaine, *Hellénisme et prophétie: Les Oracles sibyllins juifs et chrétiens*, and now Stewart Lester, Leventhal, Najman, Scott, and Stell, eds. *'Listen to the Sibyl'*.

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His account of the translation of the Hebrew bible in Greek is worth considering here as well. Omitting the name of his source, Pseudo-Justin suggests to those who argue that scriptures were written in Greek (and are thus not an older, eastern tradition) to read "inquiries from the outside" (ταῖς ἔξωθεν ἐντυχὼν ἱστορίαις).[125] After mentioning that the Greek king was astonished that seventy translators got the same translation, he claims that the king "revered the books as divine and placed them there [i.e., in the library]" (ἐκπλαγεὶς … τὰς δὲ βίβλους ἐκθειάσας, ὡς εἰκός, ἐκεῖσε ἀνέθηκεν).[126] He takes as a proof for his claims the testimony of Philo and Josephus and he also constructs credibility through eyewitness inspection, local tradition, and the testimony of local informants:

> ἀλλ' αὐτοὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ γενόμενοι καὶ τὰ ἴχνη τῶν οἰκίσκων ἐν τῇ Φάρῳ ἑωρακότες ἔτι σωζόμενα, καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἐκεῖ ὡς τὰ πάτρια παρειληφότων ἀκηκοότες.
>
> But we ourselves have been in Alexandria and have seen the traces of the little lodgings on Pharos, still preserved, and we have heard [these things] from the people there who have received them as ancestral tradition.[127]

This passage enacts an authority-building operation structurally comparable to the handling of the Sibyl and Philo's narrative. Authority is shifted away from an institutional archive and anchored instead in a narrated origin: The Septuagint's legitimacy is grounded not in a library or a corpus but in place (Alexandria, Pharos), in autopsy ("we ourselves have been there"), and in locally transmitted ancestral memory ("those who have received these things as tradition"). Autopsy and oral continuity thus assume the work that archival custody would normally perform. At the same time, the appeal to Philo and Josephus provides an elite apparatus of corroboration, learned witnesses who do not constitute the archive but secure its credibility once it has been relocated, much as Berossus functions for the Sibyl. The same logic is at work in both episodes: Pseudo-Justin dislodges authoritative texts from their expected settings (Roman inscriptional space for the Sibyl; the Hellenistic library for the Septuagint) and reinscribes them within a "barbarian" or Jewish genealogy of transmission. What matters is therefore not physical possession or institutional preservation, but a crafted narrative of origins that renders these texts ancient, divinely authorized, and properly housed.

[125] Ps. Justin, *Cohort*, 13.
[126] Ps. Justin, *Cohort*. 13.
[127] Ps. Justin, *Cohort*. 13. My transl.

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The library remains on the map, but authority migrates toward inspired beginnings, witnessed sites, reputable intermediaries, and providential custodianship (synagogue rather than Mouseion; Babylon rather than Cumae; Pharos rather than library stacks), producing an alternative archive whose legitimacy is genealogical, geographic, and theological rather than institutional.

5 Christian Apologetic Reappropriations of Jewish Archives

Jewish Custodianship and Christian Control

Roman "Pagans" and Christians both develop a politics of books in which authority is demonstrated by custody: whoever can preserve, organize, and circulate a revered textual heritage can claim the right to speak for it. Yet the two models reverse the direction of legitimacy. In the Roman case,[128] custodianship is self-authorizing. Rome presents itself as the capable heir of Greek paideia: It collects, edits, teaches, and often translates Greek texts, turning them into an imperial resource. Greece remains the prestigious source, but Roman power is displayed precisely in its ability to administer that prestige at scale: libraries, schools, patrons, and a Latinizing infrastructure that makes Hellenic culture governable and universal.[129]

The Christian construction of Jewish custodianship operates differently. Here custodianship is hetero-authorizing: The synagogue becomes a providential "control archive" for Christian claims.[130] Jews preserve the Law and the Prophets not as neutral co-owners, but as the guardians of texts whose true meaning, and thus whose real possession, Christians claim through fulfillment and reclassification. Jewish otherness is therefore structurally necessary: because Jews are not Christians,

[128] For the Roman side, see, for example, Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome*, esp. 269–270; Wallace-Hadrill, *Rome's Cultural Revolution*, 3–37; Habinek, *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity, and Empire in Ancient Rome*, 15–68; König, *Greek Literature in the Roman Empire*.

[129] See Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek: Culture, Identity and the Civilizing Process in the Roman East," 116–143.

[130] For Augustine's influential construction of Jews as providential "witnesses" who preserve the Scriptures for Christian proof, see for a (too?) positive account Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, 265; Cohen, "Revisiting Augustine's Doctrine of Jewish Witness"; and Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity*, 23–35. For Jerome's appeal to the *Hebraica veritas* and the (ambivalent) reliance on Jewish linguistic and textual expertise, see Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the "Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim"*; Rebenich, "Jerome: The '*Vir Trilinguis*' and the '*Hebraica Veritas*,'" 50–77; Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity*, 21–102.

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their custody can be invoked as external verification, insulating the Church from the charge of fabrication. But this same logic displaces Jewish interpretive sovereignty. Preservation is redescribed as service; the custodian remains visible so that Christian freedom and mastery can be seen by contrast. In short, the Christian notion of Jews as custodians is appropriation as well as displacement: Jews keep the books, but the Church claims ownership over the archive, its interpretation, and its promulgation.

Among Christian apologists, custodianship of scripture is notably conceived in the framework of the library articulated in *Aristeas*, which had long-lasting consequences for the negotiation of identity in Christian apologetic writing: not only in pagan–Christian polemics but also (and no less importantly) in apologetic writings concerned with Jewish–Christian debates and the internal reconfiguration of scriptural authority. The Christian rewriting of the translation of the Septuagint sees the irruption of a Roman component, leading to stakes that are quite different from that of *Aristeas*.

In *Apology* 1.31 Justin retells the translation story, but with striking adjustments. The books requested by the Egyptian king are no longer "the Law" but "the books of the prophets," and these prophets are said to have arranged their prophecies into books that were carefully preserved by the "Jewish kings" – not priests – who happened to be reigning at the time.[131] Jewish scripture thus appears, from the outset, as a royal archive guarded, ordered, and stabilized but within Jewish dynastic custody. More surprisingly still, the addressee of the Egyptian request is no longer Eleazar the high priest, as in Aristeas, but Herod: not a priestly custodian of the Temple, but a quasi-Roman king. This unique shift pulls the Roman world into the bibliographic scene, since Herod, known from Josephus and from the Gospel tradition, figures as the most Romanized of Jewish rulers.

At this point Justin says nothing about the miracle of the translation or the sanctity of the translators. The point is not to sacralize the Septuagint's production but to render prophecy legible as public, checkable "documentary evidence." The books, he insists, remain accessible "to this day" in Egypt (without naming Alexandria) and are read publicly among the Jews. That claim of availability allows him to pivot from Ptolemaic antiquarianism to contemporary conflict: Jews, under

[131] For a more detailed comparison, see Wasserstein and Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint from Classical Antiquity to Today*, 98–100.

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Bar Kokhba, persecute Christians unless they renounce. The dispute, for Justin, is therefore not primarily one of ownership or custodianship, but of interpretation: "though they read, they do not understand," and they treat Christians as enemies. The logic of the "hostile" or contradictory witness is already being prepared, even if Justin has not yet made it explicit. In the *Dialogue*, however, where scriptures are central, he clearly claims that the Jewish writings were "not yours, but ours."[132] This strategy is strikingly different from his pupil Tatian, whose omission of any reference to Jews and Jewish scriptures suggests bibliographic appropriation without ethnographic acknowledgment, as we have seen.

In his *Cohortatio*, Ps.-Justin' recounts the translation in a manner closer to that of Philo. However, this narrative is not enough for a Christian apologist since the account of the making of the Septuagint clearly concerns Jews, not Christians. Ps.-Justin therefore argues that:[133]

> Τὸ δὲ παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις ἔτι καὶ νῦν τὰς τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ θεοσεβείᾳ διαφερούσας σώζεσθαι βίβλους θείας προνοίας ἔργον ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν γέγονεν· ἵνα γὰρ μὴ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας προκομίζοντες πρόφασιν ῥᾳδιουργίας τοῖς βλασφημεῖν ἡμᾶς βουλομένοις παράσχωμεν, ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν Ἰουδαίων συναγωγῆς ταύτας ἀξιοῦμεν προκομίζεσθαι, ἵνα ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν τῶν ἔτι παρ᾽ αὐτοῖς σωζομένων βιβλίων, ὡς ἡμῖν τὰ πρὸς διδασκαλίαν ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων ἀνδρῶν γραφέντα δίκαια πιστεύηται.
>
> The fact that these books, which differ from our own piety, are preserved among the Jews even to this day is, on our behalf, a work of divine providence. For, in order not to provide a pretext of fraud to those who wish to blaspheme us by claiming that we produce them from the Church, we deem it right to produce them instead from the synagogue of the Jews, so that from the very books still preserved among them it may be clear that the writings composed by the holy men for instruction were written for us.

This passage also shows apologetics operating as custodial argument: Christian claims are stabilized by appealing to a non-Christian library whose very otherness guarantees integrity. The synagogue becomes a providential "control archive," enabling the Church to present its scriptural foundations as externally verified, and therefore immune to the charge of Christian fabrication. This is apologetic and bibliographic imagination at its peak: Biblical writings are not framed as a neutral

[132] Justin, *Dial.* 29.2. On Justin's *Dialogue* and his antiheretic stance, see den Dulk, *Between Jews and Heretics: Refiguring Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho*.

[133] Ps.-Justin, *Cohort. Graec.* 13 (Pouderon, SC 528), my transl.

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"shared heritage," nor as texts simply excluding the Jews. Precisely by keeping them Jewish in custody, the author turns the synagogue into the necessary guardian and guarantor of Christian written promises: the doctrine of the Jews as witnesses.

This argument will be expanded in a stronger anti-Jewish manner by Augustine: In Augustine, Jews are no longer merely *custodes* of Scripture: he recasts them, in a Roman register of household book-labor and triumphal inversion, as literate slaves, a *scrinaria* people "bearing" (*baiulans*) the Law and Prophets *ad testimonium* of the Church's *adsertio*. In the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* this becomes a deliberately visible tableau: Jews as the Christians' *librarii*, like *servi* carrying codices behind their *domini* so that their displayed burden and "trampling" (*conculcantes*) functions as proof of Christian freedom and mastery.[134]

The image of the library – Alexandria above all – also opens a different apologetic route. When Eusebius quotes *Aristeas* at length in *Praep. ev*. 8. 2–5, the translation and its placement in a Greek imperial repository serve less to secure custodianship than to authorize universality: rendered into Greek and lodged in the emblematic archive of Hellenic learning, the prophetic promises become publicly accessible and world-facing precisely by being extracted from a community that, in Eusebius' polemical framing, had deliberately kept these promises hidden (contrary to what Josephus claimed).[135] Thus, the Christian appropriation of the legend of the Septuagint by the apologists opens the library to another conflict, another point of pressure: the question of the Jews and of the textual heritage.

It is also strikingly different from Origen's argument in the *Contra Celsum:* instead of arguing that the Septuagint opened up the doors of universality for the holy scriptures, Origen argues against Celsus' accusations of esotericism, that "the Jews did not hide their sacred writings, but handed them over to the whole nation; and for this reason they have gone out into the whole inhabited world" (οὐ γὰρ ἔκρυψαν τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς πᾶν τὸ ἔθνος παρέδωκαν αὐτά· διὸ καὶ εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐξεληλύθασιν).[136] In bibliographic terms: the Jewish βιβλιοθήκη is exposed to the world, and its exposure is what makes it legitimate.

[134] See the analysis in Barbu, Inowlocki, Issan-Benchimol, Kachuck, and Lemler. "Un peuple témoin: les Juifs chez Augustin et dans l'imaginaire occidental." Forthcoming.
[135] Euseb. *Praep. Ev*. 8.1.7–10.
[136] Origen, *Cels*. 4.32.

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Archive Versus Interpretation: Reading as Bibliographic Supersessionism

Custodianship in apologetic texts is never only about who owns the Scriptures but also about who can interpret them, that is, who can make the archive speak truthfully.

> In the treatise *On Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch declared that the Egyptians did not know how to tell rightly their own myths, having confused them as history in a euhemeristic framework; what was needed was a Greek paraphrase of those myths in order to elucidate the philosophical truths hidden deep within them (*De Iside* 20). This was an interpretive technique that allowed a Greek to speak out of both sides of his mouth: on the one hand, barbarians were allowed consideration as possessors of an ancient wisdom, but on the other hand, they were judged as incapable of understanding that wisdom and thus in need of Greek rationality. The Greeks bore the civilizing burden of helping those who could not help themselves.

So does Aaron Johnson summarize Plutarch's project in the *De Iside et Osiride*.[137] The same structure – archive conceded, interpretive competence denied – maps neatly onto the Jewish-Christian struggle over reading authority staged in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*. Apologetics here is not a debate over whether Scripture is authoritative (both sides grant it), but a struggle over the intelligibility that governs it: Who may read, how passages constrain one another, which horizon organizes the corpus, and which interpretive institutions are trusted.

Justin makes the principle explicit when he remarks that merely "repeating the words" of Scripture is useless without the ability to "explain the argument of them."[138] His practice performs that claim. The argument advances through guided encounters with a prophetic corpus (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Hosea, Malachi, the Psalms, and Moses)[139] whose passages are not simply cited as proof texts but made to be read, excerpted, compared, reentered, and sequenced.[140] Hence Justin's recurrent imperatives ("listen to what is written," "let us attend to the words,"

[137] Johnson, "Early Christianity and the Classical Tradition," 451–467.
[138] Justin, *Dial*. 92.
[139] Esp. *Dial*. 10–30.
[140] On this topic, see the classical Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* and "From Books to Testimonies: Remarks on the Transmission of the Old Testament in the Early Church," 145–163.

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"I will set before you the very words of God"): He stages interpretation as a public exercise in textual attention, in how to traverse an archive.

This is where the bibliographic stakes become visible. Trypho's protest "Why do you select and quote whatever you wish …?"[141] targets not theology as such, but protocol: selection, hierarchy, and relevance. Justin's reply treats omission and reordering as hermeneutic necessity. Moses must be read through prophetic anticipation and eschatological completion; Scripture becomes internally governed by cross-reference. In the extended reading of Psalm 22,[142] Justin exemplifies the effect: He transforms a heterogeneous collection of scrolls into a closed, cross-referential textual order unified by Christ as interpretive key. Apologetics thus operates bibliographically: Christianity is presented not as a rival archive but as the only reading logic that renders the inherited corpus coherent and complete.[143]

The dispute intensifies at the level of textual witnesses when Justin turns to the Septuagint story.[144] Unlike other apologetic deployments of the account, the Septuagint becomes for Justin a contested bibliographic authority. By naming "the Seventy with Ptolemy," he anchors the Greek translation in an external, courtly apparatus of validation; yet he immediately claims that contemporary Jewish teachers deny precisely that apparatus when it yields christological readings, "attempting to frame another."[145] He sharpens the polemic by alleging excisions and supplying a small dossier.[146] Whatever the plausibility of each individual charge, its function is clear: Jewish interpretation is portrayed as managed reading, shaped by living authorities who can redirect meaning through variants, trimming, or rewording. Justin then converts the resulting contest into a procedural rule for debate: Since his accusations will be denied, he will proceed only from passages "still admitted by you."[147] Trypho's demand "We ask you first of all to tell us some of the Scriptures which you allege have been completely cancelled"[148] confirms the shift: The

[141] Justin, *Dial*. 27.1.
[142] Justin, *Dial*. 98–106.
[143] For a postcolonial reading of the *Dialogue*, centered on romanness and hellenism, center and periphery, see Niehoff, "A Jew for Roman tastes: The parting of the ways in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho from a post-colonial perspective," 549–578.
[144] Justin, *Dial*. 68–73.
[145] Justin, *Dial*. 71.
[146] Justin, *Dial*. 72–73: Passages that have been removed by the Jews from Esdras and Jeremiah and the cutting of the words "from the wood" from Psalm 96.
[147] Justin, *Dial*. 71.
[148] Justin, *Dial*. 72.1.

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Dialogue is now about the integrity of textual witnesses and the rival authority structures that claim to curate them.

Seen from this angle, Justin's recurring clashes with Jewish readings of messianic texts, especially the effort to steer prophetic material toward Hezekiah,[149] are not simply interpretive disagreements but disagreements over readerly governance. What counts as a legitimate identification? The decisive credential becomes not the charisma of teachers but competence in reading within a stabilized textual horizon, anchored, for Justin, in the Septuagint as a publicly legible, antiquity-marked baseline.[150] Christian argument is thus staged as governance of legibility: guarding textual conditions,[151] constraining interpretation to agreed common ground,[152] and insisting that the prophetic archive yields Christ only to a reading practice capable of preserving cross-textual coherence.[153]

The same logic culminates in the final movement,[154] where the contest is no longer chiefly whether Jesus is the Christ, but how the symbolic past must be read. Justin imposes new reading relations within the Jewish archive: prophetic texts are made to signify through Christian cross-reading; "Israel" is redefined in terms of faith and understanding rather than genealogy; sacrificial language is reread away from temple cult and into Christian worship and communal practice. Jewish reading is repeatedly characterized as literalistic, piecemeal, and overly attached to surface markers, whereas Christian reading is presented as able to gather dispersed passages into a single narrative horizon and scale from lemma to world. The outcome is not merely a new theology but a new regime of legibility: the same books remain, but their sense is redistributed through new interpretive rules so that Christianity appears as the legitimate interpreter and continuer of the scriptural tradition.

The same tension between custodianship of texts and authority over their interpretation appears, with different emphases, in other apologetic writers of the second and third centuries. Aristides frames Jews and Christians as different economies of transmission:[155] Jewish practice is praised as inherited wisdom (customs "received from forefathers") yet criticized as misdirected observance, a ritual archive oriented toward angels

[149] Justin, *Dial*. 83–84.
[150] Justin, *Dial*. 71, 84.
[151] Justin, *Dial*. 71–73.
[152] Justin, *Dial*. 71.
[153] Justin, *Dial*. 83–85.
[154] Justin, *Dial*. 109–124.
[155] Aristid. *Apol*. 14 and 16.

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rather than God. Christians, by contrast, are explicitly known "from their writings"; the apologist presents himself as a reader whose certainty derives from reading, and he invites the king to do the same: "take their writings and read." Apologetics here becomes directed reading, a conversion proposal that imagines imperial judgment as textual verification.

Clement radicalizes the move by turning it into pedagogy.[156] Justin's struggle over who may rightly read becomes, in Clement, a program for how reading must be trained.[157] Orthodoxy is recoded as a curricular and bibliographic regime: not only right conclusions, but right sequencing of books, teachers, and interpretive habits through which Scripture becomes intelligible. The triptych *Protrepticus–Paedagogus–Stromateis* functions as curricular architecture: exhortation, formation, and finally advanced synthesis. Bibliographically, the claim is striking: Christian authority does not require a rival Alexandrian library so much as a rival regime of reading, where Scripture and the trained Christian intellect become the site where order is produced.[158] This is thematically displayed in *Paed.* 1, where the Pedagogue governs precisely the practices that make texts edifying rather than dangerous. In this sense, Clement systematizes a dynamic already visible in Justin's *Dialogue*: The struggle over Scripture becomes a struggle over the rules and communities that govern how texts are read.

Finally, Justin presses the bibliographic logic beyond Scripture into the production of public records. In *Dial.* 17, Jews are accused not merely of misreading Scripture or rejecting Christ, but of actively producing and circulating a hostile public record about Christians: selecting emissaries, sending them "through all the land," and "publishing" a narrative of Christian godlessness among Gentiles. The charge that the scribes "have the keys" but neither enter nor allow others to enter recasts Jewish authority as gatekeeping power, control over access to meaning exercised to

[156] On Clement and his literary world, see recently Heath, *Clement of Alexandria and the Shaping of Christian Literary Practice: Miscellany and the Transformation of Greco-Roman Writing*.

[157] See esp. Clem. *Str.* 1.1–2 and 1.11. On reading practices in the second and third c., see notably Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities*; Coogan, "Meddling with the Gospel: Celsus, Early Christian Textuality, and the Politics of Reading," 400–422.

[158] On Christian intellectuals, see Secord, *Christian Intellectuals and the Roman Empire: From Justin Martyr to Origen* and König, Langlands, and Uden, eds., *Literature and Culture in the Roman Empire*; Ayres, Champion, and Crawford, eds. The Intellectual World of Late Antique Christianity: Reshaping Classical Traditions. On Clement's *Pedagogue*, see two new studies: Hrůšová, van den Hoek, and Gyurkovics, *Clement of Alexandria's* Paedagogus, and Heath, *Clement of Alexandria and the Judgment of Taste: Pedagogical Rhetoric and Christian Formation*.

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obstruct rather than transmit. This becomes concrete when Justin asks Trypho for permission to quote Isaiah ("Give me permission first of all to quote …" – "I grant it"):[159] The request concerns not Isaiah's authority (shared), but the legitimacy of its use within the dispute.

Most pointedly, Justin narrates Jewish anti-Christian activity in explicitly bibliographic verbs: They "selected" emissaries (ἐκλεξάμενοι) and "cataloged" accusations (καταλέγοντας). The controversy is thus not only about belief or speech but also about archival production: the deliberate selection, ordering, and circulation of a hostile record. Apologetics here becomes counter-publication, a textual intervention designed to repair a polluted archive, reclaim Christianity's public identity, and reassert interpretive sovereignty over both prophetic texts and contemporary testimony. Thus in these apologists, the decisive act of supersession is not acquiring a new archive but imposing a new regime of legibility so that custodianship shifts from owning Israel's books to governing how they are read, transmitted, and made publicly authoritative. Whether the addressees of Justin's *Dialogue* are Jews, or "demiurgists" or any "heretics" does not fundamentally change the strategy, that remains bibliographical.

6 Apology as Library Work

Citation as Archive-Making

The practice of quotation – above all the block quotation that crystallized in the Second Sophistic, of which second-century Christian apologists were also participants – is inseparable from bibliographic imagination. Citation is not merely a way of supplying content or proof. It is a technique of making an archive present. A long extract does more than report what another text says: It stages that text as an authoritative witness, summons its surrounding corpus into view, and implies the existence of a larger, curated repository standing behind the apologist's voice. In this sense, a block quotation functions as a mini-library in condensed form, a portable shelf of authority that renders a distant book materially available inside a new work, and thereby turns textual transmission itself into an argument.[160]

[159] Justin, *Dial.* 50.1.

[160] On citations, the work of Antoine Compagnon remains a classic: Compagnon, *La seconde main, ou le travail de la citation*. Eusebius is an important example of an apologist working with citations and the idea of the library: see Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors* and "Eusebius' Construction of a Christian Culture."

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This starts most visibly with Josephus' *Contra Apionem*.[161] Josephus' use of citation in this work has often, and rightly, been described as legal or forensic in character: his marshaling of witnesses, chronological synchronisms, and hostile testimonies recalls the procedures of the courtroom, where authority is produced through documentation and cross-examination. Yet this juridical allure does not fully account for the logic of his practice. As we have seen, beyond forensic display, Josephus operates with a distinctive conception of the archive that governs not only his use of Jewish texts but also his handling of all testimony, whether Jewish, Greek, or Graeco-Egyptian. What makes a citation relevant is not simply its argumentative utility but its placement within an ordered and transmissible body of writings. Greek historians, Egyptian priests, and Jewish authorities alike are treated as archival witnesses whose value depends on their location within recognizable traditions of recordkeeping and textual continuity. Josephus' strategy thus rests on a bibliographic imagination in which persuasion emerges from the alignment of multiple archives, carefully ordered and mutually legible, rather than from legal rhetoric alone.

In late antiquity, citation becomes an apologetic method in its own right. What distinguishes apologetic citation from earlier literary practices is not simply the frequency of quotation, but the way in which citation is embedded within strategies of collection and aggregation that substitute accumulation for argument.[162] Rather than persuading by advancing propositions, apologetic works increasingly persuade by assembling corpora and by staging texts as witnesses whose sheer number, provenance, and mutual alignment create the impression of inevitability.

Seen in this light, citation in Jewish and Christian apologetics is best understood as a bibliographic operation: A practice of ordering texts into authoritative constellations. Aggregation does not merely support argument; it replaces it. To cite well is to demonstrate belonging to a tradition, a school, an archive, and apologetic persuasion unfolds through the

[161] On citations in the *Contra Apionem*, see Inowlocki, "La pratique de la citation dans le *Contre Apion* de Flavius Josèphe," 371–393.

[162] On apologetic citation as collection/aggregation (testimonia, excerpting, "witness" logic), see Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy*; Skarsaune, "From Books to Testimonies," 145–163; van den Hoek, Annewies, "Techniques of Quotation in Clement of Alexandria: A View of Ancient Literary Working Methods," 223–243; Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*; Morlet, ed. *Lire en extraits: lecture et production des textes de l'Antiquité à la fin du Moyen Âge*; Inowlocki, "Eusebius' Construction of a Christian Culture"; and Letteney, *The Christianization of Knowledge in Late Antiquity: Intellectual and Material Tools of the Theodosian Age*.

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visible performance of that belonging. At the crossroads of Greek philosophical controversy and Jewish archival culture, apologetic citation emerges as a decisive technique for transforming libraries into arguments and collections into instruments of truth.

Of course, Christians and apologists were not the only ones to use citations as arguments. Works such as those of Philodemus of Gadara reveal a similar concern for precise citation, explicit bibliographic reference, and exhaustive accumulation of opponents' positions. In Philodemus' polemical treatises, especially *On Piety*, *On the Stoics*, and *On Rhetoric*, argument is grounded in the systematic collection, attribution, and differentiation of rival doctrines, making exhaustive doxography itself a prerequisite for refutation and a marker of intellectual authority.[163] In this context, aggregation serves a polemical purpose: It rebuts accusations of intellectual superficiality by displaying encyclopedic competence. Citation becomes a way of answering the charge of irrational belief, not by philosophical refutation alone, but by exhibiting disciplined scholarly labor. The apologetic value of citation thus lies in its *fonction d'érudition*[164] as much as in its authority.

By contrast, other aggregative works of antiquity such as those of Athenaeus or Aulus Gellius, illustrate what citation looks like outside an apologetic horizon.[165] Their compilations preserve, display, and circulate cultural memory, but they do not aim to adjudicate truth claims or to close debate. Miscellany here remains open-ended. In apologetic contexts, by contrast, collection tends toward closure: corpora are assembled not to preserve diversity but to stabilize hierarchy, delimit legitimacy, and render dissent marginal.

Like Gellius or Athenaeus, Justin of Rome understood the power of quotations.[166] Even Trypho marvels at Justin's knowledge of the writings of the Jews.[167] Justin's apologetics already presupposes a library as a bounded, coherent corpus of prophetic writings whose authority lies in their mutual concord, but it does not yet thematize it as a

[163] See, for example, Delattre, "Les mentions de titres d'œuvres dans les livres de Philodème," 143–168; Weisser, "Strategies of Polemics in Greek and Roman Philosophy," 205–229.
[164] See Morawski, S., "The Basic Functions of Quotation."
[165] On citations in Athenaeus, see Jacob "La citation comme performance dans les Deipnosophistes d'Athénée," and König, "Athenaeus." On Gellius, see most recently DiGiulio, *Reading Miscellany in the Roman Empire: Aulus Gellius and the Imperial Prose Collection*.
[166] Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities*, 118–136.
[167] Justin, *Dial*. 56.16; cf. 50.1, 65.1

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library; instead, it performs its reorganization silently, through coordinated citation, typological reclassification, and polemical transfer of interpretive authority from Jewish teachers to the Christian community.

The handling of citations varies with the interlocutor. When Tatian writes against the Greeks, he insists he will argue from Greek witnesses, "using the Greeks as allies" and combating his opponents with their own evidentiary standards.[168] The proof unfolds as a staged library effect: By cataloging Greek authorities who disagree on Homer's date (Theagenes, Stesimbrotus, Antimachus, Heraclitus, Ephorus, Philochorus, Zenodotus, Aristophanes, Crates, Eratosthenes, Aristarchus, and Apollodorus), Tatian turns the very abundance of Greek scholarship into evidence of chronological instability, and thus of compromised historiographical authority. He then reanchors time in alternative record regimes: Chaldean, Phoenician, and Egyptian traditions (priests, annals, and translated historians), presented, similarly to Josephus, not as exotic lore but as institutional archives whose value lies in continuous, ordered transmission.

Tatian's bibliographic care is worth noting: When he mentions Berosus, he provides a short bio-bibliography of the author: "A Babylonian, a priest of their god Belus, born in the time of Alexander, composed for Antiochus, the third after him, the history of the Chaldeans in three books"; adding that "Berosus is a very trustworthy man, and of this Juba is a witness, who, writing concerning the Assyrians, says that he learned the history from Berosus: there are two books of his concerning the Assyrians";[169] for the Phoenicians, he writes: "There were among them three men, Theodotus, Hypsicrates, and Mochus; Chaitus translated their books into Greek, and also composed with exactness the lives of the philosophers."[170] In this sense Tatian is already doing, in miniature, what Pamphilus will do for Origen and Eusebius will systematize.

Justin, however, ushers in a different kind of citation method.[171] He reconstructs Scripture as a Christian archive by reassembling a dense multiplicity of prophetic citations into a single, internally coherent file whose unifying principle is the Logos. In the *First Apology* and *Second Apology*, biblical quotations are no longer isolated proofs but components of a cumulative documentary record that demonstrates historical

[168] Tatian, *Or. Graec*. 31.2–4.
[169] Tatian, *Or. Graec*. 36.
[170] Tatian, *Or. Graec*. 37.
[171] On citations in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, see the very useful work of Bobichon, ed., *Dialogue avec Tryphon*.

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continuity, predictive accuracy, and rational coherence. What binds this heterogeneous corpus together is not authorship, genre, or original *Sitz im Leben*, but participation in the Logos:[172] Scripture is retroactively reorganized as a Logos-bearing archive whose dispersed voices now speak with a single truth-value. This same bibliographic logic allows Justin to integrate selected Greek figures without collapsing distinctions. Philosophers such as Socrates or Heraclitus are not treated as parallel authorities but as partial participants in the Logos readers, as it were, who accessed fragments of the same truth without possessing the archive in its fullness.[173] Greek philosophy thus appears as an extrinsic appendix to the Christian scriptural file: valuable insofar as it converges with the Logos, but structurally subordinate to the prophetic archive now reordered under Christian control.

Needless to say, many other apologists resort to citations. For instance, in *Ad Nationes* 11, Tertullian establishes a hostile dossier: He explicitly cites Tacitus and calls him "loquacious in falsehood," then catches him contradicting himself (he opposes the ass-head story to that of Pompey finding no image in the Temple). Thus apologetics becomes source-criticism reading: Tertullian reads Tacitus as a hostile dossier and defeats him by demonstrating incoherence within the archive itself.

However, not all apologists resort to citations explicitly using the opponents' words against the opponent.[174] Nevertheless, they also attest to an archival mindset whose method depends on a curated citational regime. Clement of Alexandria, for instance, writes pages that are a controlled flood of excerpts: He quotes Homer and the tragedians, philosophers and doxographers, alongside biblical texts, not merely to show that he "knows" Greek culture, but to demonstrate that Greek culture can be excerpted, cross-referenced, corrected, and subordinated within a Christian architecture of knowledge.[175] The *Protrepticus* already models this: pagan myths and poems are cited as evidence against pagan worship, while Scripture is introduced as the authoritative key that exposes the moral and theological incoherence of the Greek archive (e.g., the sustained polemic through *Protr*. 2–4, where poetic and cultic materials are treated as textual evidence to be reclassified). In the *Stromateis*, the same practice becomes constructive rather than purely polemical: Clement

[172] See Justin, 1 Apol. 36–53.
[173] See Justin, 1 Apol. 46; 2 Apol. 10, 13.
[174] Compare, for example, Lact., *Inst*. 5.2.
[175] On Clement's citations, see Van Den Hoek, "Techniques of Quotation in Clement of Alexandria," 223–243.

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"catalogs" Greek wisdom as something that can be retained under Christian supervision, as it were, useful as propaedeutic material, but incapable of generating stable truth without the scriptural center and the disciplined interpretive habits he calls *gnōsis* (*Strom*. 1 on philosophy as preparatory; *Strom*. 6–7 on the true gnostic as the mature reader of Scripture and the world).

Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica* (henceforth *Praeparatio*) is especially revealing because it offers a much more structured, panoramic view of Eusebius' Greek bibliographic horizon: what he knows, what he reads, and what he deems worth preserving and mobilizing. What is striking is the rigor with which Eusebius formalizes this practice.[176] Citations are predominantly verbatim, clearly demarcated from the surrounding text, and accompanied by precise bibliographic markers: author, work, and often book number. Even more revealing is Eusebius' explicit theorization of citation itself, through a technical vocabulary that treats excerpts as *testimonia*, *voices*, and *witnesses*. Citation is no longer implicit borrowing or learned allusion, as in much classical literature, but a declared procedure whose transparency is part of its persuasive force. The apologetic claim is not only that some pagan authors support Christian truth, but that Christianity operates according to the highest standards of scholarly exactitude (ἀκρίβεια).

In the *Praeparatio*, Eusebius revisits the nexus of ethnicity and cultural identity already negotiated by Josephus, Tatian, and others (Greeks and "barbarians," Jews and their rivals) but he does so in a distinctly bibliographic key.[177] The work argues less by linear demonstration than by orchestrated accumulation: It builds its case by gathering excerpts as a library gathers books. Authority is produced through placement. By relocating texts from their native contexts into a curated documentary sequence, Eusebius turns citation into a technique of classification, sorting peoples by sorting corpora, and lets the argument emerge from the arrangement itself: which voices are made proximate, which are subordinated, and which are allowed to corroborate or seal one another. In this sense the *Praeparatio* is an archive in action, where the reordering of shelves becomes a reordering of cultural genealogies.[178] In

[176] Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors*; Johnson, "Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* as Literary Experiment," 67–90.

[177] On ethnicity in Eusebius' *Praeparatio*, see Johnson, *Ethnicity and argument in Eusebius' Praeparatio evangelica*.

[178] See, on this topic, Schott, "Eusebius's Christian Library and the Construction of 'Hebrews,' 'Jews,' and 'Hellenistic Judaism,'" 236–256.

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this history of religions of sorts, after contesting the testimonies related to "pagan theologies" in books 1–6, Eusebius tackles the relationship between Hebrews, Jews, Christians (books 7–10).

For my purpose, the main question is not "what was in his library,"[179] but what this conceptual library discloses about Christian apologetics and bibliographic imagination.[180] Many excerpts are, of course, deployed polemically; still, the work repeatedly stages connections between libraries rather than severing them: between Greek and Jewish–Christian learning, and also between the Jewish and the Christian library. Figures such as Plato, Philo, and Josephus are not discarded but carefully positioned within a hierarchy of authorities. Plato can even be framed as a translator or borrower of Moses. Clement and Origen become indispensable mediators when Eusebius treats topics like the Hebrew understanding of matter or the relation between Scripture and Platonic philosophy. Quotation, moreover, often works like nested "matryoshkas": an authoritative compiler (Alexander Polyhistor, for instance) is cited to authorize other, more marginal voices (Artapanus, Eupolemus, etc. only preserved in a fragmentary form); Philo becomes a hinge between biblical writings and Christian interpretation. The apologetic maneuver is therefore a matter of library precisely because the library enables the construction of networks, curated webs of citations, endorsements, cross-references, and genealogies that organize authority and meaning.

Something similar happens in the *Historia* Authors matter not only for what they say but also for who vouches for them: citation creates networks of approval within Christian literature.[181] These linkages underpin an implicit claim of the *Historia*: that Christianity possesses a substantial literary culture of its own, anchored in Scripture, yet extending beyond it through a transmissible, internally authorized tradition of reading and writing.[182]

[179] As was the case of Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea*.

[180] From this point of view, Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea*, although it remains an excellent study, goes too far taking for granted most allusions or citations as reflecting ownership of material books. See a more restrained viewpoint on the library in Frenschkowski, "Studien zur Geschichte der Bibliothek von Cäsarea," 53–104. See also Inowlocki, "What Caesarea Has to Do with Alexandria? The Christian Library between Myth and Reality," 1–19 and Inowlocki, *Pamphilus of Caesarea and Christian Book Culture*, Forthcoming at Cambridge University Press.

[181] See Inowlocki, "A New Christian 'Order of Books'? Eusebius's Bio-Bibliographical Catalogue of the Christian Authors in the *Historia ecclesiastica*," 35–58.

[182] On Christian intellectuals in the *Historia*, see Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire: Constructing Church and Rome in the Ecclesiastical History*, 89–120.

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Citing the Enemy: Origen's *Against Celsus*

Origen's *Contra Celsum* offers a range of instances exemplifying bibliographic operations and apologetics.[183] From the start he frames the task as work on a text: He is answering a written treatise, and he explains why such a written counter-text is needed.[184] He then describes his method in plain procedural terms, moving through Celsus section by section and testing each claim as it appears.[185] This involves explicit policing of quotation and attribution: When Celsus reports Christian claims, Origen objects that he is not reproducing Paul "as the words actually occur," and he corrects the wording and its scope.[186] He also accuses Celsus of selective excerpting from the Gospel narratives, lifting material useful for mockery while ignoring elements that would cut against his case so that the opponent's "citations" are shown to be a tendentious sampling.[187] Origen repeatedly signals the mechanics of excerpt-and-reply: He quotes a portion, then takes up what comes "after the remarks cited," treating Celsus' book as a sequence of answerable lemmas.[188] At the same time, he makes his own rules of evidence visible: He deliberately refrains from quoting the Gospels so as not to appear to argue from "more recent" writings, and instead answers from what he presents as an older scriptural register.[189] And when he addresses heresies, he insists he speaks from "careful perusal of their writings," marking refutation as grounded in direct textual study rather than hearsay.[190] In short, Origen turns the controversy into a contest over how one handles documents, what one quotes, how accurately, how selectively, and under what evidentiary constraints, so that scholarly, bibliographic control becomes part of the apologetic force of his reply.

Origen does not only answer Celsus' ideas,[191] he works on Celsus' book in a way that resembles library practice. He breaks the treatise up into quotable pieces (individual claims, turns of phrase, lists of peoples, examples) and brings them out one at a time. In that sense Celsus' text is

[183] A new translation has just been published: Young and Trigg, trans. *The Contra Celsum of Origen: English Translation and Facing Greek Text.*
[184] Origen, *Cels*. praef. 1–2.
[185] Origen, *Cels.* 3.1.
[186] Origen, *Cels*. 1.13.
[187] Origen, *Cels*. 2.34–37.
[188] Origen, *Cels*. 4.1.
[189] Origen, *Cels.* 6.41.
[190] Origen, *Cels*. 6.51.
[191] On Celsus, see Carleton Paget, and Gathercole, *Celsus in His World: Philosophy, Polemic and Religion in the Second Century.*

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dismembered: It becomes a set of excerpts that can be isolated, checked, and targeted. But Origen also re-members it by reattaching each excerpt to an argument of his own making: he supplies context, corrects what he thinks Celsus is doing, and then places the passage into a new order that suits his reply. The opponent's book is therefore reassembled inside Origen's work as a kind of dossier, tagged, sequenced, and made answerable. This is a bibliographic operation in the strict sense: control of the controversy depends on control of the opponent's text as a collection of retrievable units, not as an uninterrupted whole. The result is an archival reversal: later anti-Christian polemic may have continued to echo Celsus, but, as Sébastien Morlet has argued, much subsequent Christian engagement with anti-Christian arguments, especially in Eusebius, depends not on direct access to Celsus (or Porphyry, for that matter), but on Celsus-as-processed-by-Origen.[192] In this sense, Origen's refutation becomes a durable bibliographic artifact: a controlled transmission of the enemy's book that simultaneously neutralizes it and ensures its long-term availability within Christian intellectual infrastructure.

In *Contra Celsum* 1.14–18 Origen is answering a very specific move by Celsus: Celsus claims that the "true account from the beginning" is supported by the agreement of the most learned nations and men, and he parades a list of ancient peoples as his proof, while pointedly leaving the Jews out, adopting a stance contrary to that of Josephus in the *Contra Apionem*. Origen meets this with procedures that look like the work of a scholar handling a contested archive. He first calls out the selection bias and demands consistent standards: If one accepts "barbarian and Greek histories" as evidence of antiquity, one cannot dismiss the Jewish record simply because it is Jewish. He then rebuilds the dossier by adding independent witnesses from the Greek library (Numenius, Hermippus, and Hecataeus) bringing with them questions of attribution and authenticity (Pseudo-Hecataeus is vindicated by the testimony of Philo of Byblos). He notes that there are many more such testimonies "in circulation," but he chooses only a few, adopting the stance of someone who controls a larger archive than he needs to display. He also points to existing compilations that have already done the spadework of collection and listing: Here the work of Josephus and Tatian is treated as that of predecessors. Finally, he turns the argument into a concrete library test: "take down the books" of the Greek sages and compare them with Moses,[193] matching

[192] Morlet, "The Reception of the Alēthēs Logos," 297–326.
[193] *C. Cels*. 1.18: προκαλούμενοι βιβλίους βιβλίοις παραβάλλεσθαι.

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histories with histories and ethical teaching with laws. In other words, Origen counters Celsus by redoing the bibliography: rechecking criteria, adding attestations, sorting provenance, and insisting on comparison of books rather than slogans, so that the Jewish and Christian scriptural archive cannot be excluded from the cultural shelves on which Celsus wants to build his case.

Bibliographic Operations

The bibliographic labor that makes apologetic citation possible is often deliberately inapparent: The reader sees the polished chain of testimonia, not the prior work of locating, sorting, delimiting, and stabilizing texts. Yet apologists sometimes make this labor conspicuously visible precisely for apologetic reasons. What follows are not "references to books" but operations that make texts function as evidence: auditing hostile sources, manufacturing documents, policing transmission, stabilizing attribution, and staging access. By foregrounding the effort of collection, verification, and controlled access, they advertise their command of the archive and convert curatorial competence into a credential of truth. Whether hidden or displayed, this infrastructure is part of the apologetic apparatus: It underwrites an authoritative persona, someone who can produce texts on demand, marshal witnesses, and control the terms of proof, and it authorizes the claims those citations are made to support.

In some cases, such operations concern the apologies themselves. Justin of Rome, in 2 Apol. 14.1 not only engages in document-making but also in imperial authentication: He puts in the spotlight his demand from the emperor to sign (ὑπογράψαντας) his *libellum* (βιβλίδιον) and to thereby authorize its publication in order to convince its readers (repeated at 15.1).

For Ps.-Justin and Lactantius, as for other early Christians, the Sibyl is a real prophetess, and her prophecies (especially those interpolated by Jews and Christians) carry truth.[194] In both, the Sibyls are closely associated with Rome.[195] However, the scribal process by which her oracles were taken down in writing at Cumae is subjected to critical scrutiny:[196]

[194] See Thompson, "Patristic Use of the Sibylline Oracles," 115–136; Bartlett, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Josephus, Aristeas, the Sibylline Oracles, Eupolemus*, 36.

[195] Rutilius Claudius Namatianus, in his poem *De reditu suo* describes how the Vandal general of the Roman army, Stilicho, betrayed Rome by burning the sibylline books (*De reditu suo* 2.52–60): see Borchardt, "Sibyls, Destruction, and Loss in the Context of Reproductive Science."

[196] On the Sibyls and the motif of loss and destruction of their prophecies, see Borchardt, "Sibyls, Destruction, and Loss," 356–375 who points out that in past studies "scholars connected the sibylline troubles in transmission with a motif of suspicion of female divinatory

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> For she did not commit her oracles to writing, but uttered them in words, under the impulse of inspiration, and left them to be taken down (ὑπογράψασθαι) by others. Hence it is that many of her sayings have been lost, and many preserved in fragments only (ἐν σπαράγμασι μόνον διεσώθη); and others again have been corrupted through the negligence or ignorance of those who wrote them down (διὰ τὴν ἀμέλειαν ἢ ἀπαιδευσίαν τῶν ὑπογραψάντων διεφθάρη). But whatever remains of them, and is preserved to us, bears clear testimony to the truth […] For, unlike the poets who, after their poems are penned, have power to correct and polish (διορθοῦν καὶ κατακοσμεῖν), especially in the way of increasing the accuracy of their verse (πρὸς τὴν ἀκρίβειαν τῶν μέτρων), she was filled indeed with prophecy at the time of the inspiration, but as soon as the inspiration ceased, there ceased also the remembrance (μνήμη) of all she had said. And this indeed was the cause why some only, and not all, the metres of the verses of the Sibyl were preserved (διεσώθη) … And besides all else which they told us as they had heard it from their fathers, they said also that they who then took down (ὑπογράψαντες) her prophecies, being uneducated persons (διὰ τὴν ἀπαιδευσίαν), often could not preserve accurately the metres (μὴ δυναμένων ἀκριβῶς τὰ μέτρα διασώζειν); and this, they said, was the cause of the want of metre (τῶν ἐπῶν ἀμετρίαν) in some of the verses, the prophetess having no remembrance (οὐκέτι μεμνημένης) of what she had said, after the possession and inspiration ceased, and the reporters having, through their lack of education, failed to record the metres with accuracy.[197]

The passage is a staged critique of the Sibylline pagan archive through the figure of "bad scribalism." By insisting that the Sibyl "did not commit her oracles to writing" and that others had to write down records of (ὑπογράψασθαι) her utterances, Ps.-Justin relocates the decisive vulnerability of pagan prophecy to the moment of textualization: loss, fragmentation (ἐν σπαράγμασι), and corruption (διεφθάρη) are not accidental outcomes but the predictable product of negligent and uneducated custodians (ἀμέλεια / ἀπαιδευσία). The metrical defect (ἀμετρία) functions as a publicly verifiable symptom of that institutional failure: The archive cannot even guarantee formal ἀκρίβεια, because its custodians cannot "preserve the metres accurately." This mise en scène allows a double manoeuvre. On the one hand, the prophetess is preserved as a true witness precisely by being dissociated from the defective written artifact; on the other, the pagan archive is

figures in early Jewish and Christian texts." He proposes instead that "even though the sibylline voice is highly valued, the words she speaks are fragile due to her inability to create disciples in her own image […] the sibyl's infecundity not only relies on a distortion of familiar tropes about intergenerational paths of knowledge, but ultimately bears comparison with ancient science's account of the role played by women in reproduction" (357).

[197] Ps. Justin, *Cohort*. 36–37. ANF transl. slightly revised.

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indicted as an unreliable apparatus of transmission whose possession of Sibylline texts cannot secure authority. The narrator's own philological competence, his ability to diagnose corruption through metrical criteria and to assign causal responsibility, implicitly claims for the Christian side the very custodial virtues the pagan archive lacks: educated mediation, textual discipline, and a stable regime of preservation capable of making prophecy usable as proof.

Lactantius also treats the Sibylline corpus as a bibliographic problem before it becomes a theological resource.[198] He engages in attribution, classification, provenance, and access-control at once. Because "the Sibyl" often circulates as a single name for multiple prophetic voices, the oracles suffer from a deficit of attribution: texts are read and kept without stable authorial assignment. Precisely for that reason, apologetic use requires an archival operation – disentangling, classifying, and authenticating a scattered dossier so that it can function as admissible testimony. Lactantius performs this operation by appealing to Varro, introduced as a guarantor of erudition, and by focusing on the conditions of transmission (*et feruntur et habentur*): the Sibylline books "circulate" and are "held" as objects within a cultural economy of preservation. The complaint about confused authorship is therefore not incidental; it is a curatorial move that clears the ground for selecting a usable witness (above all the Erythraean Sibyl) and stabilizing her voice. Varro's anecdote about the Tiburtine Sibyl and her statue discovered in the river holding a book dramatizes the same point in material form: Prophetic authority is staged through the visibility of the book itself. And the Roman story of the Cumaean Sibyl's books pushes the same logic to an extreme: Once acquired, the Sibylline Books are locked into a state archive and treated as restricted knowledge, consulted only under controlled procedures by the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*. In Lactantius, then, the Sibyl's oracles become persuasive not simply because of what they say, but because the apologist constructs them as an ordered, access-controlled archive with identifiable provenance, *and* because he anchors that archive in Roman canons of learning by recruiting Varro, hailed as *doctior* even among the Greeks, as the erudite guarantor who makes this dossier legible and credible. By elevating Varro in precisely these terms, Lactantius signals that the Sibyl's usable voice is not secured only by "Greek" antiquity

[198] *Inst. div.* 1.6.7–12. On Lactantius' use of non-biblical oracles, see Freund, "Christian Use and Valuation of Theological Oracles: The Case of Lactantius' *Divine Institutes*," 281–282.

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or prophetic aura, but by *Romanitas*: A Latin regime of erudition and state-style custodianship that authorizes (above all) the Erythraean Sibyl as the most citable and administratively "traceable" witness within the otherwise confused Sibylline name.[199]

Bibliographic operation is also evidenced in the repeated invitation in Eusebius' *Praeparatio* to the reader to "pick up and read" (ἀνάγνωθι λαβών) a book whose excerpt then follows in the text,[200] which procedur-alizes reading-as-evidence. Scholars usually explain it by reference to the idiom of the scriptorium. Mras, the editor of the text, famously interpreted it as an actual vestige of Eusebius' dictation process, an unpolished trace of author and scribe at work; he was followed by Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams in their common work on the Caesarean scholars' use of the codex.[201] Sébastien Morlet has since argued that the phrase should be taken more simply as a polite invitation to the reader; I previously read it as part of a high-culture posture adopted by Eusebius.[202] Yet I would now nuance this point: A systematic search in the TLG reveals that only two authors use this exact collocation with any regularity: Demosthenes and Eusebius. In Demosthenes, it is a technical courtroom instruction addressed to the γραμματεύς, the clerk charged with reading aloud documents introduced as evidence.[203] The formula marks a transition from spoken persuasion to documentary authority. Demosthenes deploys it specifically when calling for the reading of laws (νόμοι), decrees (ψηφίσματα), oracles (μαντεῖαι), and sworn testimonies (μαρτυρίαι).[204] In other words, when he summons archives.

In light of this, I would read Eusebius' as a similar invitation to enter *his* argumentative library, almost as an embodied act. It asks the reader

[199] *Inst. div*. 1.7.6–13. See also what he says about the Oracles of Apollo, on which see Busine, *Paroles d'Apollon: Pratiques et traditions oraculaires dans l'Antiquité tardive (IIe–VIe siècles)*.

[200] As pointed out by Gifford, *Eusebii Pamphili Evangelicae Praeparationis*, 104.

[201] See Mras, ed., *Eusebius Werke*. Vol. 8, pt. 1, 28; Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea*, 212–213.

[202] Inowlocki, "Eusebius' Construction of a Christian Culture," and Morlet, Sébastien. "'Prends et lis': Les appels au lecteur chez Eusèbe de Césarée," 165–184.

[203] See, for example, Agusta-Boularot, *Les références épigraphiques aux Grammatici et γραμματικοὶ de l'Empire romain (Ier s. av. J.-C., IVe s. ap. J.-C.)*, 653–746; Jaillard, *Mémoire, écriture, autorité. Quelle place pour le scribe dans les pratiques des polythéismes grecs? (VIe – IVe s.)* available online: www.unige.ch/lettres/antic/application/files/6415/8910/7119/DJ-Memoire3.pdf

[204] Demosth., *Orat. De corona* 118.l.2; *Orat. De corona* 305.l. 7; *Orat. De falsa legatione* 70.l.3; *Orat. De falsa legatione* 270.l.8; *Orat. Adversus Leptinem* 35.l.7 and 153.l.4; *Orat. In Midiam* 46.l.9, and 52.l.1; *Orat. In Timocratem* 32.l.7; *Orat. Pro Phormione* 62.l.1; *Orat. Contra Boeotum* 1.36. l. 8; *Orat. Contra Eubulidem* 31.l.6.

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to move from narrative reception to documentary encounter, to touching their textual remains. In this respect it resembles Justin's authorizing gestures: The reader is not positioned as a distant consumer of testimony but as a participant who is granted access, drawn into proximity with documents, and made to experience authority and truth as something performed through reading. The *Praeparatio* is not an exercise in remembrance or preservation. It constructs an archive in order to persuade: citation and compilation function here less as memory work than as a strategy of rhetorical, apologetic proof.

7 Caesarea and the Apologetic Library

Pamphilus, Origen, and Caesarean Bibliography

This section advances the central claim of this Element by examining one of the most consequential operations of the bibliographic imagination: the assembly of corpora. Ancient apologetics is often described as a literature of argument, reactive, polemical, and dialogical. Yet what gives apologetic writing its distinctive force is not only the articulation of positions, but also the capacity to imagine, delimit, and materialize authoritative bodies of texts. Apologetics attempts to persuade not only by arguing, but also by organizing knowledge.

The bibliographic imagination, as developed in this study, refers to the capacity to think with and through texts as collective formations: lists, canons, dossiers, and archives that render truth visible by arranging it. Apologetic authors do not merely cite sources; they conceptualize traditions as structured corpora whose coherence, antiquity, and completeness function as proof. To assemble a corpus is already to argue, though without appearing to do so. This section shows that the act of compilation is not ancillary to apologetic discourse but constitutes one of its core epistemic strategies.

This mode of persuasion exemplifies the bibliographic imagination at work. Apologetic authors envision truth as something that can be collected, ordered, and stabilized through textual architecture. The authority of a position depends not on its argumentative novelty but on its successful integration into an already imagined corpus. What matters is not what one says, but where one situates it within a curated body of writings.

The case studies examined in this section trace the emergence and consolidation of this bibliographic logic. Josephus' enumeration of Jewish books reframes Jewish tradition as a closed and venerable scriptural corpus whose authority precedes Greek philosophical inquiry. Origen's

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construction of scriptural corpora in the Hexapla, across languages, versions, and exegetical layers, redefines doctrinal disagreement and Christian-Jewish debates as a problem of textual mastery and completeness. Pamphilus' *Apology for Origen* radicalizes bibliographic apologetics by substituting a curated dossier of citations for sustained polemic, allowing compilation itself to stand in for defense. Eusebius systematizes these practices, transforming bibliographic ordering into a historiographic and apologetic principle that structures Christian intellectual memory on an unprecedented scale. By foregrounding lists, canons, and dossiers, this section demonstrates that apologetics is not simply a rhetorical response to external challenge but a formative practice of book organization. The bibliographic imagination does not merely reflect authority; it produces it.

The idea of the library, as we have seen, occupies a privileged place within this bibliographic imagination.[205] More than a repository of books, the library functions as an icon of material unity: a space in which the diversity of the archive is gathered, ordered, and made to yield new and intensified meaning. In *Aristeas*, the library already serves as a powerful template, staging the translation of the Jewish Law into Greek within a universalizing bibliographic horizon and presenting textual plurality as capable of harmonization under institutional control. The apologetic significance of this gesture lies not in the content of the books alone, but in the imagination of a setting in which they are collected, authorized, and rendered commensurable.

Yet some apologetic writings do not merely invoke the idea of the library but increasingly work to constitute one. They collapse the distinction between argument and archive: The apologetic work no longer points to an external repository of authority but presents itself as the site where authoritative texts are already assembled, stabilized, and made to speak. Apologetics thus becomes a self-archiving practice, transforming the literary work into a bibliographic space in its own right, and positioning compilation itself as a primary mode of persuasion.

The image of the library functions as a mobile icon, continually redeployed to think authority through books. What this bibliographic imagination performs is both deconstruction and reconstruction: It decenters the Greek library as the privileged horizon of truth (and, indirectly, destabilizes Roman claims as well, even when only related to cultural custody), while simultaneously reordering knowledge by assembling a

[205] See Inowlocki, *Pamphilus of Caesarea and Early Christian Book Culture* (forthcoming) that studies this question in detail.

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new library, not simply by adding or subtracting titles, but by re-shelving the world. At the same time, it stretches what Josephus and the earliest Christians could still call "the library" in the strong sense: Scripture, whose contours remain fluid at least into Eusebius' day. That expansion becomes explicit at a particular place and moment: Eusebius' portrait of Pamphilus' Caesarean βιβλιοθήκη (library), where Origen's corpus and other "ecclesiastical" writers are cataloged and curated alongside the sacred books as a coherent Christian collection. Thus, Caesarea becomes a pivotal site for this study because it is there, with Pamphilus and Eusebius, that the apologetic reorganization of the world through the library first coincides with a material library, founded by Pamphilus toward the end of the third century.[206] Thus, in Caesarea, a new order of books, at once material and conceptual, takes shape, at least insofar as our early Christian archive has chosen to memorialize it. It is in Caesarea that the library becomes self-consciously Christian. Beginning with Pamphilus, Eusebius' teacher and companion, and centering on Origen, both as biblical editor and as intellectual in his own right, it culminates (in distinct modalities) in Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica* and *Historia ecclesiastica*, and, in its literary continuation, Jerome's *Vir. ill.*

While the apologies examined in this work are usually written in tension with Greek, Roman, or Jewish opponents, sometime at the turn of the fourth century, the first apology for a Christian author is composed by Pamphilus of Caesarea, with the assistance of his disciple Eusebius. This work is of major importance as far as bibliographic imagination is concerned and therefore deserves scrutiny.

Pamphilus' *Pinakes*, the lost bio-bibliographic catalog compiled at Caesarea, function less as a neutral finding aid than as a watermark impressed upon the entire Caesarean apologetic enterprise.[207] They silently govern what can be cited, defended, and transmitted by first determining what counts as an object of Christian knowledge: What is a "work," what belongs to an "author," how a corpus is divided, and where it is located within a usable archive. In relation to the *Apology for Origen*, this is

[206] I examine this issue in detail in my monograph, *Pamphilus of Caesarea and Christian Book Culture*.

[207] In addition to Callimachus' famous Pinakes (on which see Blum, *Kallimachos: The Alexandrian Library and the Origins of Bibliography*; Jacob, "Callimaque: un poète dans le labyrinthe," 100–112; Jacob, "Lire pour écrire: navigations alexandrines," 47–83; Jacob, "La Bibliothèque, la Carte et le Traité: Les formes de l'accumulation du savoir à Alexandrie," 19–37; Jacob. "Fragments of a History of Ancient Libraries," 57–82. Papyri have preserved various book/bibliographical lists: see Otranto, *Antiche liste di libri su papiro*.

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decisive. By converting Origen's sprawling and heterogeneous production into a nameable, divisible, and retrievable corpus, the *Pinakes* make it possible for Origen to be mobilized as an authority in controversy, pedagogy, and ecclesial memory. Every subsequent act of quotation presupposes this prior act of ordering: One can only cite what has already been stabilized as a work, an author, and a place within a controlled repository. The same logic applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica*, whose citational power depends on a prior regime of selection, excerpting, and archival control that is rarely thematized but constantly operative.

Pamphilus' *Apology for Origen* is the clearest Caesarean demonstration that citation can function as an apologetic method rather than as a mere support for argument.[208] What survives is mediated – Rufinus' late fourth-century Latin dossier, framed by his preface and followed by *De adulteratione librorum Origenis* – but this transmission history is itself revealing: The *Apology* already circulated and was reused as an *archive* that could be repackaged for new polemical moments. Its basic wager is formal. Instead of producing a continuous refutation of charges, the work builds its defense through block quotation and accumulation: Origen is made to "answer" by speaking, extensively and verbatim, within a curated sequence of excerpts. Apologetic force is generated by aggregation, by the impression of abundance, internal coherence, and documentary transparency.

In that sense, the *Apology* turns citing into a visible act of copying.[209] The defense is inseparable from the Caesarean library culture of collecting, collating, transcribing, and preserving: to cite Origen is to transmit him, and to transmit him is already to defend him. The apparent humility of the compiler ("we merely reproduce") is therefore not only a posture but a bibliographic ethic. Yet precisely because the work is anthological, it is also a powerful exercise of control. Selection, arrangement, and omission, whether Pamphilus'/Eusebius' or Rufinus', shape what "counts" as Origen and determine which doctrinal flashpoints are foregrounded or bracketed. The dossier lets Origen appear unmediated while making that "voice" a product of curatorial governance.

Read this way, the *Apology for Origen* is not just a prelude to Rufinus' Latin translation of the *Peri Archôn*: It also shows how Caesarean

[208] The best treatment on citations in Pamphilus' *Apology* so far is Schott, "Plotinus's Portrait and Pamphilus's Prison Notebook: Neoplatonic and Early Christian Textualities at the Turn of the Fourth Century C.E.," 329–362. On the *Apology*, see, for example, Junod and Amacker, Pamphile, and Eusèbe de Césarée. *Apologie pour Origène*.

[209] In *Vir. ill. 75*, Jerome even contends that Pamphilus copied almost all of Origen's works *sua manu*. See Inowlocki, "The Hand of the Slave and the Hand of the Martyr: Pamphilus of Caesarea, Autography, and the Rise of Textual Relics."

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scholarship converts the library into an argument by turning texts into witnesses and compilation into proof. Eusebius' *Praeparatio* and *Demonstratio* scale up the same technique from a single-author dossier to a civilizational archive. Where Pamphilus assembles Origen to secure the legitimacy of a contested Christian writer and to regulate his readership, Eusebius assembles pagan and Jewish corpora to arbitrate the place of Christianity within the history of philosophy and "religion." The shift is one of scope, not of method: In both cases, apologetics advances less by debating propositions than by constructing the archive in which the verdict already appears self-evident.

Yet precisely because this work makes Origen anthologizable, it also renders him exploitable. The reception history is therefore structurally ironic: The very dossier designed to protect Origen becomes a quarry for his opponents. Figures such as Marcellus, even when attacking Origen's authority, could still draw on Pamphilus' curated excerpts (directly or indirectly) as a reliable repository of Origenian "evidence," using the *Apology*'s own citations to build a contrary case, similarly to what we have seen with Origen's citations of Celsus.[210] In this sense, Pamphilus' *Pinakes* and anthology do not simply defend Origen; they create the archival infrastructure that makes Origen's later polemical afterlife possible on both sides, turning Caesarean curation into the condition of possibility for both apologetic vindication and heresiological prosecution. Pamphilus' bibliographic project did not end with the *Apology for Origen*: It also included the compilation of *Pinakes*, a Caesarean apparatus for mapping, ordering, and making usable the immense Origenian corpus. Together, *Pinakes* and *Apology* embody the same bibliographic imagination: They do not merely preserve Origen's writings but convert them into an *accessible archive*, organized so that Origen can be cited, defended, and transmitted under controlled conditions.

Eusebius: When Apologetics Becomes Library

In spite of the many discussions about the library of Caesarea, we have actually only one direct, explicit contemporary testimony, Eusebius' own in HE 6.32.3:

> τί δεῖ τῶν λόγων τἀνδρὸς ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος τὸν ἀκριβῆ κατάλογον ποιεῖσθαι, ἰδίας δεόμενον σχολῆς; ὃν καὶ ἀνεγράψαμεν ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ Παμφίλου βίου

[210] Seibt, *Die Theologie des Markell von Ankyra*; Vinzent ed., *Markell von Ankyra: Die Fragmente & der Brief an Julius von Rom.*; Steenson, "The Date of the Philocalia," 245–252.

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> τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἱεροῦ μάρτυρος ἀναγραφῆς, ἐν ᾗ τὴν περὶ τὰ θεῖα σπουδὴν τοῦ Παμφίλου ὁπόση τις γεγόνοι, παριστῶντες, τῆς συναχθείσης αὐτῷ τῶν τε Ὠριγένους καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐκκλησιαστικῶν συγγραφέων βιβλιοθήκης τοὺς πίνακας παρεθέμην.
>
> But why is it necessary for a precise catalogue of the man's [Origen's] works to be made in the present work, which requires its own study? I did record it in my record of the life of the holy martyr Pamphilus of my own day, in which, showing how great was Pamphilus' eagerness for divine matters, I supplied the pinakes of the library of the writings of Origen and of other ecclesiastical writers gathered by him.[211]

According to this passage, the library appears to have been organized above all around Origen, with no explicit place for Greek pagan literature, at least in the Pamphilan phase.[212] Even so, the very act of assembling an Origenian corpus at Caesarea already looks like an apologetic intervention: a program of consolidation, authentication, and defense of Origen's textual patrimony, precisely the kind of project the *Apology for Origen* invites us to posit.

In this bibliophilic milieu, citations are no longer simply one tool within an apologetic arsenal, as in earlier apologies; they *are* the apology. As the first apologetic work devoted to a Christian individual author, the *Apology for Origen* is, if we credit Rufinus, constructed almost entirely from Origen's own excerpts. The surface rhetoric is disarmingly modest: Origen is defended by *Origen*, his voice allowed to vindicate itself. Yet the very form of the anthology presupposes a decisive mediating intelligence: a curator who selects, cuts, sequences, and frames, ventriloquizing "Origen" while claiming merely to transmit him. In other words, the defense masquerades as self-testimony, even as it depends on a puppet master's strings.

In the *Praeparatio*, Eusebius redeploys the same technique, now on an unprecedented scale: whole stretches of Greek authors are excerpted and reassembled into a polemical mosaic. In this project, the library becomes entangled with the vast apologetic enterprise of the *Praeparatio* Anyone trying to reconstruct the shelves is almost forced to treat the *Praeparatio* as a primary witness, and anyone interpreting the *Praeparatio* must, in turn, reckon with the concrete book world that made such a work possible. This has often been read as straightforward evidence for the Caesarean library's expanding holdings of Greek literature. But the inference is not

[211] Text by Schwartz and Theodor Mommsen, GCS 9/2: 586 My transl.

[212] This is, however, contradicted by a testimony of Jerome: his Epistle 70.4 includes Pamphilus among Christian scholars who engaged actively with Greek philosophy – a testimony that, though indirect, points to a broader intellectual horizon.

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automatic. The *Historia* may strategically suppress the library's "Greek side" in order to present an exclusively Christian archive. In that case, the *Praeparatio* does not reflect a growing collection; it exposes how Eusebius calibrates the visibility of the library's contents across genres, making bibliography itself responsive to apologetic and memorial agendas.

The same is true of the *Historia* although not explicitly an apology, it is nevertheless deeply imbued with apologetic concerns. It is tempting to read the *Praeparatio* and the *Historia* as two different libraries, one Greek, one Christian. But this opposition obscures their deeper unity. They are better understood as two coordinated sectors of a single curatorial project.[213] The *Praeparatio* captures and reorganizes the external archive of Greek culture, excerpting it into a legible and governable form, disarming it as a rival authority by transforming it into a reservoir of testimonies. The *Historia*, by contrast, administers the internal archive of Christian memory, stabilizing succession, authorship, and orthodoxy through chains of transmission and documentation. One governs alterity; the other governs identity. Together they construct a textual regime in which Christianity does not merely refute the past, but inherits, catalogs, and manages it, exercising authority not only by argument, but by archive. If both works present themselves as two shelves in the Christian library, it is worth noting that for Eusebius, βιβλιοθήκη (library) is not a neutral label: It encodes a particular, quasi-imperial imagination of knowledge, culture gathered, ordered, authenticated, and made governable through collection.

βιβλιοθήκη is an elastic term, sliding between a material repository and a bibliographic mode of total collection. Eusebius can describe Diodorus as the author who "brought together under one treatise the entire historical library,"[214] or speaks of someone who "gathered the libraries into one place";[215] a βιβλιοθήκη can be what has been "collected"[216] and even "epitomized."[217] This is not idle wordplay: the συναγωγή/συνάγειν vocabulary makes compilation and storage structurally analogous. Whether texts are assembled into a single work or into a single space, the same epistemic claim is at stake: dispersed writings become ordered, inspectable witnesses.

When Eusebius uses βιβλιοθήκη for actual collections, it typically denotes imperial, public repositories: above all the royal library of

[213] see also Corke-Webster, Eusebius and Empire, 42-44.
[214] Euseb., *Praep. Ev*. 1.6.4.
[215] Euseb., *Praep. Ev*. 2.1.55.
[216] Euseb., *Praep. Ev*. 10.7.22.
[217] Euseb., *Laus Const*. 13.8.2.

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Alexandria through his sustained use of *Aristeas*[218] and Roman libraries as authoritative containers for writers worth preserving (Philo and Josephus).[219] Even the brief notice of the Christian library in Aelia Capitolina frames it as an institutional site of safeguarding and retrieval.[220] The term, in other words, carries the aura of imperial knowledge regimes.

That is why the lone explicit Caesarea reference is so weighty. Eusebius is inserting Caesarea into the genealogy of foundational library-building. The gesture resonates with Aristeas' scenes of royal "completion" and "repair" of the library, and with 2 Maccabees' claim that Nehemiah "founded a library and collected" authoritative writings.[221] Caesarea is thus framed as a providential act of recovery and re-ordering – Origen's patrimony restored as a public archive of truth – a parallel Jerome later makes explicit when he casts Pamphilus as searching for Origen's books "throughout the world."[222] In the aftermath of persecution and before a fully Christian empire, this vocabulary does real work: It projects what, in Eusebius' eye, the Christian library *should* be: an imperial-scale Christian βιβλιοθήκη, where collecting, excerpting, and preserving function as the infrastructure of a new cultural order.

The Greek title of the *Praeparatio*, Εὐαγγελικὴ προπαρασκευή, a work largely made of block quotations, might even playfully suggest the form of a preparatory notebook of excerpts (παρασκευή). If the *Praeparatio Evangelica* is a library, its function is not simply to stock authorities, but to translate Christian truth into an imperial form of proof. As we have seen, Eusebius writes inside an ecology in which empire claims to know universally through retrievable records: censuses, archives, catalogs, official communications, and the promise of documentation that can be consulted and checked. The *Praeparatio* therefore stages Christianity in a position that can withstand audit: It does not only argue, it performs verification by assembling excerpts, arranging them so that claims appear traceable, comparable, and testable.

This is why many "witnesses" in the *Praeparatio* are produced in order to be opposed. Their value is evidentiary: Once excerpted, they become hostile documents that convict their own traditions whether by contradiction, incoherence, moral or theological failure. The promise to cite "only Greeks," even when imperfectly kept, belongs to the same evidentiary

[218] Euseb., *Praep. Ev*. 8.1–4; *Hist. Eccl*. 2.18.8; *Demonstr. Ev*. 8.2.70.
[219] Euseb., *Hist. eccl.* 2.18; 3.9.2.
[220] Euseb., *Hist. eccl*. 6.20.1.
[221] 2 Macc 2:12–13.
[222] Jer., Ep. 34.1.

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ecology: It is a claim to external attestation designed to make the verdict look less like a self-indulgent assertion than like an archive-based conclusion.

In that sense, the *Praeparatio* is a work of bibliographic imagination. It maps the religious field by deciding which books count, how they are to be excerpted, arranged, and reproduced, and how their relative authority should be ranked. Citation becomes a technology for ordering the world: Eusebius reshelves traditions, and produces a new hierarchy of knowledge in which Christian doctrine is legible as the rational outcome of documentary comparison. This is also why the *Praeparatio* sits naturally in continuity with earlier apologists and with the Caesarean habitus associated with Pamphilus (and the *Apology for Origen*): apologetics here is not merely persuasion, but archive work: a method that makes truth look like something established by records, not merely proclaimed by argument.

This mobilization of the archive for apologetic ends is, as we have seen, old, already in Josephus' *Contra Apionem*, where he contests the primacy of the Greek literary archive. But context is decisive. Josephus writes as a Judean Jew from a defeated people, refugee, suspected traitor, and imperial client, so citation functions as cultural self-defense: It forces a subordinated voice into view and challenges the criteria by which Greek paideia claims authority. Eusebius writes at the Constantinian turn, when the Church occupies a far stronger institutional position and can align itself with imperial victory. The bibliographic posture shifts accordingly. Josephus cites against the grain of defeat; Eusebius cites from a position of early dominance to reorganize authority. Bibliographically, his compilations do not simply preserve materials: they curate a new order of books, ranking witnesses, inviting readers to consult documents, and re-hierarchizing Greek learning within a Christian archive.

8 When Library Replaces Apology

Jerome and the Apologetic Library of Christianity

Jerome extends the same logic of accumulation to Christian literary culture itself: He lists, names, and summarizes Christian writers' lives and works in order to render Christianity demonstrably learned, productive, and culturally serious.[223] However we judge Jerome's self-presentation,

[223] On *Vir. ill.* and its reception, see Vessey, "'*Vera et aeterna monumenta*': Jerome's Catalogue of Christian Writers and the Premises of Erasmian Humanism," 351–375.

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the *De viris illustribus* is explicitly cast by Jerome as an apology for Christianity, an answer to Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, meant to exhibit, as he says, the "builders of the Church."[224] What it constructs is not an archive in the sense of a repository of documents, but a chronographic library: A chronologically ordered map of Christian authorship, organized by author and works, designed to make Christian literature visible, citable, and therefore defensible as a tradition of learning.[225] By compiling a continuous lineage of *viri* with books, titles, and credentials, Jerome turns Christian authorship into evidence: The existence of a dense, variegated, and historically extended corpus becomes an argument for Christianity's legitimacy in the arena of literary culture.

> *Discant igitur Celsus, Porphyrius et Iulianus, rabidi adversum Christum canes, discant sectatores eorum qui putant ecclesiam nullos philosophos et eloquentes, nullos habuisse doctores, quanti et quales uiri eam fundauerint exstruxerint adornauerint «et desinant fidem nostram rusticae tantum simplicitatis arguere, suamque potius imperitiam recognoscant.*
>
> Thus, let them learn, these Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, rabid dogs [barking] against Christ, let their followers learn, they who think that the church has had no philosophers, no orators, no educated men, how many and what kind of men have founded, built and adorned it, and let them also cease to accuse our faith of such rustic simplicity, and recognize rather their own ignorance.[226]

Even if the work also serves implicit ends (internal canon-making, ecclesiastical boundary drawing, and the elevation or marginalization of particular figures – first and foremost Jerome himself), its stated apologetic purpose captures the core bibliographic operation at stake: Debate is displaced by the archive, and the claim "Christianity has truth" is supported by the demonstrable fact that Christianity has a library.

Jerome's genius was to grasp the major innovation carried by Eusebius' *Historia* and *Chronicon*: the possibility of narrating Christianity not only through events but also through a chronological library, a history built out of authors, books, and chains of transmission. His own adaptation/continuation of the *Historia* is, in effect, a selective extraction of Eusebius' bio-bibliographical material, prolonged into his own present and ultimately anchored in his own authorship.

[224] His apologetic claims in the preface have not always been taken seriously but see Pricoco, "Motivi polemici e prospettive classicistiche nel idi Girolamo," 69–99.

[225] On the birth of Christian literature and Jerome's *Vir. ill.* see Vessey, "Jerome and Rufinus," 318–327. See also, more recently, Vessey, "Jerome in Rome: Memory and Project," 520–549.

[226] Jer., *Vir.ill. praefatio* (Ceresa-Gastaldo ed.), my transl.

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For the Ciceronian he refuses to be, the Christian library of the *Vir. ill*. is meant to replace the Greek and Roman one – at least at the level of apologetic display, since Jerome never in fact abandons his classics. Drawing on Eusebius' *Historia* and *Chronicon*, and probably also on the Caesarean bio-bibliographic tradition associated with Pamphilus, Jerome inherits a distinctly Caesarean lens: apologetics carried out through bio-bibliography.

Like the Caesareans, his library proudly makes room for Philo and Josephus.[227] Even Seneca is admitted,[228] if only on the strength of the pseudepigraphic letters to Paul, because what matters is not strict "philological hygiene" but the capacity to stage a usable genealogy of learning. In this sense, the *Vir. ill*. represents a culminating moment in a long arc that runs from the Alexandrian translation myth of *Aristeas*, through Josephus' *Contra Apionem*, to Caesarea and finally Bethlehem.

Jerome feels no need to add sustained doctrinal argument, elaborate historical narration, or extended polemical development. The apologetic claim is made by the form itself: A sequence of authors, dates, and titles that renders Christian literature visible as a continuous tradition. The library becomes a gallery, almost a Christian counterpart to Varro's *imagines*, a procession of portraits that embodies a new hierarchy of books.[229]

And the sequence is not neutral. By extending the series from the canonical writings down to his own present, Jerome quietly positions himself as the *aboutissement* of this lineage.[230] The *Vir.ill.* is thus an apologetic library not only for Christianity but also for Jerome's own program, above all his philological and translational revolution. In placing himself at the end of the gallery, he claims for his projects a canonical place within the Church's literary memory: not an eccentric labor on the margins, but the latest, and necessary, stage in the building of Christian books.

Even though many later works – Gennadius' continuation foremost among them – continue to attest the tight link between apologetics and bibliography, I stop with Jerome. For there is a meaningful trajectory from Aristeas to him: from the Library of Alexandria to Jerome's

[227] Jer., *Vir. ill.* 11 and 13.
[228] Jer., *Vir. ill.* 12.
[229] On Jerome's *Vir. ill*., his use of Eusebius, and the parallel with Varro, see the works of Mark Vessey, especially "Reinventing history: Jerome's Chronicle and the writing of the post-Roman West," "Literary History: A Fourth-Century Invention?", "*Vera et aeterna monumenta*: Jerome's catalogue of early Christian writers and the premises of Erasmian humanism," and "Jerome Between History and Scripture: The Event of the *De viris illustribus* / *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*."
[230] Jer., *Vir. ill.* 135.

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Bethlehem, from the translation of the Septuagint to the Latin translation of the Vulgate, from a colonized people's fantasy of cultural recognition through a pseudo-institutional enterprise to the self-assertion of a Christian intellectual freelance – Dalmatian monk, at once hated and venerated – who can now claim not merely entry into the library of the powerful but the authority to reorder it.

Jerome, however, is far from the end of the story. Gennadius and many successors continued to cultivate bio-bibliographic writing as a tool of intra-Christian polemic and self-definition, from Visigothic Iberia to Byzantium.[231] In these later iterations, "illustrious men" and their books are mobilized within new apologetic fronts, above all the long afterlives of the Origenist controversies, so that bibliography remains a medium for adjudicating orthodoxy, lineage, and authority. Augustine would deserve an Element of its own on that topic: In Augustine, apologetic authority is increasingly produced through bibliographic form. *De civitate Dei* functions as a vast curated dossier of Roman cultural memory. That same archival impulse turns inward in the *Retractationes*, where Augustine retrospectively indexes, summarizes, and corrects his own writings, effectively constructing "Augustine" as an authorized corpus and regulating how it should be read. Finally, Possidius' *Vita* and *Indiculum* extend this logic into reception. The arc culminates, in a different key, in Photius' *Bibliotheca*, where the library is in a sense emancipated from its apologetic mantle: the catalog becomes less a defensive gallery of Christian legitimacy and more a sovereign exercise in critical reading, classification, and literary judgment.

9 Conclusion

Apologetics as Curatorial Power

This study has argued that, in significant – yet not all – cases (*Aristeas*, Josephus' *Contra Apionem*, Tatian's *Oratio*, Origen's *Contra Celsum*, Eusebius' *Praeparatio* and Jerome's *Vir. ill.*, as well as many others) ancient apologetics is best understood not as a literary genre defined by formal features or doctrinal content, but as a historically situated mode of cultural work, one that operates through bibliographic imagination. What unites many of the disparate texts commonly labeled "apologetic" is not their form (petition, dialogue, treatise, and anthology) nor even only their immediate polemical targets, but the way they construct authority by organizing texts, regulating access to archives, and governing practices

[231] On which see Barrett, "Men of Letters and Men of Good Works in Early Medieval Iberia."

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of reading. Apologetics, in this sense, is less a matter of refutation than of reconfiguration: It intervenes in the conditions under which truth can be recognized, transmitted, and verified.

This perspective helps explain several features of ancient apologetics that otherwise appear puzzling or secondary. First, it accounts for the prominence of citation, aggregation, and compilation as epistemic strategy. Apologetic citation does not simply support arguments; it occasionally approaches the point where bibliographic display itself carries argumentative force. In some cases (Jerome), the archive is a self-evident verdict. Second, it clarifies why disputes over antiquity, authenticity, and transmission loom so large. These are not abstract debates about "history" or "tradition," but struggles over bibliographic sovereignty: Who controls the record, who polices continuity, and which custodianship regimes guarantee trust. Third, it explains why apologetics so often bleeds into historiography, canon formation, and literary history. Apologetic controversy generates the habits of ordering, classifying, and preserving that make scholarship possible. Thus, there is a strong linkage between apologetics and scholarship.

From Josephus' counter-archive opposing Greek historiography, through Christian constructions of Jewish custodianship, to the Caesarean transformation of compilation into argument, bibliographic imagination is inseparable from power. The Caesarean moment makes this logic explicit. With Pamphilus and Eusebius, apologetics ceases to point toward an archive and becomes one. The library is no longer merely invoked as a guarantor of authority; it is constituted as the medium through which authority is exercised. Lists, pinakes, anthologies, and histories do not accompany apologetic argument: they *are* the argument. Jerome's *Vir. ill.* pushes this development to its limit. Here bibliography effectively replaces apology: the existence of a dense, ordered Christian literary tradition becomes sufficient proof of legitimacy. Christianity is defended not by disputation but by display.

This reconceptualization has implications beyond the texts examined here. It invites scholars to read apologetic materials not only for what they say, but for how they organize knowledge: How they imagine collections, police boundaries, and train readers. It suggests that debates traditionally framed as theological or doctrinal can also be understood as disputes over custody, legibility, and interpretive jurisdiction. It encourages a more integrated history of early Christian literature, one that treats apologetics, canon formation, historiography, and library culture as interdependent practices rather than successive stages.

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The bibliographic strategy fits the Roman Empire's documentary impulse not only because it borrows juridical idioms of evidence and procedure, but because it makes Christianity thinkable in the very categories through which the empire recognizes credibility: record, custody, public availability, and retrievable proof. Bibliographic imagination is the hinge. It turns polemic into archival labor and thereby produces a form of authority that resembles imperial knowledge practices even when it contests them. With the Christianization of the empire, especially in the East, these practices do not simply continue; they acquire institutional thickness. Schools, episcopal networks, libraries, scriptoria, and conciliar mechanisms increasingly provide the means to stabilize texts, police attribution, and regulate access to approved writings.[232] In that setting, canon formation may be at least in part be understood as the political–theological crystallization of apologetic bibliography: the canon is the archive made governable, the minimal corpus capable of carrying maximum authority across space and time, articulated through principles of continuity and consensus[233] and eventually formalized in classificatory instruments distinguishing canonical, ecclesiastical, and apocryphal writings, as in the *Decretum Gelasianum*.

It resolves, in a bounded form, the recurring apologetic anxieties about corruption, forgery, rival versions, and illegitimate interpretation, while also answering imperial pressures for uniformity, public legibility, and administrative clarity. The line from the Alexandrian library (as imagined site of cultural validation) to the Caesarean βιβλιοθήκη (as material and conceptual Christian archive) is therefore not merely a history of "books," but of governance. At the far end of this arc stands Jerome's *Vir. ill.*, where the apologetic burden is carried less by argument than by the visible existence of a Christian literary world – a chronologized Pinakes of sort – so that bibliography itself performs what apologetics had long been trying to achieve: canon, continuity, and cultural authority.

Finally, this study underscores a broader point about ancient intellectual culture. Apologetics is not a prelude to "real" theology or Jewish and Christian scholarship. It is one of the primary sites where ancient communities learned to think with books. The apologetic library is therefore not a marginal phenomenon, but a central laboratory for the making of late antique knowledge.

[232] See Euseb., *Hist. eccl.* 6.32.3; *Vit. Const.* 4.36–37; Athan., Fest. *ep.* 39; Cyr. Hier., *Cat.* 4.35–36; Conc. Laod., *can.* 59.

[233] See Vincent. Lerin., *Common.* 2.5–6.

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