



## TOWARDS A NEW EDITION OF JULIAN'S *CONTRA GALILAEOS*: ASSESSING THE MATERIAL FROM THE SYRIAC TRANSMISSION OF CYRIL'S *CONTRA IVLIANVM*\*

### ABSTRACT

*Emperor Julian's three-book treatise Contra Galilaeos survives solely in those Christian sources that quoted it in order to respond to its forceful attack on Christianity. The bulk of these survivals comes from Cyril of Alexandria's twenty-book Contra Iulianum. The recent publication of the first modern critical edition of Cyril's work creates the occasion for a fresh study of the remnants of Julian's text that can be recovered from it. This is especially true for Books 11–20 of Cyril's treatise that are themselves lost and survive only in quotations in later Greek and Syriac sources. The present article undertakes a reassessment of the Julianic material preserved via the Syriac transmission of Contra Iulianum, including several passages hitherto unknown or ignored in earlier studies of Julian's treatise. It provides the Syriac text and English translation of eight passages and contextualizes them in the wider argumentative aim of Contra Galilaeos.*

**Keywords:** Julian; Cyril; Eusebius; Origen; star; martyrs; apologetic; genealogy

In the winter of 362/3, while making preparations in Antioch for his fateful invasion of Persia, Emperor Julian composed a three-book polemical treatise in which he aimed 'to set before all humanity the reasons that persuaded [him] that the Galileans' fraud [Christianity] is a human fabrication constructed with maliciousness' (τὰς αἰτίας ἐκθέσθαι πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις, ὑφ' ὧν ἐπεισθην ὅτι τῶν Γαλιλαίων ἡ σκευωρία πλάσμα ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπων ὑπὸ κακουργίας συντεθέν).<sup>1</sup> Lost in the direct manuscript tradition, scattered traces of Julian's text survive thanks to subsequent Christian refutations. The bulk of these survivals comes from Cyril of Alexandria's *Contra Iulianum* (henceforth, *CI*), which probably originally comprised twenty books and quoted lengthy verbatim extracts from *Contra Galilaeos* (henceforth, *CG*) in an effort to respond to the emperor's arguments. Unfortunately, only half of Cyril's own work has survived intact, with the latter ten books being preserved merely in later Greek and Syriac sources that cited passages from it for their own purposes. Fortunately, on

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<sup>1</sup> Julian, *CG* fr. 1.2–4 (page 87 Masaracchia [henceforth, Mas.]). For a recent introduction to Julian's treatise, see C. Riedweg, 'Anti-Christian polemics and pagan onto-theology: Julian's *Against the Galilaeans*', in S. Rebenich and H.-U. Wiemer (edd.), *A Companion to Julian the Apostate* (Leiden, 2020), 245–66. On the historical context, see S. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (Berkeley, 2012), 300–2.

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occasion these chance survivals preserve *testimonia* to, and even fragments from, Julian's original text. The task of reconstituting and publishing the text of Julian's *CG* is, therefore, largely dependent upon scholarly efforts to provide a reliable text for as much of Cyril's lengthy refutation as we can recover.

#### PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO RECOVER JULIAN'S *CONTRA GALILAEOS*

Not until the eighteenth century were the fragments of Julian's *CG* extracted from Cyril's *CI* and published independently; in 1764 the Marquis d'Argens presented the Greek passages of Julian's work cited by Cyril along with a French translation reissued in a lightly revised version four years later by Voltaire.<sup>2</sup> The first properly critical edition was published by Neumann in 1880, who used Spanheim's 1696 edition of Cyril's *CI* for the passages from *CG* cited in Cyril's first ten books and also included eighteen fragments he discovered in other sources.<sup>3</sup> Neumann's edition was largely reprinted in Wright's Loeb volume in 1923.<sup>4</sup> Both of these editions printed the passages extracted from Cyril's first ten books as a continuously running text, which misleadingly gives the impression that we have a more or less complete text of much of Julian's *CG* rather than a collection of fragments from a hostile source. Both of them also dispensed with *testimonia*, including only those extracts where Cyril cited Julian verbatim. These two defects were remedied in Masaracchia's edition of *CG* in 1990, the primary basis for all subsequent scholarship. Ninety-four of Masaracchia's one hundred and seven fragments derive from Cyril's *CI* (fr. 1–89, 91, 96–9 Mas.), with the remainder coming from Jerome (fr. 90, 101, 102), Theodore of Mopsuestia (fr. 92–5, 100, 104–6), Photius (fr. 100), the *Suda* (fr. 103) and Arethas (fr. 107).<sup>5</sup>

New remnants of Julian's treatise have since been discovered in several sources. In 1994 Guida edited and translated the fragmentary remains of Theodore of Mopsuestia's reply to Julian's *CG*, including an appendix containing several new Julianic passages uncovered in the process.<sup>6</sup> He followed this up with a study highlighting two more

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. Marcone, 'Il *Contro i Galilei* di Giuliano edito da Voltaire. Storia—e paradossi—di un pamphlet di polemica religiosa', in A. Bencivenni, A. Cristofori, F. Muccioli, C. Salvaterra (edd.), *PHILOBIBLOS. Scritti in onore di Giovanni Geraci* (Milan, 2019), 545–66. On Voltaire's admiration for Julian, see S. Rebenich, 'Julian's afterlife: the reception of a Roman emperor', in S. Rebenich and H.-U. Wiemer (edd.), *A Companion to Julian the Apostate* (Leiden, 2020), 398–420, at 409–10.

<sup>3</sup> K.J. Neumann, *Iuliani imperatoris librorum contra Christianos quae supersunt. Collegit, recensuit, prolegomenis instruxit C.I. Neumann. Insunt Cyrilli Alexandrini fragmenta syriaca ab Eberhardo Nestle edita* (Leipzig, 1880); translated as K.J. Neumann, *Kaiser Julians Bücher gegen die Christen* (Leipzig, 1880). In addition to several fragments from the lost second decade of Cyril's *CI*, Neumann also included passages from Jerome (fr. 1, 15, 16 Neumann [henceforth, Neu.]), Theodore of Mopsuestia (fr. 3–7), Photius (fr. 12) and the *Suda* (fr. 18).

<sup>4</sup> W.C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, vol. 3 (New York, 1923). Wright took into account studies of the textual tradition: P. Klimik, *Coniectanea in Julianum et Cyrilli Alexandrini contra illum libros, Dissertatio inauguralis* (Vratislavia, 1883); T. Gollwitzer, *Observationes criticae in Iuliani imperatoris contra Christianos libros, Dissertatio inauguralis* (Erlangen, 1886); R. Asmus, *Julians Galiläerschrift im Zusammenhang mit seinem übrigen Werken. Ein Beitrag zur Erklärung und Kritik der julianischen Schriften* (Freiburg, 1904).

<sup>5</sup> E. Masaracchia, *Giuliano Imperatore, Contra Galilaeos: Introduzione, testo critico e traduzione* (Rome, 1990). For the fragments from Theodore, Masaracchia drew on the study by A. Guida, 'Frammenti inediti del "contro i Galilei" di Giuliano e della replica di Teodoro di Mopsuestia', *Prometheus* 9 (1983), 139–63.

<sup>6</sup> A. Guida, *Teodoro di Mopsuestia: Replica a Giuliano imperatore* (Florence, 1994).

new *testimonia* and a new fragment of Julian's lost work that are found in quotations of Cyril's *CI* preserved in a later Chalcedonian florilegium.<sup>7</sup> In 2006 Bianchi identified three *testimonia* to Julian's *CG* preserved in homilies of the twelfth-century Italo-Greek monk Philagathos of Cerami. Two are new; one reports a Julianic criticism previously published as *CG* fr. 100 Mas.<sup>8</sup> Following this discovery, Trovato published in 2012 what he regarded as another new fragment from Julian's treatise, this one coming from the *Enarratio in Evangelium Marci* by Theophylact of Ohrid,<sup>9</sup> although Riedweg has suggested that this passage is merely a *testimonium* to one of the same passages preserved by Philagathos.<sup>10</sup> In 2018 Giavatto and Muller released a Greek-French edition of Julian's *CG*, based on Masaracchia's edition and adding some of the new passages that have come to light since 1990.<sup>11</sup> Next, in 2020 Guida identified yet another unexpected *testimonium* to *CG*, this one in an early sixteenth-century work by Gian Francesco Pico della Mirandola.<sup>12</sup> A final text containing remnants of Julian's treatise has been identified but has yet to be properly published: an extended version of Ps.-Justin Martyr's *Quaestiones et responsiones ad Graecos*, recently discovered by Toth, contains a section of text that seems to draw heavily upon the second decade of Cyril's *CI*, containing two further fragments of Julian's treatise that have not survived elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

A new edition of *CG* is needed for at least two reasons. First, scholarship on the text has advanced remarkably over the past three decades, with new fragments and *testimonia* appearing subsequent to Masaracchia's 1990 edition. As a result, accessing the text as it is known today requires knowing where to find all the recently discovered Julianic material. Second, the years 2016–17 witnessed the publication of the first modern critical edition of Cyril's *CI*,<sup>14</sup> which has brought to light still more new Julianic material, of two different types. First, the first ten books of Cyril's treatise may contain *testimonia* that have

<sup>7</sup> A. Guida, 'Altre testimonianze e un nuovo frammento del "Contro i Galilei" di Giuliano Imperatore', in M. Serena Funghi (ed.), *ΟΑΟΙ ΔΙΖΗΤΗΣΙΟΣ – Le vie della ricerca: studi in onore di Francesco Adorno* (Florence, 1996), 241–52. These passages are now Cyril, *CI* fr. 8, 15, 21, 24, 25, 26 Kinzig/Brüggemann (henceforth, Kin./Brü.).

<sup>8</sup> N. Bianchi, 'Nuovi frammenti del *Contra Galilaeos* di Giuliano (dalle omelie di Filagato da Cerami)', *BollClass* 27 (2006), 89–104. C. Riedweg, 'A German Renaissance humanist as predecessor & some further surprises: on the direct and indirect tradition of Cyril's *Contra Iulianum*', in G. Huber-Rebenich and S. Rebenich (edd.), *Interreligiöse Konflikte im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert: Julian 'Contra Galilaeos' – Kyrill 'Contra Iulianum'* (Berlin, 2020), 257–85, at 262 has proposed that the two new fragments be numbered *CG* fr. 100a and 100b. On the hypothesis that Cyril served as Philagathos' unnamed source for this Julianic material, these passages were published as Cyril, *CI* fr. 72, 73, 74 Kin./Brü.

<sup>9</sup> S. Trovato, 'Un nuovo frammento e nuove testimonianze del "Contra Galilaeos" di Giuliano l'Apostata', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 62 (2012), 265–79, at 265–7.

<sup>10</sup> Riedweg (n. 8), 248 n. 16.

<sup>11</sup> A. Giavatto and R. Muller, *Julien l'Empereur: Contre les Galiléens* (Paris, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> A. Guida, 'La trasmissione del testo del *Contra Galilaeos* di Giuliano e un nuovo misterioso frammento', in G. Huber-Rebenich and S. Rebenich (edd.), *Interreligiöse Konflikte im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert: Julian 'Contra Galilaeos' – Kyrill 'Contra Iulianum'* (Berlin, 2020), 91–109.

<sup>13</sup> A.M. Ritter and P. Toth, 'Sechs ps.-justinische Traktate', in C. Riedweg, C. Horn and D. Wyrwa (edd.), *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie: Vol. 5. Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike* (Basel, 2018), 2256–8. Cf. Riedweg (n. 8), 260, who proposes that these fragments be called *CG* fr. 91c and 95b. Fuller discussion, including the Greek text, in W. Kinzig and T. Brüggemann (edd.), *Kyrill von Alexandrien I: Gegen Julian, Teil 2: Buch 6–10 und Fragmente* (Berlin, 2017), 941–3.

<sup>14</sup> C. Riedweg and W. Kinzig (edd.), *Kyrill von Alexandrien I: Gegen Julian, Teil 1: Buch 1–5* (Berlin, 2016); Kinzig and Brüggemann (n. 13).

long lain in plain sight. For example, Cyril's response to *CG* fr. 47 Mas. (quoted at *CI* 6.25.4–15) indicates that the dominical saying at Matthew 10:28 is an example of the kind of 'harsh law' that Christians have taken from Judaism (*CI* 6.27.11–15), alluded to but otherwise not specified in the quoted extract. A careful study of *CI*, taking into account a more sophisticated understanding of Cyril's method of handling his source material, is needed to determine if more Julianic material can be recovered.<sup>15</sup>

A second tranche of Julianic material from the new edition of Cyril's *CI* is fortunately more readily accessible. The editors have uncovered new Greek and Syriac fragments from the second decade of *CI*, several of which contain further *testimonia* to lost portions of Julian's *CG*. The present article sets forth these new remnants surviving in Syriac sources and contextualizes them within the wider argumentative scope of Julian's *CG* in so far as that can be determined.<sup>16</sup> For the prolegomenon to Neumann's 1880 edition of *CG*, Nestle edited and translated into Latin twenty-seven Syriac fragments from Cyril's *CI*, of which fourteen derived from the lost Books 11–20. However, Neumann included only a few extracts from these fragments of *CI* in his edition of *CG* (specifically *CG* fr. 2, 8, 9, 10, 13 Neu.), even though several others that he excluded illuminate lost portions of Julian's text. Masaracchia included even less Syriac material in her edition and printed merely a Latin translation, omitting the Syriac text altogether (*CG* fr. 91, 96, 97, 98 Mas.). In contrast, for the new GCS edition of Cyril's *CI*, Hubert Kaufhold has edited fifty-five Syriac fragments, of which twenty-three come from the lost second decade.<sup>17</sup> This recent reassessment and enlargement of our knowledge of the Syriac transmission of Cyril's *CI* has laid the foundation for a fresh study of the traces of Julian's *CG* preserved there, which the present article aims to provide.<sup>18</sup> I propose that within these twenty-three fragments from *CI* Books 11–20 we can identify seven new *testimonia* to be added to Masaracchia's edition and one expanded version of a fragment she already included.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. S. Rebenich and H.-U. Wiemer, 'Introduction: approaching Julian', in S. Rebenich and H.-U. Wiemer (edd.), *A Companion to Julian the Apostate* (Leiden, 2020), 1–37, at 31: 'What remains to be done is to produce an edition of the fragments of Julian's treatise which takes into account the insights that have been reached by close study of Cyril's text.'

<sup>16</sup> For an overview of Cyril's works in Syriac translation, see H. Kaufhold, 'Werke des Kyrill in syrischer Überlieferung', in G. Huber-Rebenich and S. Rebenich (edd.), *Interreligiöse Konflikte im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert: Julian 'Contra Galilaeos' – Kyrill 'Contra Iulianum'* (Berlin, 2020), 229–55; for a detailed analysis of the surviving translations, D. King, *The Syriac Versions of the Writings of Cyril of Alexandria: A Study in Translation Technique* (Leuven, 2008). On the accuracy of the Syriac transmission of *CI*, Kaufhold in Kinzig and Brüggemann (n. 13), 829 comments: 'Der syrische Text folgt dort, wo ein griechischer Text erhalten ist, diesem in aller Regel ziemlich genau. Das wird man auch bei den Stellen, wo der griechischen Text verlorengegangen ist, voraussetzen können.' Based on my own study of the text, his description seems accurate.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the overview table of all the Syriac fragments in Kinzig and Brüggemann (n. 13), 840–3.

<sup>18</sup> Riedweg (n. 8), 259–60 has already begun this process with respect to one passage from Cyril's eighth book that survives in both Greek and Syriac. Although the Greek manuscript tradition unanimously reads  $\varphi\alpha\sigma\iota$  at *CI* 8.48.24, seeming to report an objection from unnamed pagan opponents, the quotation of this passage in the Syriac translation of Severus of Antioch's *Contra impium Grammaticum* has the singular participle ܘܫܝܢ ('he says'), explicitly attributing this objection to Julian in the opening editorial comment to the passage (page 868.6 Kaufhold). As a result, Riedweg proposes that the plural  $\varphi\alpha\sigma\iota$  be emended to the singular  $\varphi\eta\sigma\iota$  and that the passage be added to the new fragments of Julian's *CG* with the designation fr. 65a. This, however, seems too hasty a decision since there are other indications from the wider context that Cyril has in mind not just a single opponent in this section but a larger group of unnamed contemporary Hellenes (plural references at *CI* 8.46.1  $\text{o}\acute{\iota}\ \delta\iota\prime\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\nu\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ , 8.50.2–3  $\text{π}\alpha\rho\grave{\alpha}\ \text{τ}\omega\iota\varsigma\ \text{Ἑ}\lambda\lambda\eta\gamma\omega\nu\ \text{π}\alpha\iota\sigma\iota$ ).

The question of how best to refer to these fragments of *CG* is complex. Masaracchia's edition enumerated the fragments beginning with the first one cited by Cyril in *CI* and continuing to the last one cited in Book 10. Riedweg has proposed that the new fragments from Cyril's second decade be numbered according to where they likely occurred in the course of Julian's *CG*, 'using mainly the narrative sequence of the gospels as an aid to orientation',<sup>19</sup> since the gospels seem to have been Julian's main focus in his second book from which these passages presumably come.<sup>20</sup> This, however, makes the current numbering system more complex, since it keeps Masaracchia's existing enumeration but uses the addition of letters after the numbers to indicate the proposed location of new fragments (for example, designating one such passage *CG* fr. 91c since it presumably should have originally come after fr. 91b). To simplify matters, I number these new passages starting where Masaracchia left off, at 108, with the exception of the passage that is an expanded version of an already numbered fragment and a new fragment clearly related to it. When a full edition of the text is finally produced, its editors may decide to renumber these fragments according to their own scholarly judgements about the original sequence of *CG* and about how to manage the unwieldy and complex state in which it has reached us.

#### NEW FRAGMENTS

*CG* fr. 91 apud *CI* fr. 3a (page 878.2–7, 22–6 Kaufhold):

And, O friend of ours, what is so novel about the fact that in keeping with God's will a star arose contrary to its normal pattern at that time when God the Word took on a body and it went ahead as a herald? **Is it not the case that, owing to the occurrence of great events all throughout the world, there have often appeared those stars that are also called 'comets' or 'in the form of beards', though others also give them the name 'meteors'?**<sup>21</sup> **And this star was not one of those known stars, nor was it, as [Julian] claims, the daystar.**

...  
So then, this is how the marvel should be understood and it is worthy of being believed, even if that star did not remain until now. Moreover, it was not one of the stars that are known—not the daystar or Pleiades or Aldebaran. And even if it was standing over Bethlehem and over the house and over the place where the child was lying, one should not doubt the story.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Riedweg (n. 8), 260 n. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Riedweg and Kinzig (n. 14), XCII, CV–CVIII. See also Julian's allusions to topics he intends to treat later in *CG*, all of which pertain to Jesus and the gospels: *CG* fr. 50.3–4 Mas. (apud *CI* 6.42.7–8), fr. 51.3–5 Mas. (apud *CI* 7.1.14–15) and fr. 64.5–7 Mas. (apud *CI* 8.15.9–10), with the last passage referring explicitly to the δευτερον συγγραμματα of *CG*.

<sup>21</sup> In his German translation, Kaufhold transliterates ܘܢܩܘܠܘܢܐ as 'qalys, seemingly reading initial ܩ as a preposition, and adds in brackets that perhaps this is meant to be ܐܩܘܢܝܫܡܘܨ or 'Sternschnuppen' ('shooting stars'). However, if ܩ is read as a part of the word rather than as a preposition, then the Syriac is simply a transliteration of δοκίδες, as also recognized by Nestle (Neumann [n. 3], 65; cf. Masaracchia [n. 5], 185). Hence, I translate the word as 'meteors'. Cf. J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford, 1903), s.v. ܘܢܩܘܠܘܢܐ.

<sup>22</sup> All English translations from Syriac are mine, though I have consulted Kaufhold's German translation of the Syriac fragments published in Kinzig and Brüggemann (n. 13), 761–818. I am also grateful for the comments on my initial draft translation offered by my research assistant Hannah Stork.



gain a further glimpse into Julian's argument. The direct address with which the passage opens, characteristic of Cyril's style,<sup>26</sup> implies that Julian objected to the story of the magi's star on grounds that it was somehow 'novel' (ἑνὸν). This emphasis on novelty is further elucidated in the latter portion of the extract printed above. Cyril's defence of the account as plausible despite the star's disappearance suggests that Julian had raised this point too, probably because an appearing and disappearing star would be a novel heavenly phenomenon that did not obey the normal laws of celestial motion. Finally, in the latter portion of the extract Cyril again opposes the view that the star was the daystar, Pleiades, or Aldebaran, all of these being known heavenly bodies which, as such, are not novel. Thus from Cyril's rebuttal we surmise not only that Julian sought to identify the magi's star with the daystar (as Neumann and Masaracchia recognized) but also that he seemingly thought it was implausible that the star in question was a novel phenomenon previously unknown to astronomers which moved in a strange manner and disappeared once its mission was complete.

This fuller understanding of Julian's argument is significant because he is apparently arguing against an interpretation of the star put forward by at least two earlier Christians. In his *Contra Celsum*, Origen proposed that the star was 'a new star and not like any of the ordinary ones' (καὶνὸν ... καὶ μηδενὶ τῶν συνήθων παραπλήσιον), and that it is 'to be classed with the comets which occasionally occur, or meteors, or bearded or jar-shaped stars' (κομηῆται ἢ δοκίδες ἢ πωγωνία ἢ πίθοι).<sup>27</sup> Origen then made precisely the same point as Cyril, namely that such phenomena often appeared at great moments of history, so it should not be surprising to find this occurring at the birth of Jesus.<sup>28</sup> Eusebius, that fourth-century enthusiastic disciple of Origen, followed his predecessor on this question, asserting in his *Demonstratio evangelica* that the magi's star was a 'strange' (ξένος) and 'new' (καίνος) star akin to the 'so-called comets or meteors or beard-shaped stars' (κομητῶν, ἢ δοκίδων, ἢ πωγωνιῶν) that have often appeared at the occurrence of unusual events.<sup>29</sup> Thus the two most famous apologists for Christianity before Julian had argued that the star was a novel phenomenon that appeared for a specific time and then disappeared once its mission was complete, the very same position that Julian seems to have set himself against. In one of the other surviving verbatim fragments of his *CG* Julian, in fact, refers to Eusebius by name

<sup>26</sup> Cf. T. Brüggemann, "Ἀποστροφή in *Contra Iulianum*: Julian als fiktives Gegenüber Kyrills", in G. Huber-Rebenich and S. Rebenich (edd.), *Interreligiöse Konflikte im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert: Julian 'Contra Galilaeos' – Kyrill 'Contra Iulianum'* (Berlin, 2020), 153–64. On Cyril's use of rhetoric in the treatise more broadly, see M. Shramm, 'Kyrills Argumentationsstrategien in *Contra Iulianum*: zu Logik und Rhetorik seiner Widerlegung', in G. Huber-Rebenich and S. Rebenich (edd.), *Interreligiöse Konflikte im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert: Julian 'Contra Galilaeos' – Kyrill 'Contra Iulianum'* (Berlin, 2020), 131–51.

<sup>27</sup> Orig. *C. Cels.* 1.58. Text from M. Borret, *Origène. Contre Celse, Tome I* (Paris, 1967), 236. Translation from H. Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge, 2003), 53. At *C. Cels.* 1.34 Origen noted that Celsus cited the passage about the Bethlehem star in Matthew but did not say how he interpreted it, so it is unclear whether his comments on this issue in this later passage respond to lost criticisms from his opponent. A precedent for Origen's view is found in Clement of Alexandria's report that the Valentinian Theodotus described the star as being 'strange and new' (ξένος ἀστὴρ καὶ καινός) and as having 'destroyed the ancient order of the stars' (καταλύων τὴν παλαιὰν ἀστροθεσίαν) (*exc. Thdot.* 4.74.2; text from R.P. Casey, *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* [London, 1934], 86).

<sup>28</sup> Orig. *C. Cels.* 1.59.

<sup>29</sup> Euseb. *DE* 9.1.11–13. Text from I.A. Heikel, *Eusebius Werke, Band 6: Die Demonstratio evangelica* (Leipzig, 1913).

and alludes to a passage from his *Praeparatio evangelica*.<sup>30</sup> It is, therefore, plausible that Julian learned of this interpretation of the magi's star from his reading of Eusebius, and focussed his treatment of this gospel passage around critiquing the view of that earlier defender of Christianity, a pattern repeated below in *CG* fr. 111, though it cannot be excluded that he was responding to Origen instead of, or in addition to, Eusebius in light of the parallels between *CG* and *Contra Celsum* recently brought to light.<sup>31</sup>

Julian thus apparently opposed the idea that the magi's star was a novel or irregular astrological phenomenon, as Origen and Eusebius had maintained, which is why Cyril felt the need to defend its plausibility, indeed normality, despite the fact that it moved in a strange fashion and did not remain in the sky.<sup>32</sup> This insight comports with the sentence originally singled out by Neumann in which Cyril claims Julian said that the magi's star was the daystar or Venus: Julian objected to the star as something novel or unusual, and identified it with, or at least compared it to, a known heavenly body. But why would Julian have referred specifically to the daystar in his criticism of Origen's and Eusebius' position? Answering this question moves into more speculative terrain but a conjecture can be offered. The fifth-century grammarian Servius reported that Varro claimed 'the morning-star, which is said to belong to Venus, was continually seen by Aeneas until he should reach Laurentian territory and ceased to be visible after he arrived: from which fact he recognized that he had in fact arrived' (*Varro enim ait hanc stellam Luciferi, quae Veneris dicitur, ab Aenea, donec ad Laurentem agrum ueniret, semper uisam, et postquam peruenit, uideri desiisse: unde et peruenisse se agnouit*).<sup>33</sup> The parallels between this tradition and the story of the magi following the star westwards to Bethlehem have long been recognized,<sup>34</sup> and it could be that Julian himself deployed this similarity in his critique of the biblical account, which would be in keeping with other passages in the treatise that highlight traditions related to Rome's founding and greatness (cf. *CG* fr. 42, 43, 44, 49 Mas.).

<sup>30</sup> *CG* fr. 53.7–11 Mas. referring to Euseb. *PE* 11.5.5 and 11.5.7. Cf. J. Bouffartigue, *L'empereur Julien et la culture de son temps* (Paris, 1992), 300, 384–9; Elm (n. 1), 305.

<sup>31</sup> M.-O. Boulnois, 'La diversité des nations et l'élection d'Israël: y a-t-il une influence du *Contre Celse* d'Origène sur le *Contre les Galiléens* de Julien?', in S. Kaczmarek, H. Pietras and A. Dziadowiec (edd.), *Origeniana Decima: Origen as a Writer (Papers of the 10th International Origen Congress)* (Leuven, 2011), 803–30; M.-O. Boulnois, 'Le *Contre les Galiléens* de l'empereur Julien répond-il au *Contre Celse* d'Origène?', in E. Amato, V. Fauvinet-Ranson and B. Pouderon (edd.), *EN ΚΑΛΟΙΣ ΚΟΙΝΟΙΠΑΤΙΑ: Hommages à la mémoire de Pierre-Louis Malosse et Jean Bouffartigue* (Nantes, 2014), 103–23; M.-O. Boulnois, 'The biblical text and its variants at the heart of the debate between the Emperor Julian and Cyril of Alexandria: the cases of Genesis 6.2 and 49.10', *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 25 (2021), 284–319. Boulnois (this note [2014]), 110 raises the possibility that Julian was responding to Origen's criticism of Celsus specifically on the topic of the magi's star.

<sup>32</sup> Cyril's response to Julian is thus largely a reaffirmation of the view held by Origen and Eusebius (i.e. that the magi's star was something like a comet), though with a denial that this meant it was something strange or novel as they had claimed.

<sup>33</sup> Serv. ad Verg. *Aen.* 2.801. Text from G. Thilo, *Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii Aeneidos Libros I–III Commentarii* (Leipzig, 1878), 331. I am grateful to my research assistant Edward Jeremiah for drawing my attention to this passage.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. N.W. de Witt, 'The influence of the saviour sentiment upon Virgil', *TAPhA* 54 (1923), 39–40; A. Adair, 'A critical look at the history of interpreting the star of Bethlehem in scientific literature and biblical studies', in P. Barthel and G. van Kooten (edd.), *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Experts on the Ancient Near East, the Greco-Roman World, and Modern Astronomy* (Leiden, 2015), 43–84, at 72–3. Adair says the association between the star of Bethlehem and that of Aeneas goes back at least to D.F. Strauss in the nineteenth century.



A further *testimonium* from Varro yields more material relevant for reconstructing Julian's argument. In the *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine quotes a passage from Varro's *De gente populi Romani* in which Varro passes on a report about Venus from the chronicler Castor who in turn was seemingly drawing upon the mathematicians Adrastus of Cyzicus and Dion of Neapolis. According to these sources, during the reign of King Ogyges, Venus 'changed its colour, size, shape and course' (*mutaret colorem, magnitudinem, figuram, cursum*). Moreover, this is said to have been 'something that has never happened before or since' (*quod factum ita neque antea nec postea sit*).<sup>35</sup> Here we have a tradition about a known star changing its course which is said to be such an unusual event that it has never occurred subsequently. It seems unlikely to be a coincidence that the star in question is the daystar and that the same heavenly body somehow figured into Julian's criticism of the supposed novel behaviour of the magi's star. Perhaps his argument went something like this: 'The only star known to have ever changed its course was, according to Castor, the daystar, so the story of the magi's star in the gospels must have been fabricated in imitation of it.' Even if somewhat speculative, this reconstruction of Julian's argument would explain why Cyril in response would argue that the magi's star should not be identified with any of the heavenly bodies known to astronomers.

Before leaving this fragment, we must comment on its relation to the fragment of *CG* published by Guida in 2020, found in Gian Francesco Pico della Mirandola's treatise *De rerum praenotione* and numbered *CG* fr. 91a by Riedweg.<sup>36</sup> Here Pico claims that Julian identified the magi's guide with a star bearing the Egyptian name Asaph which appeared every four-hundred years.<sup>37</sup> In other words, according to this *testimonium*, Julian said that the star was what we now today call a comet. As a precursor for this view, Guida points to the aforementioned passage from Origen's *Contra Celsum* in which the Bethlehem star is said to be a 'comet' or 'meteor'.<sup>38</sup> It seems more likely that, as argued above, Julian's argument was framed in opposition to the position of Origen and Eusebius. That is, even though Julian in this fragment seemingly agrees with Origen and Eusebius that the star was what we could call a 'comet', he rejected their claim that the object was a novelty and instead sought to identify it with a named astronomical phenomenon. The rejection of novelty is indeed the main point of continuity between *CG* fr. 91 and Guida's new mysterious fragment. It could be that Julian mentioned several well-known heavenly bodies by name, not just the daystar, but perhaps also Pleiades and Aldebaran (also noted by Cyril in *CI* fr. 3a), as well as an otherwise unknown object called Asaph. There was debate in antiquity over whether comets were recurring heavenly phenomena or random unpredictable events; according to Pico's *testimonium*, Julian took the view that they regularly appeared at set intervals, a position said to have originated amongst Pythagoras' followers.<sup>39</sup> If so, then even a rare event such as the appearance of a comet is something ordered and indeed eternal,

<sup>35</sup> Aug. *De civ. D.* 21.8. Text from B. Dombart and A. Kalb, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De ciuitate Dei* (Turnhout, 1955).

<sup>36</sup> Riedweg (n. 8), 261.

<sup>37</sup> Citing from Guida (n. 12), 98: 'Sileant igitur astrologi, et obmutescat Iulianus Caesar impius ille desertor stellam eam aegyptiam blaterans nomine Asaph, viderique quadringentesimo quoque anno. Nusquam enim hoc proditum antea, nec post annos MCCCC et tres, tot enim a salutifero Christi ortu praeteriere, visa est: suo enim munere functa ab oculis mortalium prorsus evanuit, nec eius cursus cum syderibus aliis conveniebat.'

<sup>38</sup> Guida (n. 12), 100.

<sup>39</sup> For a survey of ancient views, see Aëtius, *Placita* 3.2. Cf. Guida (n. 12), 101.













Like *CG* fr. 91b and 111, this passage comes from George of B'eltan's unpublished *Commentary on Matthew*. Because it alludes to the offering of frankincense to the infant Jesus, this criticism presumably derives from Julian's treatment of the canonical infancy narratives.<sup>69</sup> As with fr. 111, we can plausibly conjecture that Cyril's *CI* was George's unnamed source for this Julianic *testimonium* and that the passage of Cyril's treatise upon which he drew may have been found among the lost portion of the catena in MS British Library Add. 17214.<sup>70</sup> As noted above, Dionysius bar Salibi later repeats this Julianic objection, probably drawing upon George.<sup>71</sup> This new passage is noteworthy for at least two reasons. First, while it is clear that Julian's primary aim in *CG* was to undermine the sacred texts that served as the foundation for Christian belief, he also on occasion commented on Christian ritual practice, including denouncing the inefficacy of making the sign of the cross (*CG* fr. 43.11–13 Mas. *apud CI* 6.15.13–15), pointing out the inability of baptism to change a person's moral state (*CG* fr. 59.16–23 Mas. *apud CI* 7.38.18–25), and claiming that devotion to the tombs of the martyrs involved defilement (*CG* fr. 81.3–14 *apud CI* 10.11.5–17). The present passage extends this motif by showing that Julian, rather surprisingly, also addressed the kind of incense used in the liturgy.

This leads to the second noteworthy aspect of this passage. Julian's comment seemingly assumes that Christian rituals should be patterned after what one finds in the New Testament, specifically the offering of frankincense to Jesus by the magi. This could imply that, if Christians simply burned frankincense in their worship rather than the mixed compound that they currently use, their worship would be legitimate, or at least in harmony with ritual practice among other religious groups. It is difficult to discern how best to contextualize this seemingly positive remark given that elsewhere in *CG* Julian finds nothing about Christian ritual practice to endorse, consistently portraying them as having departed from the legitimate cultic practices of the Greeks, Romans and Jews. It could be that the comment was intended to contrast the practice of Jesus' earliest followers in the New Testament with the corruptions that occurred later, as Julian elsewhere asserts (cf. *CG* fr. 79.5–8 Mas. *apud CI* 10.1.14–16). The passage might also be relying on an assumed deprecation of an incense compound concocted artificially by humans, perhaps seen as a debauched luxury, in contrast to the natural simplicity of frankincense as a material used for honouring the divine.<sup>72</sup> Whatever the case, this passage from Julian is noteworthy as one of our earliest references to the burning of incense in Christian worship.<sup>73</sup>

*CG fr. 113 apud CI fr. 77 (page 892.9–12 Kaufhold):*

But the reprobate Julian, along with others, severely criticizes John at this point<sup>74</sup> for having uttered an obvious falsehood with these words, since the world could record

<sup>69</sup> Riedweg (n. 8), 261.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Kinzig and Brüggemann (n. 13), 827.

<sup>71</sup> See Sedlacek and Chabot (n. 45), CSCO 15.109 (Syriac text); CSCO 16.81 (Latin translation).

<sup>72</sup> Julian elsewhere refers positively to burning frankincense to the gods: *Or.* 2.23.32 (Bidez); 6.17.8 (Rochefort); *Mis.* 35.31 (Lacombrade); *Ep.* 98.41 (Bidez).

<sup>73</sup> For an overview, see S. Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley, 2006), 75–83, who (writing before the publication of the fragment of Julian) says Egeria's description of the Jerusalem liturgy c.381 'is the only mention of liturgical use [of incense] of which we can be certain at this early date' (77).

<sup>74</sup> The passage in view is John 21:25, which Isho'dad has just cited.





## CONCLUSION

The harvest of new knowledge from these fragments enriches our understanding of Julian's *Contra Galilaeos* in several respects. First, it provides further evidence that Julian's critique of Christianity engaged with the prior tradition of pagan polemic and Christian apologetic. In the most thorough study of Julian's sources yet undertaken, Bouffartigue concluded that Julian knew Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica* and at least Book 1 of his *Demonstratio evangelica*.<sup>78</sup> More recently, Boulnois has raised the possibility that Julian was responding to Origen's *Contra Celsum*.<sup>79</sup> The above analysis of *CG* fr. 91 suggests that Julian was aware either of Origen's treatment of the magi's star in that text or of Eusebius' similar discussion in *Demonstratio evangelica* Book 9. Moreover, *CG* fr. 111 proves that he was interacting with other texts in Eusebius' corpus, most likely his *Quaestiones evangelicae*.

This leads to the second observation. Elm has recently described Julian's treatise as 'sophisticated',<sup>80</sup> and this is nowhere more apparent than in *CG* fr. 111, in which he identifies a significant problem in what was at the time the most widespread explanation for Jesus' discordant genealogies and displays an impressive knowledge of obscure biblical texts. Nevertheless, this is but one aspect of Julian's critique of the gospels. For alongside such incisive criticisms we also find comparatively simplistic objections in *CG* frs. 109 and 113, as well as *CG* fr. 1 Bianchi. Julian's attack on the gospels seemingly was a mixture of both kinds of arguments. When combatting the interpretation of the gospels offered by a learned bishop such as Eusebius, Julian shows himself to be an equally sophisticated exegete. However, when addressing the stories in the gospels directly, he apparently thought mocking derision was the best way to show the falsity of what he regarded as trivial fairy tales.

Third, the preceding study answers questions about how Julian's *CG* was received by the medieval Syriac tradition. These later authors were, at best, relying upon the refutations of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril. However, it seems that often the chain of dependence was more complex. For example, Dionysius bar Salibi was perhaps drawing upon George of B'eltan when he reported three Julianic objections; and George himself was probably reliant, at least in part and maybe entirely, upon the anonymous florilegium of extracts in MS BL Add. 17214. Julian's *CG* had a longer afterlife in the Syriac world than is often recognized, but there were multiple layers of mediation at work.

Finally, this study has highlighted the need for a new edition of Julian's *Contra Galilaeos*. Knowledge of the text has grown considerably since Masaracchia's 1990 edition and a comprehensive reassessment of our single most important source is now in order in light of the new GCS edition of Cyril's *CI*. Once that has been completed, the new edition of Julian's *CG* can join Becker's 2016 edition of Porphyry's *Contra Christianos*, and we will be positioned to undertake a fresh study of the development of anti-Christian polemic and Christian apologetic response over the course of Late Antiquity.

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<sup>78</sup> Bouffartigue (n. 30), 379–97. Elm (n. 1), 300–21 agrees with Bouffartigue's conclusions and provides further comparative analysis of Eusebius and Julian.

<sup>79</sup> Boulnois (n. 31 [2011]); Boulnois (n. 31 [2014]); Boulnois (n. 31 [2021]).

<sup>80</sup> Elm (n. 1), 317–18, *pace* Smith (n. 49), 205–6.