

What's in a Name? Essenes, *Therapeutae*, and Monks in the Christian Imagination, c.1500–1700*

'The Essene is the great enigma of Hebrew history. Admired alike by Jew, by Heathen, and by Christian, he yet remains a dim vague outline, on which the highest subtlety of successive critics has been employed to supply a substantial form and an adequate colouring. An ascetic mystical dreamy recluse, he seems too far removed from the hard experience of life to be capable of realisation.' – J.B. Lightfoot, *Bishop of Durham (1828–1889)*¹

1. Introduction

There can be few fictitious encounters more inventive and improbable than the one set in the city of 'Cosmopolis' on the island of 'Utopia' during 'a generall meeting of many famous learned Men of all Religions.'² Two of the three men meeting at the side lines of this Davos for early modern religious controversialists were, indeed, famous. Had the encounter been real they would have instantly recognized each other. Cardinal Robert Bellarmine even had a painting on the wall of his study of his 'learned adversary', the Cambridge divine William Whitaker.³ The third participant, the imaginary rabbi Michael, had recently converted from Judaism to Christianity but could not decide 'whether to embrace the Catholike fayth, or Protestancy.' In this fantasy spun by a Jesuit polemicist, Michael set a challenge for the Protestant Hector and Catholic Achilles to prove whether the Roman faith had 'ever altered since the Apostles tymes'. Bellarmine unsurprisingly proved victorious and Whitaker 'entring into greate intemperance of words, against the Church of Rome' departed. Michael converted to Catholicism and entered the priesthood.⁴

It was Michael who introduced the subject of the Essenes. Bellarmine had rejected a parallel between heretical and monastic movements, both of whom were named after their founders: 'Touching those names of Franciscans, Bernardins, Benedictans, &c. It is so cleare, that these names are not imposed for change of Fayth, but only for institution of several

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¹ Joseph B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Rev[is]ed Text with Introductions, Notes and Dissertations* (London, 1875), 82–83.

² John Clare, *The Converted Jew or Certain Dialogues Betweene Micheas a Learned Jew and Others, Touching Divers Points of Religion, Controverted Betweene the Catholicks and Protestants* (s.l., 1630), sig. a2r.

³ James Brodrick SJ, *Robert Bellarmine: Saint and Scholar* (London, 1961), 84.

⁴ Clare, *The Converted Jew*, sig. a2r-v.

degrees of a vertuous, and religious life.’ Michael, drawing on the authority of Philo and Josephus, submitted the example of the Essenes, a Jewish sect which flourished during the Second Temple period (2nd century BCE–1st century CE) ‘to whom God vouchsafed many spiritual favours and consolations’ in support of the Roman cardinal’s argument. The Essenes were ‘[h]appy men: since he is most fit to walke upon the hight of celestial contemplation; who liveth in the vale of a voluntary humility, retyrednes, and mortification; in whom the fyre of the spirit doth ever extinguish the fire of the flesh and sensuality.’ Yet, Michael argued, their life of contemplation did not mean that they ‘instituted a Fayth, and Religion different from that of Moyses’, just as the various monastic orders did not follow a faith different from that of Christ.⁵

John Clare, the English Jesuit who most likely authored this imaginary debate, was no Bellarmine, although he likely had known that towering figure of Counter-Reformation scholarship personally.⁶ Clare, speaking through Bellarmine and Michael, sought to refute a standard Protestant accusation against Catholic monasticism – its forest of religious orders reeked of sectarianism. The Swiss Reformer Pierre Viret, for instance, denounced the ‘sects of perdition’, which multiplied every day ‘like vermin’.⁷ Such charges, of course, conveniently turned the tables back on the papists. Catholic controversialists, notably Bellarmine, had pointed to Protestant division as proof that heresies inevitably fractured into new sects.⁸ Yet the charge of monastic sectarianism also stemmed from the Protestant belief that all true Christians are saved by the same means—through *sola fide* or faith alone—and that hence monastic austerities had no value. That criticism inevitably extended beyond the differences between religious orders to monasticism itself. Luther argued that *all* Christians had to abide by Scripture and denounced the ‘inconceivable blindness’ of those who confess they ‘go further than Christ and live a loftier and more perfect life.’⁹ What makes John Clare’s use of the Essenes striking is that the Essenes were more often marshalled in defence of this much wider issue. The predominant Catholic line, articulated by Bellarmine and others, was that the Essenes were not followers of the ‘Fayth and Religion ... of Moyses’ but early Christians, who guarded the apostolicity of monasticism from Protestant assault.

⁵ Clare, *The Converted Iew*, 46.

⁶ T.M. McCoog, ‘Clare, John (c. 1579–1628), Jesuit’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Clare spent the period 1614–1620 at the Venerable English College in Rome. Bellarmine was close to the English Jesuits. In 1627, its rector was the first to give evidence during the Roman inquest into Bellarmine’s canonization: Vatican City, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Congregazione dei Riti, MS 2603, fol. 1r. McCoog cites Jesuit testimony which disputes Clare’s authorship of *The Converted Iew*, but such denials need to be taken with a grain of salt.

⁷ Pierre Viret, *De La Vraye Et Fausse Religion, touchant les voeus et les sermens licites et illicites ... : Item de la moinerie, tant des juifs que des paiens et des turcs et des papistes* ([Geneva], 1560), 554, 555: ‘se multiplient de iour en iour, comme la vermine qui s’engendre l’une de l’autre’; ‘sectes de perdition.’

⁸ A particular apt example of such polemics is Bellarmine’s response to the Lutheran Book of Concord of 1580, presented by the printer as a specimen of the forthcoming *De controversiis*: Robert Bellarmine, *Iudicium ... de libro, quem Lutherani vocant, Concordiae* (Ingolstadt, 1586).

⁹ Martin Luther, ‘The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows’, in *Luther’s Works: The Christian in Society*, ed. James Atkinson, vol. 44 (Philadelphia, 1966), 254.

As Martin Luther’s denunciation already suggests, the Protestant assault on monasticism was foremost theological, as well as—in Luther’s case—personal. The former Augustinian friar dedicated his 1522 *De votis monasticis* to the father he had unjustly defied to enter the monastic life seventeen years earlier.¹⁰ Monasticism’s historical origins interested Luther surprisingly little. Only in passing did he describe St Anthony (c.251–356CE) as ‘the very father of monks and the founder of the monastic life.’¹¹ Despite some hefty theological forays early on, it was principally on historical terrain that Catholics chose to respond.¹² While some humanists had already busied themselves with the question of the origins of monasticism, this chapter argues that this concern was *new*, one that had not concerned the Church Fathers, let alone the medieval Church. Thomas Aquinas, in his defence of monasticism, never even considered it.¹³ In addition, the chapter will demonstrate that, while the Catholic arguments in favour of apostolicity may appear to compete with each other for sheer implausibility, the Protestant reading of history was equally dogmatic and shaped by dogma.

At the heart of this confessional debate—which is fundamentally about classical reception—lies a question that remains unsettled to this day: the vexed question of the elusive identity of the Essenes. For a group of sedentary ascetics, the Essenes have proved surprisingly difficult to pin down. Scholarly controversies about their putative identification with the Qumran community, which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, continue and strangely echo the early modern debate charted in this chapter.¹⁴ The Essenes were listed by the Jewish historian Josephus as one of the three main sects of the Second Temple Period.¹⁵ Their absence from the New Testament, unlike the rival Pharisees and Sadducees, sparked the Christian imagination.

To complicate matters, early modern Christians debated not only the ‘real’ religious beliefs of the Essenes—whether they were Jews, Christians, Christian monastics, or even (eventually) ‘Judaizing pagan philosophers’—they also disagreed on who should be counted among them.¹⁶ The Jewish philosopher Philo was not only a rare historical witness (alongside Josephus and Pliny the Elder) for the Essenes, he was also the *sole* source for the existence of another group of ascetics living near his hometown of Alexandria.¹⁷ The theory that these so-called *therapeutae* were part of the Essene tradition has had defenders well into the twentieth

¹⁰ Luther’s fascinating preface is not included in the English translation: Martin Luther, *De votis monasticis ... Iudicium* (Basle, 1522), sig. a1v-a3v.

¹¹ Luther, ‘The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows’, 253.

¹² Johann Dietenberger, *Contra temerarium Martini Lutheri, de votis monasticis iudicium* (Cologne, 1525).

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *Liber contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*, trans. John Procter and Joseph Kenny <<https://dhspriority.org/thomas/ContraImpugnantes.htm>> [accessed 12 February 2019].

¹⁴ This identification, made shortly after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the late 1940s, has been under considerable strain: Matthew Black, *The Essene Problem* (London, 1961). For a restatement and refinement of the original theory, see: Joan E. Taylor, *The Essenes, the Scrolls, and the Dead Sea* (Oxford, 2015).

¹⁵ Josephus, *Jewish War*, 3.119; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.11.

¹⁶ Johannes Joachim Langius, ‘Duae dissertationes historico-criticae de Therapeutis et Essaeis’, in *Dogma sanioris philosophiae primum de immortalitate animae humanae* (Hamburg, 1725), 99–166.

¹⁷ The sources for the Essenes are usefully collected and excerpted in Géza Vermès and Martin Goodman, eds, *The Essenes According to the Classical Sources* (Sheffield, 1989).

century.¹⁸ This chapter will argue that the merger of these two Jewish sects was—ironically enough—the product of early modern Christian sectarianism. In that sense, the Essenes are more than Lightfoot’s ‘great enigma of Hebrew history’ but one of Christian history as well.

While Catholics also had other arguments up their sleeve, the confessional controversies about the apostolicity of monasticism thus significantly tracked the debate about the Essenes and *therapeutae*, as part of the wider rediscovery and reception of Philo’s writings. Philo’s account of the *therapeutae*, in his *De vita contemplativa*, existed in a strange and, at times, strained relationship with the religious identity of its author. The Essenes, too, operated within an unusually charged atmosphere, like a particle in a shifting magnetic field. Although they existed at the intersection of Christianity, Judaism and the classical world, the Essenes in the early modern mind were never liminal figures, nor were they a Jewish-Christian hybrid. They were either *radically* Christian—Christ’s closest disciples after the apostles—or radically *not*. Early modern Christians were discussing ideas fundamental to their confessional identities amidst the attracting or repelling impulses of their anti-Jewish biases.

Scholars have long emphasized the destabilizing impact of historicizing the early Church that followed the recognition of, for instance, the Last Supper as a Passover Seder, but they have traditionally associated this historical turn with the early Enlightenment. In a pivotal essay, Dmitri Levitin has deconstructed this neat narrative, which had its origins with the Enlightenment *philosophes* themselves. Levitin shows that the transformation from *historia sacra* to history of religion began much earlier and that the process ‘to replace philosophy with history as the handmaiden to theology’ was generally propelled by orthodox, confessional motives, rather than heterodox ones.¹⁹ The lynchpin in this revised chronology was the Huguenot scholar Joseph Scaliger, who in his *Opus de emendatione temporum* (1583, 2nd ed. 1598) repeatedly showed how ignorant the Fathers had been of the earliest history of their Church.²⁰ Scaliger argued that Philo and his near-contemporary Josephus deserved greater credence, as eye witnesses to the age of the apostles.²¹

This chapter takes these insights one step further and applies them to the debate over the origins of monasticism and the roles that Philo, the Essenes and the *therapeutae* play in them. It argues that the turn towards history—at least where this debate is concerned—was

¹⁸ The view that the *therapeutae* were off-shoots of the Essenes was still advocated by as eminent a scholar as Géza Vermès: e.g. Géza Vermès, ‘Essenes and Therapeutae’, in *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Leiden, 1975), 30–36; and the discussion in Appendix A of Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, 175 BC-AD 135*, ed. Géza Vermès, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black, rev. ed., 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1979), 2:591–97.

¹⁹ Dmitri Levitin, ‘From Sacred History to the History of Religion: Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity in European Historiography from Reformation to “Enlightenment”’, *The Historical Journal*, 55/4 (2012), 1160.

²⁰ The margins of Isaac Casaubon’s copies of the works of his friend Joseph Scaliger offer striking visual testimony of this. They abound with references of the ‘errores Eusebii’ variety: e.g. Joseph Scaliger, *Opus novum de emendatione temporum in octo libros tributum* (Paris, 1583), 251 (London, British Library, 582.1.9); Joseph Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii Nicolai Serarii* (Franeker, 1605), 127. (BL, C.79.a.4).

²¹ The seminal work here, foundational for the modern history of early modern scholarship, is Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1983–1993).

initiated not by Protestants but by Catholic scholars, and that the historiography of early monasticism has a surprisingly clear and (less surprisingly) Catholic starting point. Yet the fortunes of Christian readings of either or both Jewish sects fluctuated considerably over time, with the ascetic *therapeutae* also finding a welcome home in late-seventeenth-century England. What follows, then, is not a straightforward history of Protestant scepticism triumphing over Catholic credulity. Vituperate confessional debates during the sixteenth century, culminating with Jesuit attacks on the second edition of Scaliger's *Opus de emendatione temporum* (1598), gave way to *intra*-confessional conflicts during the seventeenth century, followed in the eighteenth century by their appropriation by religious radicals for attacks on orthodoxy, rather than in its defence.

Throughout, the central focus of this chapter will remain on how Christians of all stripes engaged with the Essenes and *therapeutae*: the ways they offered new readings, put forth new arguments and revived old ones. For these purposes, with all due respect to Ranke's famous injunction, it is not helpful—indeed, it is immaterial—to decide what the *therapeutae* 'really' were. Our judgement of the rightness or wrongness of particular arguments would undermine the validity of our present endeavour because it ignores the fact that all judgements, including our own, are historically constituted. At the same time, this study will demonstrate the contingency of the debate surrounding the 'real' identity of the *therapeutae* in particular, which caused them at particular moments in time to be identified in terms of something *other* than themselves, whether as Essenes or as Christians. Charting this debate will reveal its underlying structures, and while these proved difficult to dislodge and will, at times, give this study a real sense of *déjà-vu*, their origins were not inevitable. This historicizing realization that these readings were the opposite of inescapable, based partly on Christian sectarian impulses, partly on accidental (mis-)readings of ancient texts, does not challenge the arguments put forth for identifying the *therapeutae* as Christians or Essenes but it does indirectly dispute the need for any alternate identity.

2. Therapeutae, Essenes and the Origins of Monasticism in Patristic Scholarship

What makes a monk a monk? For Luther, as we already noted, it was the nature and contents of their vows which defined the essence of monasticism and which transformed convents into 'brothels of Satan'.²² Luther's rejection of vows transformed the issue into one of theology, rooted in the Reformer's understanding of *sola fide*. Perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience went beyond what Christ had demanded. Worse, as only God could provide the strength needed to realize them, making such a vow 'blasphemes and despises God.'²³ Catholics understandably foregrounded a different aspect of monasticism, which effectively would privilege history over theology: community life. Accordingly, they fell back on the shared lives of poverty, chastity, and obedience led by Christ and the apostles, imperfect

²² Luther, 'The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows', 260.

²³ Martin Luther, 'An Answer to Several Questions on Monastic Vows', in *Luther's Works: The Christian in Society*, ed. Robert C. Schultz, vol. 46 (Philadelphia, 1967), 147.

though their austerities may have been by the standards of later monasticism.²⁴ As we shall see, Robert Bellarmine's final line of defence, his last proof for the apostolicity of monasticism, were the apostles themselves, as described in the Book of Acts.²⁵

What defined monasticism thus inevitably dictates its origins and locates its origins closer to or further away from the time of the apostles. The emphasis on a monastic rule, or a collection of precepts, caused Pierre Viret, Calvin's colleague in Geneva, to date its foundation to the followers of St Benedict (c.480–c.547) 'who were the first who began to create sects.'²⁶ The definitional problem partly accounts for the general chronological haze which surrounds the opening chapters of even modern histories of early monasticism. These generally start in early fourth-century Egypt but note that by this time the *monachos* or monk had already become a recognized fixture of the Egyptian countryside.²⁷ Athanasius's *Life of St Antony* provided a convenient literary starting point for such histories of monasticism, also because it spawned a genre of lives of ascetic pioneers, such as Palladius's *Lausiac History*. Athanasius described how Antony was the first to move to the desert, which was 'was colonized by monks' under his leadership.²⁸ Jerome pushed the story slightly further back with his *Life of Paulus the First Hermit* (or Paul of Thebes), an older contemporary, who lived in the Egyptian desert for an even more implausibly long period of time.²⁹

Digging beyond these ostensibly clear 'firsts', however, the chronological blurriness re-emerges. Reading either *Vita* shows clear predecessors. St Antony, for instance, entrusted his sister to a group of 'faithful virgins' before embarking on his life of asceticism.³⁰ Other testimony provided by the Fathers and embraced by early modern Catholics suggested much earlier dates. Elsewhere, Jerome described John the Baptist as 'the prince of monks', an honour also bestowed on him by Chrysostom.³¹ Jerome was reluctant to trace monasticism

²⁴ See, in particular, the description of the apostles living together and having things in common: Acts of the Apostles 2:42–47. The observation that Jesus meant to send his disciples into the world, rather than out of it, is the starting point of G.R. Evans, *The I.B. Tauris History of Monasticism: The Western Tradition* (London, 2016), 1–3.

²⁵ Roberto Bellarmino, *Disputationes ... de controversiis christianae fidei, adversus huius temporis haereticos*, 2nd ed. (Ingolstadt, 1588), vol. 1/2, col. 438 (controversia V, bk. 2, chap. 5).

²⁶ Viret, *De la vraye et fausse religion*, 545: 'qui sont des plus anciens qui ont commencé à faire sectes.'

²⁷ See the opening reference of Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Malden, MA, 2000), 1–2. Goehring similarly starts by rejecting neat origin myths that start with St Antony: James E. Goehring, 'The Origins of Monasticism', in *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA, 1999), 13.

²⁸ Athanasius, *Life of St. Anthony*, 3, 14, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, and Kevin Knight, trans. by H. Ellershaw, 2nd series, vol. 4 (Buffalo, NY, 1892) <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2811.htm>> [accessed 21 February 2019].

²⁹ According to Jerome, Paul was a 113 years old and had been living off a divinely-delivered half loaf of bread for sixty years when Antony sought him out: Jerome, *The Life of Paulus*, 7, 10, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, and Kevin Knight, trans. W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis, and W.G. Martley, 2nd series, vol. 6 (Buffalo, NY, 1893), <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3008.htm>> [accessed 21 February 2019].

³⁰ Athanasius, *Life of St. Anthony*, 1. On this point, see Goehring, 'The Origins of Monasticism', 13–35.

³¹ The claim was more often attributed to Chrysostom: e.g. Petrus Sutor, *De vita Cartusiana libri duo* (Cologne, 1609), 245, though I have not been able to locate the passage in the Church Father's writings.

back to Elijah in the Old Testament but others, notably Cassian and Sozomen, were not.³² The chronological muddle, with its tension between antiquity and novelty, is perhaps illustrated by Jerome's famous letter on virginity to Paula's daughter Eustochium. There, Jerome introduces the figures of Paul, Antony, and John the Baptist as examples of one *type* of monasticism—that of the anchorites who live in the desert by themselves—but the relationship between them was exceedingly complicated to the point of being non-sensical: 'Paul introduced this way of life; Anthony made it famous, and—to go farther back still—John the Baptist set the first example of it.'³³ In his *Life of Paulus the First Hermit*, Jerome similarly considered Elijah to be 'more than a monk' while John 'began to prophesy before his birth.'³⁴

Protestants, as we shall explore further below, came to realize that the Church Fathers were unreliable witnesses for the early history of the Church. What they did not recognize (although I will argue that Joseph Scaliger came close) was that the subject of the apostolicity of monasticism also almost did not really concern the Fathers. This was partly *because they were still working out its precise contours*, but it also reflects their perception, rightly or wrongly, of asceticism as a timeless and valid part of Christian practice. At a time when the monastic figure was replacing the martyr as the exemplar of Christian sanctity *pur sang*, they were debating what monasticism *should* look like: what made a monk a monk.³⁵ Jerome, for instance, in his letter to Eustochium, denounced the development of a third 'very inferior and little regarded' type who lived together in groups of twos and threes that 'do exactly as they choose.'³⁶ In other words, this process of codification—defined, of course, by the development of monastic rules—obscures the fact that monasticism was at the same time both new (in its adoption of rules) and old (in its embrace of asceticism), which makes later attempts to press the Fathers into service as historical witnesses largely moot.

The Christian appropriation of the *therapeutae* as monastics might be held up against this argument. Contrary to expectations, the Essenes and the *therapeutae* traversed the patristic period virtually in parallel, with only two minor exceptions, which as we shall see, cannot really be counted as such but would prove significant later. That their merger would have to wait until the sixteenth century may seem surprising given that one of the principal arguments later advanced in favour of the identification of the *therapeutae* as Essenes was the opening line of Philo's *De vita contemplativa*, which introduced both sects as representatives of two distinct and idealized modes of living:

³² Jerome, *The Life of Paulus*, 1; John Cassian, *The Monastic Institutes*, trans. by Jerome Bertram (London, 1999), 7 (bk. 1, chap. 1); Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, I.12, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Chester D. Hartranft, 2nd series, vol. 2 (Buffalo, NY, 1890) <<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/26021.htm>> [accessed 27 October 2020].

³³ Jerome, *Letters* 22.36, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Translated by W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley, 2nd series, vol. 6 (Buffalo, NY, 1893) <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001022.htm>> [accessed 21 February 2019].

³⁴ Jerome, *The Life of Paulus the First Hermit*, 1.

³⁵ Pak-Wah Lai, 'The Monk as Christian Saint and Exemplar in St John Chrysostom's Writings', *Studies in Church History*, 47 (2011), 19–28.

³⁶ Jerome, *Letters*, 22.34.

I have discussed the Essenes [Ἐσσαιῶν περί διαλεχθείς], who persistently pursued the active life and excelled in all or, to put it more moderately, in most of its departments. I will now proceed at once in accordance with the sequence required by the subject to say what is needed about those who embraced the life of contemplation.³⁷

These opening lines can be straightforwardly read as representing the Essenes, who were well-known for labouring on the land and practising crafts, as the representatives of the ‘active’ or practical life.³⁸ Philo’s *incipit* likely alluded to a lost preliminary treatise on the Essenes—not his youthful *Every Good Man is Free* which also discussed the group.³⁹ The *De vita contemplativa* then introduced the *therapeutae* as representing the *opposite* ideal, not a life of communal labour but one of mostly solitary contemplation. Philo’s treatise on this community includes an etymology of their name—they were *therapeutae*, either because they were healers of souls or because they were worshippers—but it never again mentions the Essenes by name after the opening line.⁴⁰ For a number of contextual reasons a second reading of this passage, associated in particular with Scaliger and examined later, would emerge during the early modern period, which reads this line as referring to different *types* of Essenes: active or practical ones and passive, theoretical, or contemplative ones—that is, the *therapeutae*, ‘those who embraced the life of contemplation.’

There is no good evidence that any of the Church Fathers had arrived at this reading or identification. Eusebius, who would Christianize the *therapeutae* in his *Ecclesiastical History*, explicitly identified the Essenes as Jewish in his *Praeparatio Evangelica*, drawing on Philo’s *Every Good Man is Free*.⁴¹ The only sort-of-but-not-really exception was Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315–403), whose potted description of the *therapeutae* as Christians was drawn from Eusebius’s account which we shall examine next. In the *Panarion* or *The Refutation of All Heresies*, Epiphanius introduced the *therapeutae* as Jessaeans, and the *De vita contemplativa* as *On the Jessaeans*.⁴² The Bishop of Salamis claimed that these early Christians were called thus either for Jesse or Jesus. The most probable foundation for this elaborate phantasy are the opening words of Philo’s treatise: Ἐσσαιῶν περί, which Epiphanius then spun into Jessaeans.⁴³ Although this solution suggests some familiarity on

³⁷ Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 1. I have used the Loeb edition when no further bibliographical details are provided.

³⁸ E.g. Philo, *Every Good Man is Free*, 76.

³⁹ For the very credible thesis that this work has been lost, see Bacchisio Motzo, ‘Un’opera perduta di Filone’, *Atti della R. Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* 46 (1911), 860–80, and the passing reference in Joan E. Taylor and Philip R. Davies, ‘The So-Called Therapeutae of “De vita contemplativa”: Identity and Character’, *The Harvard Theological Review* 91/1 (1998), 9. See also the argument developed by Conybeare that the *De vita contemplativa* was part of Philo’s Apology for the Jews against Apion, which the philosopher tried to read aloud to the Emperor Caligula: Philo, *About the Contemplative Life: Or the Fourth Book of the Treatise Concerning Virtues*, ed. Frederick Cornwallis Conybeare (Oxford, 1895), 283–84.

⁴⁰ Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 2.

⁴¹ Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*, 8.XI–XII.

⁴² Epiphanius, *Panarion*, trans. Frank Williams, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 2009), 126 (29.4.9–5.1).

⁴³ Aline Pourkier, *L’Hérésiologie chez Epiphane de Salamine* (Paris, 1992), 441, suggests that Epiphanius was working from memory and had been struck by the opening lines of Philo’s treatise when reading it. This

the part of Epiphanius with Philo's *De vita contemplativa* independent of Eusebius, the subsequent discussion reveals no further engagement with that treatise. Elsewhere in the *Panarion*, the bishop treated the Essenes as a sect of Samaritans, much to the astonishment of even early modern Catholic editors.⁴⁴ Although it may have drawn on a version of the Essene name then, Epiphanius's etymological fantasy still applied *only* to the *therapeutae*.

The same sort of approach must be taken for the second exception: a rather barbarous and partial (or at least now fragmentary) Latin translation of the *De vita contemplativa* that Frederick Cornwallis Conybeare has plausibly dated to the fourth century CE.⁴⁵ The elaborate title of the manuscript, *De statu Essaeorum, id est Monachorum, qui temporibus Agripp[a]e Regis Monasteria sibi fecerunt* (On the State of the Essenes, That Is, of the Monks Who in the Times of King [Herod] Agrippa Built Monasteries for Themselves) seems to be the product of still more elaborate embellishment. The opening line itself was also significantly garbled: translating a past Greek participle (διαλεχθείς) as a Latin future one (*disputurus*) effectively transformed a conclusion ('I have discussed the Essenes') into an introductory promise.⁴⁶ Yet, as with Epiphanius, it is worth noting that even in the Latin manuscript, the *therapeutae* as Essenes travelled on a separate path, divorced from Philo's descriptions of the Essenes, let alone those written by others.⁴⁷ While these elaborations by Epiphanius and the anonymous Latin translator rendered the *therapeutae* Essenes in name only, they would prove significant in the sixteenth century.

Given their separate travels, the *therapeutae* thus received their Christian treatment considerably earlier than their Essene counterparts. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius (263–339) went to great lengths to identify this group of ascetics as members of the Christian church established at Alexandria by the Apostle Mark. In his *De vita contemplativa*, Philo described a group of ascetics, male and female, that could be found 'in many places in the inhabited world' but 'especially round Alexandria', with 'the best' travelling to a low-lying hill above Lake Mareotis.⁴⁸ There, they lived together but in separate houses, each of which possessed a sanctuary, cell, or closet [μοναστήριον; *monastērion*], where they spent most of their waking hours engaged in solitary study, prayers, and devotions ('... all alone in their cell, without speaking, not daring to go out, not even looking out of their windows,' as the Huguenot pastor Jacques Basnage later put it).⁴⁹ They would fast for extended periods of time

solution, which strikes me as persuasive, is alluded to in passing in David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Assen, 1993), 229, who concludes that 'the wily bishop keeps us guessing.'

⁴⁴ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 10.1.1–2; Epiphanius, *Sancti Patris Nostri Epiphani Constantiae, sive Salaminis in Cypro ... opera omnia*, ed. Denis Pétau, 2 vols (Paris, 1622), 2:22–23. Pétau's notes are paginated separately.

⁴⁵ Philo, *About the Contemplative Life*, ed. Conybeare, 144–45. The surviving copies cut off mid-way through Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 42. Conybeare describes the Latin as 'too barbarous' for Jerome. See also the passing reference in Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, 175 BC–AD 135*, 2:596.

⁴⁶ See the full text in Philo, *About the Contemplative Life*, ed. Conybeare, 146.

⁴⁷ The Old Latin version was paired only with the *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin*.

⁴⁸ Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 21–22.

⁴⁹ Jacques Basnage de Beauval, *Histoire des Juifs, depuis Jesus-Christ jusqu'à présent*, 9 vols (The Hague, 1716), 2:559: 'seul à seul dans leur Cellule, sans parler, sans ôser sortir, ni même regarder par les Fenêtres.' Cf. Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 25. Loeb renders μοναστήριον as 'closet' which given its intended function

but every seven days they would come together for a general (though gender-segregated) assembly and a collective meal.⁵⁰ On special occasions, likely the feast of Pentecost, they also joined together for the singing of hymns.⁵¹

Although he was not the first Christian to value Philo's writings, Eusebius's *interpretatio christiana* was breaking new ground.⁵² Accordingly, he leavened his quotations from Philo with pre-emptory denunciations of the obstinacy of would-be sceptics. He also conveniently omitted passages, such as their obedience to the laws of Moses, that more clearly identified the *therapeutae* as Hellenistic Jews.⁵³ Crucially, however, he did not identify Philo as a Christian but implied that the 'extraordinarily philosophic' nature of the asceticism appealed to the Platonic philosopher.⁵⁴ Philo, thus, constituted a valuable bridge between Alexandrian Judaism and Christianity. His value for Christians would remain that of an outsider looking in, a role which could be amplified or belittled according to individual or confessional needs.⁵⁵ Jerome, clearly inspired by Eusebius's interpretation, would introduce Philo's testimony twice in his *De viris illustribus*. In his portrait of Mark, he implied that Philo, the 'most learned of the Jews', had been tricked by the Judaizing practices of the early Christian practices into writing his *De vita contemplativa* 'as something creditable to his [own] nation.'⁵⁶ This account also earns Philo his own entry, which played up his identity as a philosopher. Jerome reported 'a proverb among the Greeks' that 'either Plato philonized or Philo platonized ... so great is the similarity of ideas and language.'⁵⁷ At the same time, Jerome's chosen heading unequivocally provided Philo with the cognomen *Judaeus*—Philo the Jew—which would be used well into the modern period.⁵⁸

Early modern Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, have read Eusebius as unequivocally representing Philo's *therapeutae* as the first Christian *monastics* (even when,

(including study) does not seem overwhelmingly plausible, amusing though the idea of ascetics dwelling in closets might be.

⁵⁰ Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 30, 34, 37.

⁵¹ Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, esp. 84. For the identification of this feast with Pentecost, see: Philo, *About the Contemplative Life*, ed. Conybeare, 306–7.

⁵² For the Alexandrian Christians who preserved Philo to which Eusebius was heir, see David T. Runia, 'Philo and the Early Christian Fathers', in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge, 2009), 210–30.

⁵³ Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 64.

⁵⁴ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, II.xvi.2.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of *Philo christianus*, see David T. Runia, 'Philo and the Early Christian Fathers', in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge, 2009), 210–30. But note the important corrective in Sabrina Inowlocki, 'Eusebius of Caesarea's Interpretatio Christiana of Philo's De Vita Contemplativa', *Harvard Theological Review*, 97/3 (2004), 307, 320. The tradition had limited currency in the early modern period, which will be discussed at the appropriate moment.

⁵⁶ Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, 8 (Mark), in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Ernest Cushing Richardson, 2nd series, vol. 3 (Buffalo, NY, 1892)

<<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2708.htm>> [accessed 27 October 2020].

⁵⁷ Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, 11 (Philo the Jew).

⁵⁸ On the origins of this cognomen, which apparently began circulating slightly before Jerome, see David T. Runia, 'Philonic Nomenclature', in *Philo and the Church Fathers: A Collection of Papers* (Leiden, 1995), 43–45.

as Scaliger did, they set out to refute that reading), and their modern historians have followed suit. Perhaps, such a reading was inevitable. Their ascetism, the reference to the *monastērion*, and their presence in Egypt, the traditional birthplace of Christian monasticism, excited the imagination of later Christians, including Rufinus who in his Latin translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* added that Philo's ascetics were 'those ... who are now in the churches and monastic houses.'⁵⁹ By the sixth century, a forger masquerading as Dionysius the Areopagite, an early follower of the Apostle Paul mentioned in Acts of the Apostles, penned letters addressed to a monk or *therapeutēs*.⁶⁰ Yet, as Sabrina Inowlocki has shown, Eusebius himself never presents them as anything other than Mark's early followers.⁶¹ In Eusebius's theology, asceticism was so closely tied to Christianity that it was meant to be practised by all Christians, not by the select monastic few.⁶²

While Inowlocki argues that Jerome, writing a generation after Eusebius, was the first to put forth this monastic reading, I would suggest that even then hesitation still abounded. While Jerome was clearly struck by the reference to 'monasteries', his interpretation was surprisingly tentative. He only noted that 'the church of those that believed in Christ at first, was such as *now* the monks desire to *imitate*', a parallel he then backed up, not with a quotation from the *De vita contemplativa* but with a reference to Acts.⁶³ He never referred to the *therapeutae* in his many other discussions of monasticism. In his famous letter in praise of virginity to Eustochium, Jerome did once, fleetingly, refer to the Essenes, discussed by 'Philo, Plato's imitator,' and 'Josephus, the Greek Livy.'⁶⁴ The passage, a curious and corrupted interjection restored by Erasmus, seems intended to strip both the authors and the Essenes of their Jewishness but does not explicitly identify any of them as Christian.⁶⁵

As for the *therapeutae* as monastics, it is difficult to see a clear consensus emerge. Cassian and Epiphanius offered passing endorsements, without apparent first-hand knowledge of Philo. Moreover, neither attached a great deal of importance to this identification. Cassian referred to the 'monks' who followed the 'holy evangelist Mark ... the first patriarch of the city of Alexandria', sending his readers to Eusebius for more information. Yet, he did so, only in support of a specific point (the singing of psalms).⁶⁶ Equally transient was Epiphanius's mention of Philo's visit to the Christians who 'entertained' him 'at their monasteries' during 'Passover'. While Philo may well have met the *therapeutae*, this story is evidently little more than an embellishment of the Eusebian

⁵⁹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Rufinus of Aquileia, II.xvii.2 (Rufinus of Aquileia, *History of the Church*, trans. Philip R. Amidon (Washington, DC, 2016), 79).

⁶⁰ See the four letters to the 'monk' Gaius: Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibhéid (New York, 1987), 263–65.

⁶¹ Inowlocki, 'Eusebius of Caesarea's Interpretatio Christiana of Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa*', 305–28.

⁶² Goehring, 'The Origins of Monasticism', 15.

⁶³ Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, 11 (Philo the Jew). Emphasis added.

⁶⁴ Jerome, *Letters*, 25.35: 'A similar description is given of the Essenes by Philo, Plato's imitator; also by Josephus, the Greek Livy, in his narrative of the Jewish captivity.' The throw-away line follows an idealized description of monastic communal life.

⁶⁵ Erasmus, *The Edition of Jerome*, trans. James F. Brady and John C. Olin, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Patristic Scholarship*, vol. 61 (Toronto, 1992), 191.

⁶⁶ Cassian, *The Monastic Institutes*, 2.5.

account.⁶⁷ By contrast, Sozomen in his *Ecclesiastical History* was hesitant to adopt his illustrious predecessor's *interpretatio christiana*. He identified the *therapeutae* discussed by 'Philo the Pythagorean' (*sic*) as 'the most virtuous of the Hebrews' whose dwellings, regimen and customs were similar 'to those we now meet with among the monks of Egypt.' He admitted that these could be 'Jews who had embraced Christianity and yet retained the customs of their nation.' Yet Sozomen also aired the theory that monasticism had emerged during periods of intense Roman persecution—when many fled into the deserts 'and they became used to this kind of living.' He appeared relieved to reach the safe dry land created by the ascetics Antony and Paul.⁶⁸

This survey of patristic reception suggests that we should approach the *therapeutae* and Essenes as if they featured on the letter chart on an optician's office wall. Our perception of them is refracted through several lenses: those of the Fathers, those of Protestants and Catholics, and our own. When assessing their early modern reception, it is vital to take heed of all of three. When we do this, four tentative conclusions present themselves. First of all, Eusebius's factual silence on monasticism makes the fact that he was later *read* as representing the *therapeutae* as monks still more salient for our understanding of early modern confessional polemics. Secondly, such acts of reading and misreading, translation and mistranslation were cumulative because even when original sources, such as the *De vita contemplativa*, were consulted, their reading was structured by subsequent layers of interpretation. Seeing reception both as a product of the present and as the product of layers of past interpretative accretions leads to a third point: we should not assume that in the early modern debate one side (the Protestants) had historical truth on their side. In fact, as we shall see, what we might now regard as the most innovative and least confessionalized identification of the *therapeutae* was set out by a seventeenth-century Catholic scholar, though one with substantial Protestant contacts, while the Christian *therapeutae* belatedly won Protestant adherents as well. Fourthly, if the reading of the early Fathers set out above—as unconcerned with the apostolicity of monasticism—is correct, then this further helps to account for the slippery nature of the source material and the vexed nature of the debate that followed. Still, if we cannot trace the roots of monasticism for both historiographical and confessional reasons, we can pinpoint the earliest discussions of its origins in the early modern period with surprising precision.

3. A Gradual Union: The Therapeutae and Essenes Become One, 1513–c.1590

While other aspects of monastic life, such as the multiplication of different religious orders, had already been defended by Thomas Aquinas, its (possible apostolic) origins had not attracted much, if any, attention during the Middle Ages.⁶⁹ The first attempt to write a general

⁶⁷ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 29.5.1–3.

⁶⁸ Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, I.12–13.

⁶⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologiae of St Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd edn (London, 1920), *secunda secundae partis, quaestio 188*.
<<https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3188.htm>> [accessed 27 October 2020].

history of monasticism and its supposed apostolic origins only emerged in the early sixteenth century. To the extent that any discussion before this time took place it focussed on Carmelite origin myths, as a dispute for precedence among religious orders. The Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel had emerged in the Holy Land and arrived in the medieval West following the fall of the Crusader kingdoms. Dominicans in particular poured scorn on the claims of Carmelite upstarts to be descended from the prophet Elijah, and they would soon be joined in their derision by erudite Jesuits.⁷⁰ *Therapeutae* and Essenes would soon play an outsized role both within these intra-Catholic squabbles and in general histories of monasticism. Yet this was a product of gradual rediscovery of ancient texts and a great deal of imagination, rather than the adoption of an already existing patristic narrative. For very different confessional reasons both Catholics and Protestants became committed to the union of the two Jewish sects.

The history of the history of monasticism thus began on 10 April 1513, when the Sorbonne theologian Josse van Clichtove completed his *De laude monasticae religionis opusculum* during a stay at the famous Benedictine abbey of Cluny. It was dedicated to his erstwhile pupil, Geoffroy d'Amboise who at a young age had succeeded his aristocratic uncle as its abbot. Clichtove's praise for his pupil's embrace of 'the rule and discipline of St Benedict, who is deservedly placed among the first authors and architects of monastic rigour' again highlights the extent to which competition for antiquity among the religious orders complicated the Catholic narrative.⁷¹ Although never mentioned by name, Clichtove's implicit target was Erasmus, who in his *Enchiridion militis christiani* (1503) had been critical of contemporary monasticism.⁷²

As the work's full title already made clear, Clichtove's first proof of the 'excellence and dignity of the monastic profession' was the 'antiquity of its institution.'⁷³ This was breaking new ground, although as a good Catholic, Clichtove took steps to obscure this.⁷⁴ While foreshadowed in the Old Testament, the humanist saw particular signs of the emergence of monasticism around the time of the New Testament, first of all by the Essenes

⁷⁰ Andrew Jotischky, *The Carmelites and Antiquity: Mendicants and Their Pasts in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2002).

⁷¹ Josse Clichtove, *De laude monasticae religionis opusculum unde ipsa ceperit exordium incrementum et stabilimentum dilucide declarans* (Paris, 1513), sig. a2v: 'sanctissimi patris Benedicti regulam ac disciplinam ... qui inter primos monasterialis austeritatis authores et architectos merito collocatur.'

⁷² The 1518 preface of the revised edition of the *Enchiridion* can certainly be read as a reply to Clichtove. It addresses the origins of monasticism and includes a brief dismissive mention of the Essenes: Erasmus, *The Handbook of the Christian Soldier: Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, in *Spiritualia*, ed. John W. O'Malley, trans. Charles Fantazzi, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 66 (Toronto, 1988), 20–22. On Clichtove's later attacks on Erasmus, see Erika Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics*, 2 vols (Nieuwkoop, 1989), 2:73–79. Rummel does not mention Clichtove's earlier *De laude monasticae religionis*. For Clichtove as an opponent of Erasmus, see Jean-Pierre Massaut, 'Josse Clichtove of Nieuwpoort', in Peter G. Bietenholz and Thomas B. Deutscher, eds, *Contemporaries of Erasmus* (Toronto, 1985), 317–20.

⁷³ Clichtove, *De laude monasticae religionis opusculum*, fol. 6r: 'Eluscet autem ipsius monasticae religionis excellentia et dignitas primum ex antiquitate institutionis eius.'

⁷⁴ In his opening chapter, in addition to the Fathers, he referenced Marsilio Ficino's *De Christiana religione* and Aquinas's *Liber contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*, neither of which discuss apostolic origins.

‘a peculiar sect among the Jews a little before the incarnation of Our Lord.’⁷⁵ Although Clichtove, who based his description solely on Josephus, praised their poverty, chastity and devotion, he situated the Essenes as the first among other groups of *non-Christian* ascetics, including Pythagoreans, Vestal Virgins and Druids, all of whom ‘demonstrated a certain shadow or likeness of monastic observation.’⁷⁶ These provide the context for the origins of Christian monasticism: Chrysostom’s description of John the Baptist as the prince or first of monks, and the ‘norm, rule and truth of monastic observation’ observed by Christ and the apostles.⁷⁷

Only in the next chapter on the founders of religious orders did Clichtove report on the monastic traditions of the Alexandrian Church, founded by St Mark, and related by ‘Philo the Jew, a most learned man [*vir dissertissimus*] though not belonging to our religion.’⁷⁸ Although the introduction of Philo appears inspired by Jerome’s *De viris illustribus*, the overall description of Mark’s supposed disciples—that is, the *therapeutae*—was based only on Eusebius.⁷⁹ From there, the theologian takes us to the Fathers, and the various monastic founders (Benedict, Dominic, Francis, Bernard).⁸⁰ Clichtove, then, was aware of the Essenes, whom he saw as Jewish, through Josephus. His access to and knowledge of Philo and the *therapeutae* were mediated entirely through Eusebius, possibly accessed through his translator Rufinus. Accordingly, Clichtove was not aware that Mark’s disciples might have been *therapeutae* or, for that matter, Essenes. The two sects, which would shortly be joined together, were discussed in separate chapters.

A second humanist account of the origins of monasticism, completed on 5 December 1517 and published as Luther was penning his treatise on monastic vows, drew on different sources and came to different conclusions.⁸¹ In fact, it was likely the first text to present the Essenes as Christian monastics. Polydore Vergil’s much expanded *De rerum inventoribus* (On the Inventors/Discoverers of Things, 1521) noted that the origins of monasticism were already much debated in Jerome’s time. Jerome’s mental acrobatics, surveyed above, giving each of the purported founders—Elijah, John, Anthony and Paul—their due, gave Polydore the excuse to put forth his own theory:

Truly I believe (when a matter is ambiguous everyone is free to conjecture) that the institution of the monastic life flowed from the Essaeans or Essenes, as Pliny [the

⁷⁵ Clichtove, *De laude monasticae religionis opusculum*, fol. 7v: ‘peculiarem apud Iudaeos sectam paulo ante adventum domini nostri in carne.’

⁷⁶ Clichtove, *De laude monasticae religionis opusculum*, fol. 8r: ‘quandam religiosae observationis umbram et effigiem ostentabant.’

⁷⁷ Clichtove, *De laude monasticae religionis opusculum*, fols 8v–9r: ‘observatam ab apostolis monasticae observationis normam, regulam et veritatem.’

⁷⁸ Clichtove, *De laude monasticae religionis opusculum*, fol. 9v: ‘Philo Iudaeus, vir disertissimus licet a nostra religione alienus.’

⁷⁹ The discussion bracketed by references to Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History* at the beginning and end: Clichtove, *De laude monasticae religionis opusculum*, fol. 10r–v.

⁸⁰ Clichtove, *De laude monasticae religionis opusculum*, fol. 10v.

⁸¹ Polydore Vergil, *De rerum inventoribus libri octo* (Basle, 1525), 105. The first edition was published by Froben in 1521.

Elder] calls them, whose sect was exceedingly famous among the Jews, to later generations, because in almost every respect they conducted their lives in the way the monks amongst us are accustomed to lead theirs according to the prescripts of the law.⁸²

Polydore's principal source for the Essenes was Philo, who had discussed them in his youthful *Every Good Man is Free*. Yet, like Clichtove's, Polydore's knowledge of Philo was mediated by Eusebius—'Hactenus Philo, apud Eusebium'—, who, as we saw, had discussed them in his *Praeparatio evangelica*.⁸³ Polydore used Philo's idyllic description of the Essenes to take a swipe against the moral standards of contemporary monasticism.⁸⁴ Neither the *therapeutae* nor Eusebius's *interpretatio christiana* featured in Polydore's discussion.

At the start of the early sixteenth century, then, building blocks were only still being assembled and a coherent narrative of the origins of early monasticism had yet to form, with the Essenes and *therapeutae* continuing their travels on separate paths. As none of the Fathers had conflated them (with the sort-of exception of Epiphanius), their merger had to await the rediscovery and wider dissemination of Philo's original writings, which remained not only in manuscript but also, for the most part, in Greek. A six-volume translation of Philo by Lilio Tifernate for Pope Sixtus IV in 1470s–80s remained in manuscript, apparently unread.⁸⁵ Tifernate's student Raffaello Maffei Volterrano, who had obtained a copy, was the only Italian Renaissance humanist whose opinion of Philo was later deemed worthy by printers to be listed alongside the Fathers.⁸⁶ The English Catholic John Christopherson had found Philo's works 'almost lurking in the shadows' in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice.⁸⁷

The first editors and translators of Philo in print were consequently sceptical as to his identity. The Italian Dominican Agosto Giustiniani who published an old Latin manuscript translation of the *Centum et duae quaestiones* on Genesis (1520) was not completely sure whether its author was the Philo who had been friends with Peter mentioned by Jerome or 'some other man pleasing to God and blessed with many spiritual gifts [*charismatibus*] by the

⁸² Vergil, *De rerum inventoribus libri octo*, 207: 'Ego vero quando in re ambigua unicuique liberum est coniectare, crediderim institutum monasticae vitae ab Essaeis sive Essenis ita appellat Plinius, quorum secta apud Iudaeos admodum celebris habita est, ad posteros manasse, quoniam illi fere per omnia, eam ducebant vitam, quam inter nos monachi ex praescripto legis agere solent.'

⁸³ Vergil, *De rerum inventoribus libri octo*, 208.

⁸⁴ On Polydore Vergil's criticism of the Church of his day, see Jonathan Arnold, 'Polydore Vergil and Ecclesiastical Historiography in His *De Inventoribus Rerum IV–VIII*', *Studies in Church History*, 49 (2013), 144–55.

⁸⁵ Charles L. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington, IN, 1998), 213–14. On Philo in the *Quattrocento*, see also Charles L. Stinger, *Humanism and the Church Fathers: Ambrogio Traversari, 1386–1439 and Christian Antiquity in the Italian Renaissance* (Albany, NY, 1977), 144–45.

⁸⁶ Philo, *Philonis Iudaei, scriptoris eloquentissimi, ac philosophi summi, lucubrationes omnes quotquot haberi potuerunt*, trans. Sigismund Gelenius (Lyon, 1555), sig. *4r.

⁸⁷ Philo, *Philonis Iudaei scriptoris eloquentissimi gravissimique libri quattuor, iam primum de graeco in latinum conversu: de mundi fabricatione; de decem praeceptis; de magistratu, seu principe deligendo; de officio iudicis*, trans. John Christopherson (Antwerp, 1555), sig. a3v: 'quasi in tenebris iacuerant.'

Holy Spirit.’⁸⁸ In his 1526 Latin translation of Philo’s *De mundo*, Guillaume Budé was ‘not at all persuaded’ it was written by the Alexandrian Jew on account of its debts to Greek philosophy, notwithstanding Philo’s widely reported Platonism.⁸⁹ It was not just Jews, then, who, as Joanna Weinberg has demonstrated in two important chapters, became re-acquainted with Philo’s thought in the sixteenth century, but the Christians who had preserved it as well.⁹⁰

A seminal moment, both in the early modern reception of Philo and the merger of the *therapeutae* and the Essenes came with the first edition of Philo’s collected works in 1527, in a Latin edition by the young Basle humanist Johannes Sichardt.⁹¹ The title page confidently advertised the inclusion of the *De vita contemplativa*, printed for the first time, under the heading *De essaeis*.⁹² Like other editions, this one was prefaced by Jerome’s life of Philo, which reported that Philo among other works had published one entitled *De Judaeis*, which Sichardt amended in the margin to *De Essaeis*.⁹³ Sichardt was not publishing fresh translations, however, but brought together existing Latin versions, including Budé’s recent translation of *De mundo*. For the *De vita contemplativa* he collated two manuscripts of the old Latin version, which we discussed above. Having likened in his preface his extended battles with the corrupted manuscripts to the Labours of Hercules, the bellicose humanist arrived at the contentious issue of the title of the *De vita contemplativa*. Sichardt recognized the one given by Eusebius—that is, *De vita contemplativa*—but he preferred to follow the consensus of his Latin manuscripts ‘and the beginning of the book itself, where it explicitly prefaces that it *will* speak on the Essenes.’⁹⁴ Epiphanius’ testimony is not invoked, but Sichardt suggested a possible scribal corruption of Jerome’s reference to *De Judaeis* in order to advance his *De essaeis* hypothesis. He likely recognized that the full title of the Latin version, involving monasteries and King Herod, was implausible. Nevertheless, while it did not make it onto the title page, it still appeared at the head of the text itself.

⁸⁸ Philo, *Philonis Judaei Centum et duae quaestiones, et totidem responsiones morales super Genesim*, ed. Agosto Giustiniani (Paris, 1520), sig. a1v: ‘quavis alius virum fuisse deo gratum multisque charismatibus a spiritu sancto donatum.’

⁸⁹ Aristotle and Philo, *Aristotelis Philosophi Nobilissimi de Mundo Libellus; Philonis Iudaei Itidem de Mundo Libellus*, trans. Guillaume Budé (Paris, 1526), fol. 2r.: ‘nequaquam eum fuisse mihi persuadeo.’

⁹⁰ Joanna Weinberg, ‘The Quest for Philo in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Historiography’, in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (London, 1988), 163–87; Joanna Weinberg, ‘Rabbi or Heretic: The Debate over Philo of Alexandria among Jews in Early Modern Europe’, in *Philon d’Alexandrie dans l’Europe moderne: Réceptions d’un corpus judéo-hellénistique*, ed. Frédéric Gabriel and Smaranda Marculescu with Joanna Weinberg (Paris, [forthcoming]).

⁹¹ Philo, *Libri Antiquitatum; Quaestionum et solutionum in Genesim; De essaeis; De nominibus Hebraicis; De mundo*, ed. Johannes Sichardt (Basle, 1527). As the title suggests, this was not quite an *Opera omnia*. The *De mundo* translation included was by Budé.

⁹² Conybeare notes that part of the text had already appeared as part of the 1520 edition of the *Quaestiones et solutiones*. A lost manuscript page, containing the end of that treatise and the beginning of the *De vita contemplativa*, had caused Agosto Giustiniani to run both texts together as one: Philo, *About the Contemplative Life*, ed. Conybeare, 142.

⁹³ Philo, *Libri Antiquitatum* [etc.], ed. Sichardt, sig. a1v: ‘forte legendum est Essaeis.’

⁹⁴ Philo, *Libri Antiquitatum* [etc.], ed. Sichardt, sig. a2v: ‘ipse libri ingressus, quo se de Essaeis scripturum ex confesso praefatur.’ Emphasis added.

Although he took the ‘Essenes’ to be Christian worshippers and dedicated the volume to the canons of the abbey church of Fulda, whose manuscript he had used, Sichardt’s position is not overtly Catholic.⁹⁵ Indeed, writing in the 1520s his confessional affiliation was unclear—and indeed may have been so to him as well. At the beginning of the decade he was forced to leave Freiburg for Basle because of supposed Lutheran sympathies, but Basle on account of suspected Catholic ones.⁹⁶ Similar ambiguities surround the Czech humanist Sigismund Gelenius (c.1497–1554) who completed a Latin translation of Philo’s *opera omnia* shortly before his death. Gelenius, that last survivor of the age of Erasmus, wisely kept his views of Philo, whose Judaism he emphasized, to a minimum.⁹⁷ About the *therapeutae* or Essenes he said nothing at all. He did, however, restore the *De vita contemplativa* title and rendered the work’s opening lines in an ambiguous way that could support both readings.⁹⁸ The French Catholic humanist Adrien Turnèbe in the first Greek *Opera omnia* edition was considerably more enthusiastic both of the Christian and Essene readings of the *therapeutae*, and indeed of Philo’s simultaneous ‘philosophising and theologising’ as well.⁹⁹ Most of the prefatory material consisted of a lengthy excerpt of Eusebius’s *interpretatio christiana*.¹⁰⁰ Headings in the index, such as ‘Essenes in Egypt’, ‘female Essenes and their customs’, and ‘their hymns for God’, all refer back to the *De vita contemplativa*.¹⁰¹

Even before Turnèbe, the confessional pressure on the apostolicity—or not—of monasticism was growing, as was the corpus of possible sources to be marshalled on either side. Jacobus Latomus, like Clichtove, a critic of both Erasmus and Luther, opened his *Libellus ... de votis atque institutis monasticis* (1530) with a chapter insisting on the antiquity of the institution. The Leuven theologian added to Clichtove’s material (whom he does not cite) the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, whose authenticity (already questioned by *Quattrocento* humanists) he defends.¹⁰² He also brings in the *therapeutae* in a way that suggests greater engagement than shown by Clichtove, as he refers to them by their Greek

⁹⁵ Philo, *Libri Antiquitatum* [etc.], ed. Sichardt, sig. a1r–v.

⁹⁶ Guido Kisch, *Johannes Sichardus als Basler Rechtshistoriker* (Basle, 1952), 8–9. His conversion to law could be a response to confessionalisation. He ended his days as *professor primarius* of law at the Lutheran University of Tübingen.

⁹⁷ Philo, *Philonis Iudaei, scriptoris eloquentissimi, ac philosophi summi, Lucubrationes omnes quotquot haberi potuerunt*, trans. Sigismund Gelenius, 2 vols (Lyon, 1555), vol. 1, sig. *2v. Gelenius twice presented Philo as a follower of Moses and emphasized his limitations for Christians.

⁹⁸ Philo, *Lucubrationes*, trans. Gelenius, 2:744: ‘Postquam de Essaeis disseruimus, qui vitam activam exercent omnibus ... ordo postulat ut deinceps dicamus quae dicenda sunt de contemplationi deditis.’

⁹⁹ Philo, *In libros Mosis de mundi opificio, historicos, de legibus; Eiusdem libri singulares*, ed. Adrien Turnèbe (Paris, 1552), sig. α2v: ‘φιλοσοφῶντε καὶ θεολογῶν.’ On this preface, see also John Lewis, *Adrien Turnèbe, 1512–1565: A Humanist Observed* (Geneva, 1998), 168–69.

¹⁰⁰ Philo, *In libros Mosis de mundi opificio, historicos, de legibus*, ed. Turnèbe, sig. α4v–α6r.

¹⁰¹ Philo, *In libros Mosis de mundi opificio, historicos, de legibus*, ed. Turnèbe, sig B3r: ‘[Essaei] in AEgypto’; ‘Essaeae mulieres et earum ritus’; ‘hymni in deum’.

¹⁰² Jacobus Latomus, *Libellus de fide et operibus et de votis atque institutis monasticis* (Antwerp, 1530), sig. E5v–E6v. On this fifteenth-century debate, see John Monfasani, ‘Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in Mid-*Quattrocento* Rome’, in *Supplementum Festivum: Studies in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. James Hankins, John Monfasani, and Frederick Purnell (Binghamton, NY, 1987), 189–220.

name.¹⁰³ Latomus's conclusion to his description of the *therapeutae*—'So far, Philo the Jew, who lived during the time of the Apostles'—shows why Catholics valued his testimony.¹⁰⁴ Yet despite these protestations the theologian still seems to have accessed him only via Eusebius.¹⁰⁵

The Essenes were absent from Latomus's account, but they were growing in popularity. A strange consensus emerged on the Essene identity of the *therapeutae*, but for two confessionally inflected and hence conflicting reasons. The Essene label, first of all, served Protestants well because it allowed them to explain the *therapeutae* in terms of something *else*: they were not Christian monks *but* Jewish Essenes. This was a strategy of straightforward re-labelling or re-categorizing, rather than re-interpretation. Although Scaliger would later claimed ownership of it, the approach was already adopted by the Magdeburg Centuries (1559–1574). The section on 'the rites of those who lived a solitary life' in its first volume, devoted to the first century CE, promised to discuss the Essenes elsewhere under another heading 'on the sects of the Jewish people.'¹⁰⁶ Conversely, the Centuries delayed its discussion of monasticism to the volume covering the fourth century, in which the Essenes—*quelle surprise*—do not feature.¹⁰⁷ In his *De origine et progressu monachatus* (1588), Rodolphus Hospinianus similarly discussed the Essenes safely away from Christianity in his section on 'On the origin and progress of monasticism among the Jews, Pagans, and Turks.'¹⁰⁸

For Catholics, by contrast, the expanded category of Essenes provided access to an even greater array of supposedly apostolic monks. The most exhaustive Catholic discussion of the sixteenth century, Matthaeus Galenus's *Origines monasticae* (1563), finally brought together this full set of authorities. Its table of contents illustrates how a structure could be assembled out of them. After an etymological discussion, the work's second chapter

¹⁰³ Latomus, *Libellus de fide et operibus*, sig. E7v.

¹⁰⁴ Latomus, *Libellus de fide et operibus*, sig. E8r: 'Haec ex Philone Iudaeo, qui Apostolorum tempore vixit.'

¹⁰⁵ Or at least, Latomus cites nothing that cannot also be found in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*.

¹⁰⁶ All references to the Magdeburg Centuries are to the British Library copy, 699.m.1–7: [Matthias Flacius et al.], *Ecclesiastica historia, integram ecclesiae Christi ideam, quantum ad locum, propagationem, persecutionem, tranquillitatem, doctrinam, haereses, ceremonias, gubernationem, schismata, synodos, personas, miracula, martyria, religiones extra Ecclesiam, et statum Imperii politicum attinet*, 13 vols (Basle, 1559–74 [1564, 1562–74]), vol. 1 (1564), bk. 1, col. 248: 'Ritus eorum qui solitariam vitam egerunt'; 'supra de sectis populi Judaici'. For the claim that Eusebius was discussing Essenes, see vol. I, bk. 2, col. 18. [Flacius et al.], *Ecclesiastica historia*, vol. 2 (1564), col. 124, similarly insists on the absence of evidence of monasticism in the second century CE, while it elsewhere points to the continued existence of the Essenes (col. 250). See also the passing sceptical reference to monasticism in the third century: *ibid.*, vol. 3 (1564), col. 149.

¹⁰⁷ [Flacius et al.], *Ecclesiastica historia*, vol. 4 (1562), cols 464–77. The section opens with the claim that 'coepit hoc seculo primum Monastice in Aegypto.' The omission of the Essenes is especially notable because the section does reference Jerome's discussion of Elijah and John the Baptist (col. 470).

¹⁰⁸ Rudolf Hospinianus, *De origine et progressu monachatus ac ordinum monasticorum, equitumque militarium omnium libri VI* (Zürich, 1588), fol. 1r. Tellingly, the chapter opens with an etymological discussion, starting with the discussion of the *therapeutae* in Philo's *De vita contemplativa*. Having surveyed the material on the Essenes, Hospinian turns to Eusebius who sought to transform the Essenes into Christians: 'Philo autem nihil usquam de Christianis scripsit, nec ullo verbo in tota hac narratione Christianorum mentionem facit, sed duos libros composuit de ea secta philosophorum, quos Essaeos vocant': *ibid.*, fol. 8r.

‘demonstrates the true origins of Catholic monasticism out of the book *De vita contemplativa or on the Therapeutae* by Philo of Alexandria, both the most eloquent and erudite of the Hebrews, and an Apostolic author.’¹⁰⁹ Philo’s demonstration was then ‘confirmed’ by Eusebius’s use of Philo, followed by chapters devoted to testimony from Jerome and Epiphanius (the latter now added to the source base). The Jessaeian etymology then set the stage for the ‘corroborating’ Apostolic evidence by Josephus on the Essenes, followed by the evidence of the (supposedly equally) apostolic Dionysian corpus. Galenus’s work thus illustrates both Catholic efforts to infuse the Fathers with the still greater antiquity of Josephus and Philo, as contemporaries of the apostles, and the way that the same Fathers acted as a glue keeping the *therapeutae* and the Essenes together. (The old Latin translation published by Sichardt plays a supporting role as well.¹¹⁰)

The *Origines monasticae* also illustrate the allure of the Essenes to early modern Catholic scholars, whose lives were usually more ‘active’ and less contemplative than those led by the *therapeutae* in their closets. Galenus excerpted some fifteen continuous pages of material from Josephus on the communal practices of the Essenes, which he illustrated in the margins with New Testament references and other Christian material, as well as comments such as ‘this is truly ancient and Christian.’¹¹¹ Conveniently, Josephus was blamed for any supposed misrepresentations (such as the fact that the Essenes predated Christianity), a strategy which we shall also observe for Philo. The same approach, giving pride of place to Josephus’s Essenes, was also adopted by Richard Hall (d. 1604) in his *De proprietate et vestiario monachorum* (1585).¹¹² Drawing on Galenus, the Jesuit Antonio Possevino similarly rejected part of Josephus’s account on the Essenes as ‘manifest errors and superstitions.’¹¹³ The Jesuit maintained that Josephus had confused ‘the Christian Essenes who converted from the Jews, whom Epiphanius calls Essaeans or Jessaeans’ with ‘his Essenes, especially since during his time the Christians were held for Jews.’¹¹⁴ Scaliger would perceptively observe that the (practical) Essenes made better monks than the theoretical ones (the *therapeutae*).¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Matthaeus Galenus, *Origines monasticae, seu, De prima ac vera Christianae monastices origine commentarius* (Dillingen, 1563), sig. B3r: ‘Ex Philonis Alexandrini Hebraeorum cum disertissimi, tum eruditissimi, et Apostolici scriptoris libro de vita contemplativa, seu de Therapeutis vera Monastices Catholicae origo demonstratur.’

¹¹⁰ Galenus, *Origines monasticae*, fol. 53r.

¹¹¹ Galenus, *Origines monasticae*, fols 43v–52r. ‘Hoc vere antiquum et Christianum est’: *ibid.*, fol. 51v. He expands these annotations significantly in the annotated copy he used for a proposed second edition, to be discussed further below: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Don.e.707.

¹¹² Richard Hall, *De proprietate et vestiario monachorum aliisque ad hoc vitium extirpandum necessariis liber unus* (Douai, 1585), 12–13.

¹¹³ Antonio Possevino, *Apparatus sacer ad scriptores veteris novi testamenti; Eorum interpretes, synodos et Patres Latinos et Graecos*, 2 vols (Cologne, 1608), 1:968.

¹¹⁴ Possevino, *Apparatus sacer*, 1:968: ‘Esseni Christiani ex Iudaeis conversi, quos Epiphanius Esseos, sive Iesseos vocat ... credibile igitur est, Iosephum confudisse nostros Iesseos cum suis Essenis, praesertim cum eo tempore Christiani pro Iudaeis haberentur.’

¹¹⁵ Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii Nicolai Serarii*, 246.

The reception and merger of the Essenes and *therapeutae*, then, is partly the result of accretions of many different (mis-)readings over time, but it is also a story of seeing the present in the past. So strong was the Christian lens that even Protestants were willing to entertain or concede the parallel, even when, as we saw, Eusebius never referred to the *therapeutae* as monks. The Cambridge divine William Perkins described the Essenes as ‘like Popish Monkes and Friers, which did separate themselves from the people, vowing and dedicating themselves to live in perpetuall sanctitie.’¹¹⁶ Scaliger depicted the relationship between Essenes and *therapeutae* (or as he saw them, practical and theoretical Essenes) as between Benedictines and the more austere and contemplative Carthusians.¹¹⁷ Writing in the late seventeenth century, the Huguenot pastor Jean La Placette compared the *therapeutae* to the reformed religious orders in the ‘Communion Romaine’, suggesting that they were ‘Observant’ Essenes.¹¹⁸

The parallel also served Protestant purposes. For the most part, Protestants granted the existence of a superficial similarity, either to tarnish Catholicism with Jewish superstition, according to which the Essenes were ‘but an old Jewish Monkerie,’ or to highlight the Essenes’ particular excellence compared to contemporary monasticism.¹¹⁹ The former Catholic Thomas Bell used the parallel to discredit his erstwhile Jesuit friends. Where the Essenes distinguished themselves by their abstinence, you could meet a Jesuit at any ‘common inne upon the friday at Dover, or other place of arrivall on what day soever; yea, though it be good fryday, they wil eate flesh with you for companie, and so accommodate themselves to the time, as you may worthily deeme them worldelie politikes, and not religious Iesuites as they professe to be.’¹²⁰ Hospinianus even maintained that Satan, in his efforts to sow division, had introduced both Jewish sects and Catholic monastic orders.¹²¹

At the same time, the sixteenth-century consensus on this concoction of *therapeutae*, Essenes, and (for Catholics) monastics was a story of blinkers, as well as ways of seeing. Anti-Jewish biases provided a protective coating. For all the praise heaped onto Philo, he continued to be consistently identified as ‘Philo the Jew’ and his Judaism made him into an unreliable narrator whose testimony could be discounted or excused as prejudiced, whenever convenient. We will observe this more closely in the final two sections of this chapter. Here, we should note that that the legend of Philo as a Christian convert never gained much traction in the early modern period for exactly the same reason: he was more useful as a helpful but

¹¹⁶ William Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition of Christs Sermon in the Mount Preached in Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1608), 84.

¹¹⁷ Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii Nicolai Serarii*, 262.

¹¹⁸ Jean La Placette, *Traité de l’aumône ... Avec une dissertation où l’on prouve que les Thérapeutes ou Supplians dont parle Philon, n’étoient pas Chrétiens* (Amsterdam, 1699), 358, 1.

¹¹⁹ John Sheffeld, *The Hypocrites Ladder, or Looking-Glasse: Or A Discourse of the Dangerous and Destructive Nature of Hypocrisie, the Reigning and Provoking Sin of This Age* (London, 1657), 190. See also Viret, *De La Vraye Et Fausse Religion*, 518–20, who also emphasized the influence of Egyptian priests.

¹²⁰ Thomas Bell, *The Survey of Popery Wherein the Reader May Cleerely Behold, Not Onely the Originall and Daily Incrementes of Papietrie, with an Evident Confutation of the Same; but also a Succinct and Profitable Enarration of the State of Gods Church from Adam Untill Christs Ascension* (London, 1596), 144–45.

¹²¹ Hospinianus, *De origine et progressu monachatus ac ordinum monasticorum, equitumque militarium omnium libri VI*, fol. 4r.

conveniently biased observer looking in.¹²² The closest we get to Philo Christianus is limited discussion of Photius's assertion in the ninth century CE that the Alexandrian converted to Christianity but left in anger, a story which, if anything, highlights the utility of Philo's liminal status. When the Spanish Jesuit Juan de Soria asked Baronio's opinion on Photius's claim, the church historian was sceptical both in private and in later editions of the *Annales*.¹²³

Of course, one can always identify outliers. One French Catholic missed the memo and saw in the Essenes, not monks but anabaptists.¹²⁴ Yet the equation of Essenes, *therapeutae*, and monks filtered down into vernacular literature.¹²⁵ The Essenes also worked their way into Carmelite origin stories, eventually even becoming 'Elijahians' (*Eliseni*).¹²⁶ When Robert Bellarmine in the mid-1580s surveyed the Protestant and Catholic weaponry on the monastic battlefield, the battle lines were clearly drawn with the *therapeutae* and Essenes serving on the frontlines. Discussing the six principal arguments in favour of the apostolicity of monasticism, the learned Jesuit began with Athanasius's life of Anthony only to take the reader gradually closer to the age of Christ. His fourth argument was (pseudo-)Dionysius, whose evidence fundamentally hinged on accepting Eusebius's *interpretatio christiana*. His fifth were the *therapeutae* and the Essenes. The sixth was Scripture itself: the Apostles emerged from Acts as 'truly the first Christian monks.'¹²⁷

While this final argument was, of course, the most authoritative, it was also, for Protestants, more easily discounted, so pride of place was really given to the *therapeutae* and Essenes. Bellarmine, beginning with Philo, noted the Protestant strategy of re-categorizing the *therapeutae* as Essenes: 'the Magdeburgians ... admit that Philo wrote this, but that he did not speak on Christians but on Essenes, who were a sect of Jews altogether similar to our religion.'¹²⁸ As for his own attitude to the *therapeutae*/Essenes concoction, Bellarmine held out two solutions which the Jesuit both deemed 'probable.' It was possible that Josephus and

¹²² For the legend of Philo Christianus, see the inventory in Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*, 3–7; Inowlocki, 'Eusebius of Caesarea's Interpretatio Christiana of Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa*', 320. The older argument set out by Bruns, 'Philo Christianus', 141–45, has been superseded. Only a single fifth-century pseudo-gospel identifies Philo as a convert: Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 5.

¹²³ Raimondo Alberici, ed., *Epistolae et opuscula pleraque nunc primum ex archetypis in lucem eruta*, 3 vols (Rome, 1759–70), 1:246, 255. Granada, 17 December 1591. Juan de Soria to Cesare Baronio; Rome, 15 March 1592. Cesare Baronio to Juan de Soria. Soria noted that the Jesuits Francisco Torres and Petrus Canisus had reported the claim but provides no references. Baronio expressed scepticism both of the late date and Photius's reliability.

¹²⁴ Gabriel Du Préau, *De vitis, sectis, et dogmatibus omnium haereticorum* (Cologne, 1569), 158.

¹²⁵ Paolo Moriggia, *Historia dell'origine di tutte le religioni che sin'ad hora sono state al mondo* (Venice, 1569), fols 6–8. The author's description of the Essenes ends with a reference to Lake Mareotis as 'their' primary home and the birthplace of hermits.

¹²⁶ Tomás de Jesús, *Libro de la antigüedad, y sanctos de la orden de nuestra Señora del Carmen y de los especiales Priuilegios de su Cofradia* (Salamanca, 1599), 20. For the etymology, see Juan de Cartagena, *De sacra antiquitate ordinis B. Mariae de Monte Carmelo tractatus duo* (Antwerp, 1620), 124–25.

¹²⁷ Bellarmino, *Disputationes*, vol. I/2, col. 438: 'vere primi fuerunt Monachi Christiani'.

¹²⁸ Bellarmino, *Disputationes*, vol. I/2, col. 437: 'Magdeburgenses ... fatentur Philonem haec scripsisse, sed eum non esse loquutum de Christianis, sed de Essenis, quae erat secta Iudaeorum omnino similis nostris religionibus.'

Philo were not speaking of the same people and that the ancient sect of the Essenes were Jews, but others—Bellarmine mentioned Galenus by name—held that Josephus had confused Christians or ‘Jessaeans’ with ancient Jews.¹²⁹ As we shall see in the next section, to safeguard the *therapeutae* as monks, Cesare Baronio would drive a wedge between them and the Essenes, which that Protestant ‘Achilles’ Joseph Scaliger then sought to mend. This debate produced both some of the most original thinking and some of the worst insults seen in the history of early modern scholarship.

4. A Closer Look and a Painful Divorce: Cesare Baronio, Joseph Scaliger and Some Vicious Jesuits

We have observed so far that the Essenes and *therapeutae* were brought together by the fertile Christian, especially Catholic, imagination which saw in their ascetic practices proof for the existence of monasticism during the apostolic period. Yet, as we also saw, this merger was at the same time the product of (mis-)readings and interpretations, which though they accumulated over time, can nevertheless be traced back to the opening lines of Philo’s *De vita contemplativa*. As Philo could also be read, at least as plausibly, as introducing the two sects, despite their asceticism, as representing two *opposite*—active and passive—modes of life, close comparisons inevitably posed problems. In their conflict over the Essenes as Christian monastics, Cesare Baronio and Joseph Scaliger explored two possible solutions, in pursuit of their juxtaposed hypotheses. Where Baronio contrasted differences in practices to hesitantly divorce Christian *therapeutae* from Jewish Essenes, Scaliger focussed on the name and etymology of the Essenes to keep the two sects together as Jews. These two approaches, etymological and comparative, mediated by scholars’ attitudes towards Philo, would form the organizing principles of the debate going forward. Neither men, however, found salvation in the solutions that they put forward.

Cesare Baronio discussed the Essenes in his *Annales ecclesiastici* (12 vols, 1588–1607), exactly where one would expect: as part of his discussion of the Alexandrian church founded by the Apostle Mark. Joseph Scaliger’s attack on the *Annales* was based on Baronio’s overreliance on the ‘hallucinating’ Eusebius, who had introduced Philo’s *therapeutae* in precisely that context.¹³⁰ Baronio had indeed been deeply influenced by the early Greek Church historians, even if he deemed them all heretics.¹³¹ Most of this Alexandrian discussion, which Baronio—for reasons known only to himself—placed in 64CE, was given over to discussing the contrasting testimony of Philo and Josephus on our merged group of Essenes. The Protestants who ‘pursue the monastic institution with hatred’

¹²⁹ Bellarmino, *Disputationes*, vol. I/2, cols 437–38.

¹³⁰ On ‘Eusebii hallucinationem’, see e.g. Joseph Scaliger, *Opus de emendatione temporum*, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1598), sigs. γ5verso, γ6recto.

¹³¹ On Baronio’s reliance on Eusebius, see the brief comment in Eric W. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1981), 470–71, and Baronio’s ‘Ordine prefissosi dal Baronio nello scrivere la Storia Ecclesiastica’ in Generoso Calenzio, *La vita e gli scritti del cardinale Cesare Baronio della Congregazione dell’Oratorio* (Rome, 1907), 909–13 (document no. 7), which features Eusebius at the top of this list.

forced Baronio to return to the original sources, for they claimed that ‘Philo did not speak about Christians, but that he composed a history on the Jewish sect of the so-called Essenes. Josephus [in the *Antiquities*] demonstrates that they existed before the time of Christ, since he reports that Herod bestowed some favour on them.’¹³² As I have argued elsewhere, Baronio’s solution to this difficulty could be read as sacrificing Josephus (and the Essenes) to save Philo’s *therapeutae* for the Church.¹³³ His other solution, which we already glimpsed above, was the creation of different *types* of Essenes and would prove popular among Protestants and Catholics alike. While this sacrifice of Josephus likely reflects his personal view, this does not fully capture the argumentative position—worthy of a contortionist—that the church historian ended up taking.

Indeed, Baronio’s argumentative structure is immediately striking and puzzling. Scaliger’s friend Isaac Casaubon was not wrong when he observed in his manuscript notes that Baronio did not have ‘full confidence’ in his position.¹³⁴ Yet the argument set out, which takes us through a range of options, was clearly intentional. Baronio’s manuscripts reveal some last-minute changes but no whole-sale revisions. He was clearly not working out his own position in public. Rather, he offered a range of options, none of which he forcefully rejected, for the reader to choose from. Baronio’s *Annales*, in general, can be read as a form of Catholic consensus building.¹³⁵ In this context, it is noteworthy that Philo’s *therapeutae* (even though ultimately Christian) are referred to as Essenes throughout. Indeed, the manuscript version of the *Annales* even referred to Philo’s *De vita contemplativa* as *De Essenis*, perhaps a legacy of Sichert’s edition.¹³⁶ Baronio’s reconciliation strategy was to gradually narrow the Essenes to a particular Christian subset, constituted by the *therapeutae*.

The starting point of Baronio’s argument was thus to take as expansive a view as possible, using arguments of silence as a form of land-reclamation. The Essenes could not have existed before Christ, or the Scriptures would have mentioned them:

It is clearly a matter worthy of wonder. How could it be that when mention is made in the Gospel of all other Jewish sects, indeed of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Galileans, and the Herodians; that truly, all memory of the Essenes, whose way of life

¹³² Cesare Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 12 vols (Rome, 1588–1607), 1:598: ‘Monachorum instituta odio prosequantur . . . non de Christianis locutum esse Philonem, sed de ea Iudaeorum secta historiam contexuisse, quae Essenorum dicta esset, quam Iosephus ante Christi tempus extitisse demonstrat, cum de Herode agit his nonnihil favente.’

¹³³ Jan Machielsen, ‘Sacrificing Josephus to Save Philo: Cesare Baronio and the Jewish Origins of Christian Monasticism’, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 23/3 (2016), 239–45.

¹³⁴ Oxford, Bodleian, MS Casaubon 3, fol. 16: ‘Scaliger quaestionem decedit, quidquid perstrictae frontis homines blaterant. Ipse Baronius plenam fiduciam non habet contrarium affirmandum.’

¹³⁵ Jan Machielsen, ‘An Aspiring Saint and His Work: Cesare Baronio and the Success and Failure of the *Annales Ecclesiastici* (1588–1607)’, *Erudition and the Republic of Letters*, 2/3 (2017), 233–87.

¹³⁶ Compare Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana [BAV], Vat.lat.5684, fol. 383 with Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:597.

could appear to be worthy of admiration before all others, would remain exceedingly covered up in silence?¹³⁷

Josephus's silence on the Alexandrian Essenes (i.e. the *therapeutae*) in his defence of Judaism in *Against Apion* was used in a similar fashion:

Josephus the Jew refutes and fights in those two most eloquent books with all his powers the calumnies against the Jews collected by Apion. He at once very boastfully publicizes anything of nobility or worth on his people from all the ancient authors he had been able to hunt down, even from the most hidden of places. Did he nevertheless remain silent on that most celebrated way of life of all, that of the Essenes, when their so famous school would have been accessible to Alexandria, where Apion usually lived?¹³⁸

Similarly, the pagan authors who lived before Christ had praised pious men from all over the world, even the Brahmins of India: 'truly, on the Essenes who easily surpass all the foresaid, and who were placed plainly right before the eyes of everyone in the centre of the earth, you will not find even a word.'¹³⁹

More explicitly than other defenders of the *interpretatio christiana*, Baronio's strategy was to exploit the silences in the historical record. Silence suggested that they were Christians. When they were mentioned, their subsequent absence indicated a vanishing act, suggesting either their conversion to Christianity or a secret Christian identity all along. Given the real opportunities posed by silences, this made the actual testimony, particularly that of Josephus, quite inconvenient at times. The second part of Baronio's strategy therefore was to concede, at least for the moment, part of the territory which had first been gained. Josephus's revelation that the Essenes existed before Christ was one such problem. Baronio relented, without quite conceding: 'Truly, we do not fight hard to deny that there existed Essenes before Christ.'¹⁴⁰ They may have existed previously under Herod: 'For the writings of Josephus,' he insisted in a late manuscript addition, 'have no memory of them before then.'¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:599: 'Admiracione plane digna res est: quidnam sit, quod cum in Evangelio de ceteris omnibus Iudaeorum sectis habetur mentio, nempe de Phariseis, Sadducaeis, Galilaeis, et Herodianis; de Essenis vero, quorum vitae institutio videri poterat prae ceteris admiracione digna, omnis memoria silentio prorsus obvoluta remanserit?'

¹³⁸ Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:599: 'Iosephus Iudaeus duobus illis disertissimis libris, quibus calumnias in Iudaeos ab Apione congestas, totis viribus nisus impugnat atque refellit; simulque quidquid nobile dignumve de gente sua ex quibuscumque antiquis scriptoribus venari potuisset, ex abditissimis etiam locis gloriose admodum in medium profert; tamen de Essenorum instituto omnium celeberrimo tacuit, cum eorum gymnasium tam celebre apertum esset Alexandriae, ubi Apio degere consuevit?'

¹³⁹ Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:599: 'de Essenis vero, qui praedictos omnes facile antecellerent, quique plane ob oculos omnium essent in medio terrae constituti, nec verbum quidem habuisse reperies.'

¹⁴⁰ Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:599: 'Verum nec in his contentiosum funem trahimus ut negemus ante Christum fuisse Essenos.'

¹⁴¹ Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:599; BAV, Vat.lat.5684, fol. 384: 'nulla enim antiquior apud Iosephum de eis habetur memoria.' The discussion of Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.171–72, suggests that the Essenes may have already existed in the second century BCE, however.

Baronio alternated between these strategies, setting up a cycle in which he gained ground only to later (sort of) concede it. Accepting the existence of older Essenes, he argued from silence that they were the most likely of all the Jewish sects to *convert* to Christianity because ‘we truly have never read that the Essenes ever made the least amount of trouble either for the Lord or His apostles and disciples.’¹⁴² The same practice also caused him to divorce inconvenient Essenes (discussed by Josephus) from those described by Philo: ‘for the more ancient Essenes, who are described by Josephus, somewhat differ from those situated by Philo so that it appears that while the latter came forth out of the former, they are nevertheless not identical to them.’¹⁴³ Even then, inconveniences in Philo’s account could be glossed over as the Judaizing practices of early Christians. Proceeding, as per usual, from silence, he deduced that the converts drawn to joining the *therapeutae* must have included pagans, while Josephus’s ‘slacker’ [*remissiores*] Essenes were clearly Jews.¹⁴⁴ Their difference in location, with Josephus’s Jewish Essenes based in the Holy Land and numbering no more than 4,000 men, while Philo’s Essenes (i.e., the *therapeutae*) effectively laid claim to the rest of the world, enabled further arguments from silence:

But the same Philo in the book which he composed on the contemplative life [*De vita contemplativa*] says that this sort of men is great in number near Alexandria; indeed, that they live in the other regions of Egypt, and in addition in many parts of the world. He even adds that the same sort of life was adopted by Greeks and barbarians. [Philo] shows sufficiently plainly that he spoke only of Christians who, all over the world and from all nations, would have cultivated in these earliest times of the Church [this] way of life in nearly the same way. For who has ever read that Greeks or Barbarians had become Essenes, or that Jewish Essenes are to be found in the other provinces of the world?¹⁴⁵

At the same time, it is clear that the original expansive view which dressed up both Essenes and *therapeutae* as Christian monks still retained sufficient value for Baronio and his Catholic readership. His strategy, in effect, sought to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, offering up many different though not necessarily compatible arguments, as a way to build consensus around the ancient roots of Christian monasticism. In this sense, Baronio only presented a more elaborate menu than Bellarmine’s two ‘probable’ options. If the

¹⁴² Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:599–600: ‘De Essenis vero, quod aliquando vel Domino, vel eius Apostolis atque discipulis vel minimum negotii fecerint, nusquam legitur.’

¹⁴³ Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:600: ‘nam antiquiores Esseni, qui a Iosepho describuntur, ab his qui a Philone sunt positi, nonnihil differunt, ut appareat hos ex illis provenientes, non tamen eosdem esse cum illis.’

¹⁴⁴ Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:600; BAV, Vat.lat.5684, fol. 384, shows that Baronio reworked and strengthened this argument.

¹⁴⁵ Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:600: ‘At cum idem Philo in libro, quem de vita contemplativa conscripsit, dicat eiusmodi genus hominum apud Alexandriam magno esse numero, immo et in aliis Aegypti regionibus agere: quin insuper et in multis orbis partibus; ac etiam addat, idem vitae genus a Graecis et Barbaris esse receptum: satis manifeste declarat, non nisi de Christianis esse locutum, qui ubique terrarum, et ex omnibus gentibus eiusdem vitae, his primis Ecclesiae temporibus, in eundem ferme modum institutum excolerent. Quis enim umquam legit Graecos vel Barbaros factos Essenos, vel Iudaeos Essenos in aliis orbis provinciis reperiri?’ Cf. Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 21–22.

expansive account proved too much, the reader might still accept that some of these idealized ascetics were or, indeed, became Christians.

Baronio thus grappled at some length with the practices, beliefs, and rituals of these groups of Jewish ascetics and in the process, he highlighted the differences between them. Yet there was a second issue that the merger of Essenes, *therapeutae*, and Christians necessarily entailed: the use of different names when they were meant to be, in fact, *one* community. An annotated copy of Matthaëus Galenus's *Origines monasticae* shows its author investing considerable energy in these various etymological puzzles in preparation for a never realized second edition. One additional, particularly curious suggestion, for instance, derived from the Hebrew verb *qadar*, to grow dark or mourn, 'to be sad and sorrowful, an etymology which excellently agrees with the severity and rigour of monasticism.'¹⁴⁶ Baronio's most significant manuscript intervention in the *Annales* similarly took the form of an extended etymological excursus at the beginning of his discussion. He was struck not only by Epiphanius's speculations about the Jessaeans, but also by Philo's etymology for the name Essenes in his *Every Good Man is Free*:

[Philo] declares clearly that Essenes signify saints [*sanctos*] and have received this name from [their] holiness. When we discussed the Christian name above, we sufficiently stated that in the beginning of the nascent Church all Christians were indeed called saints [*sanctos*].¹⁴⁷

This etymological explanation, which aligns Christians and Essenes, as well as the fact that Baronio chose to add it to his opening gambit—that is, the position that he gradually moved away from—further demonstrates the value Catholics still attached to the Essenes.

Protestants, while they did not need to equate Essenes with Christians, were still confronted with that other part of the etymological puzzle, relating the *therapeutae* to the Essenes. Joseph Scaliger's response to Baronio's *Annales* in the *prolegomena* of the second edition of his *Opus de emendatione temporum* (1598) was primarily to argue that greater priority should be given to a historical eye witness such as Josephus, as a participant in the Jewish-Roman War, over later church historians such as Eusebius, whose authority often caused Baronio to misdate events 'by three years, sometimes by four, but most often by two years.'¹⁴⁸ While it was within this wider context of berating Baronio's reliance on the 'old-womanish hallucinations' of Eusebius that Scaliger turned to the *interpretatio christiana*, the

¹⁴⁶ Galenus, *Origines monasticae*, fol. 16r; Bodleian Library, Don.e.707: 'tristem ac maestum esse, quae monachicae severitati, ac rigori etymologia optime convenit.' I am really grateful to Kirsten Macfarlane for translating the Hebrew passages in these notes.

¹⁴⁷ Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:593; BAV, Vat.lat.5684, fol. 383: 'Esseos sanctos significare atque a sanctitate illud eos nomen accepisse, non obscure declarat. Verum omnes Christianos ipso exordio nascentis Ecclesiae Sanctos esse nominatos, satis superius dictum, cum egimus de nomine Christiano.' Cf. Philo, *Every Good Man is Free*, 75. For Baronio's discussion 'de nomine Christiano', see Baronio, *Annales ecclesiastici*, 1:298–99.

¹⁴⁸ Scaliger, *Opus* (1598), sig. γ3verso: 'Itaque triennio aliquando, aliquando quadriennio, ut plurimum autem biennio erratum est.'

issue here was not chronological but etymological. It also evolved, again, around different ways of reading.¹⁴⁹

Accordingly, Scaliger used Eusebius's use of Philo as a prime example to discredit the church historian's credibility as a witness. He noticed that Eusebius had left the Essenes well alone and had Christianized only the *therapeutae*. He rejected the 'puerile delusion' that the sect was Christian 'because they had been ascetics, lived by themselves, and had monasteries. As if we should consider the Bonzes of Japan to be Christians, [simply] because they live together, they sing certain psalms by turns like European monks, and they keep canonical hours according to their example.'¹⁵⁰ A generation later, Scaliger's treatment would inspire the Huguenot scholar Jean Daillé in his devastating 1632 attack on the authority of the Church Fathers.¹⁵¹ Yet, for all his skills as a philologist, Scaliger did not notice that the *monastic* reading of Eusebius was not borne out by the actual text—Eusebius, as we already noted, had presented the *therapeutae* as Christians, not as monks.

Scaliger also provides us with a second act of reading, a re-interpretation of the opening line of Philo's *De vita contemplativa*: 'That [the *therapeutae*] were not Christians but merely Essenes, Philo shows immediately at the beginning of his book.'¹⁵² Possibly, Baronio—who had clearly read the first 1583 edition of Scaliger's *Opus*—had elided the name *therapeutae* from his account to complicate this Protestant rebranding exercise. It was more difficult to argue that Philo's *therapeutae* were 'merely' Essenes, when the Oratorian priest had consistently called them Essenes already. Baronio's throw-everything-on-the-board-so-something-might-stick argumentative strategy also confused Scaliger, as it did Casaubon: 'the author ... still admitted that the true Essenes were Jews. We are amazed, in what way he thought these, Judaism and Christianity, could be well harmonized into one.'¹⁵³ The extent to which the *therapeutae* could be accepted as Christians also depended on one's inclination to countenance 'Judaizing' Christian practices and to acknowledge Christianity's Jewish roots, which Baronio was more willing to accept than most of his contemporaries.¹⁵⁴

In his *prolegomena*, Scaliger repeatedly signalled that more on the Essenes and Eusebius's other hallucinations could be found in Book Six of his great *Opus*. Interestingly

¹⁴⁹ On the 'anilibus hallucinationibus' of Eusebius, see Scaliger, *Opus*, sigs γ3recto, γ6recto, and note 130 above.

¹⁵⁰ Scaliger, *Opus*, sigs. γ4verso–5recto: 'puerile illud deliramentum'; 'quod ἀσκηταί essent, et solitarie viverent, et monasteria haberent: quasi Bonzios Iapanensium Christianos esse censeamus, quia et coenobitae sunt, et Psalmos quosdam instar monachorum Europaeorum alternis modulantur, et horas Canonicales eorum exemplo habent.'

¹⁵¹ Jean Daillé, *Traité de l'employ des saints pères, pour le jugement des différends qui sont aujourd'huy en la religion* (Geneva, 1632), 322–23. Daillé invokes the testimony of Scaliger 'et plusieurs [unnamed] autres apres luy.'

¹⁵² Scaliger, *Opus* (1598), sig. γ5recto: 'Quod Christiani non essent, sed mere Esseni, statim initio libri ostendit Philo.'

¹⁵³ Scaliger, *Opus*, sig. γ5recto: 'Sed in Annalium tomo primo tacite perstringitur sententia nostra ab auctore, qui tamen fatetur veros Essenos Iudaeos fuisse. Mirati sumus, quomodo ille putavit in unum haec bene convenire posse, Iudaismum et Christianismum.'

¹⁵⁴ On this point, see Anthony Grafton, 'Christianity's Jewish Origins Rediscovered: The Roles of Comparison in Early Modern Ecclesiastical Scholarship', *Erudition and the Republic of Letters*, 1/1 (2016), 13–42.

enough, Scaliger's treatment of Philo's *therapeutae* had not changed much since the original 1583 edition, when he had attacked Eusebius in more measured terms. In 1598, the Huguenot scholar returned to the *therapeutae* after a long list of other criticisms of Eusebius:

The same Eusebius writes that the first Christians—whom Philo called *therapeutae*—settled in Egypt. The fact that Philo reports that these men lived in monasteries is sufficient evidence that they were Christians. But Philo had written two books on the sect of these men whom they called Essenes. One is on the active life of the Essenes [περὶ βίου πρακτικοῦ τῶν Ἐσσηνῶν] who were living in a community with others, which he entitled *That Everyone Good is Free* [ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ἀστέϊος ἐλεύθερος]. The other book is *On the Contemplative Life of the Essenes* [περὶ θεωρητικοῦ βίου τῶν Ἐσσηνῶν] who were living alone and were hermits.¹⁵⁵

The inspiration for this passage can only have come from the opening lines of Philo's *De vita contemplativa*, and Scaliger quickly moves on to discuss Philo's etymology of the *therapeutae*, perverted by Eusebius into healers in Christ's name. Casaubon scribbled page references to the relevant passage in Philo in the margins of his copy of the *Opus*.¹⁵⁶ The revised title of the *De vita contemplativa*, as Géza Vermès has already suggested, is probably achieved by merging part of the title of the *De vita contemplativa* (in full: περὶ θεωρητικοῦ βίου ἢ ἰκετῶν) with the title bestowed on the work by Epiphanius—*On the Jessaeans* (περὶ Ἰεσσαίων)—the Huguenot scholar's avowed scepticism of that Church Father's *fides* notwithstanding.¹⁵⁷ The rather fundamental distinction between the two sects—communal versus solitary life—is cleverly anticipated by Scaliger's inventive use of Greek, the similarity of which makes their differences seem complementary.

Unlike Baronio, Scaliger did not explore the practices of these communities in any detail. Instead, he turned to etymology in order to prove that the *therapeutae* were, in fact, Essenes. The fact that Philo never (again) called the *therapeutae* Essenes in the *De vita contemplativa* was problematic, but the Huguenot scholar had noticed the reverse in his *Every Good Man is Free*, where Philo called the Essenes *therapeutae*. The philosopher attributed the (still mysterious) etymology of the Essenes to their sanctity as 'worshippers of God' (that is, θεραπευταὶ θεοῦ; *therapeutai theou*).¹⁵⁸ To further cement this connection, Scaliger also confronted Philo's etymology in *De vita contemplativa* that the *therapeutae* were called thus 'either ... because they profess an art of healing ... or else in the sense of worship.'¹⁵⁹ On this basis, he discussed but then rejected, the Aramaic word *asya* (healer) as

¹⁵⁵ Scaliger, *Opus* (1598), 502–3: 'idem Eusebius scribit primum genus Christianorum in Aegypto consedissee, quos θεραπευτὰς Philo vocarit. Quod ii fuerint Christiani, satis arguere, quod ἐν μοναστηρίοις eos habitasse scribit Philo. Atqui Philo duos libros eorum hominum secta scripserat, quos Essaeos vocabant. Alter est περὶ βίου πρακτικοῦ τῶν Ἐσσηνῶν qui erant κοινόβιοι, quem inscripsit hoc titulo, ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ἀστέϊος ἐλεύθερος. Alter liber est περὶ θεωρητικοῦ βίου τῶν Ἐσσηνῶν qui erant μονάζοντες καὶ μονόβιοι.' Cf. Joseph Scaliger, *Opus novum de emendatione temporum in octo libros tributum* (Paris, 1583), 251.

¹⁵⁶ Eton College, Gg.2.7; Scaliger, *Opus* (1598), 503.

¹⁵⁷ Vermès, 'Essenes and Therapeutae', 35.

¹⁵⁸ Philo, *Every Good Man Is Free*, 75.

¹⁵⁹ Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 2.

a possible etymology for the Essenes, a suggestion more recently revived by Vermès.¹⁶⁰ Yet he ultimately traced the origin of the name back—as he had done in his 1583 edition—to *hasi* (Aramaic for ‘holy man’) based on Philo’s etymological musings in *Every Good Man is Free*. Essenes and *therapeutae*, then, effectively had the same holy name. In fact, it may well have been Scaliger’s etymology which had led Baronio to conclude that the Essenes (and *therapeutae*) were ‘saints’.¹⁶¹ Finally, he (rightly) dismissed as a post-Eusebian forgery ‘this Ape’ Dionysius the Areopagite who had used the *therapeutae* as a label for monasticism to fake his antiquity.¹⁶²

What may not be apparent is how conventional, for all its learning and linguistic skill, Scaliger’s argument was. The argument that the *therapeutae* were Essenes was, as we have seen, in no way new. In fact, Protestants and most Catholics would have agreed. Scaliger’s argument depended on the opening line of Philo’s *De vita contemplativa*, just as Sichardt’s had already done. Scaliger did not study or compare the practices of the Essenes and *therapeutae* in any detail. Even his friend Casaubon noted in the margins of his copy: ‘There remain things in this book of Philo (I speak of the second one [i.e., the *De vita contemplativa*]) which would deserve consideration.’¹⁶³ A co-ordinated attack by a group of Jesuits, keen to defend both the Catholic Church’s latest scholarship and ancient traditions, caused Scaliger to examine the *therapeutae* and Essenes in greater detail and arrive at some innovative conclusions about both Hellenistic Judaism and patristic scholarship in the process.

Of course, not all Catholics appreciated Baronio’s scholarship. In his 1612 *La conveniencia de las dos monarquias catolicas*, the royal chronicler Juan de La Puente saw in the *Annales* nothing less than a whole-sale attack on Spanish traditions and, in particular, Santiago, the country’s patron saint. Baronio, the Dominican consistently alleged, treated Spain as ‘the enemy nation.’¹⁶⁴ The Oratorian’s treatment of the *therapeutae* undermined Saint James because he had been ‘the universal apostle of the Hebrews who lived in all the pagan provinces.’¹⁶⁵ La Puente, despite (or because of) his profound anti-Judaism, needed Philo’s testimony that the *therapeutae* lived among all the nations to refer to Jews rather than Christians so that Saint James could have converted them: ‘From this universality Cardinal Baronio infers that Philo spoke about Christians, but he does not infer well, because as there

¹⁶⁰ Vermès, ‘Essenes and Therapeutae’, 35; Géza Vermès, ‘The Etymology of “Essenes”’, in *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Leiden, 1975), 8–29.

¹⁶¹ Scaliger, *Opus* (1598), 503. This also leads Scaliger to advocate the use of Ἐσσηῖται over Essenes and conclude that they owed their name ‘ab instituto vitae et religionis, non ab arte aliqua’ (such as medicine). Scaliger’s name features as an authority in other discussions in the manuscript of the *Annales* but is suppressed in the printed version. See e.g. the reference to Book Six of the original *Opus* on BAV, Vat.lat.5684, fol. 127.

¹⁶² Scaliger, *Opus* (1598), 504: ‘iste Simius.’

¹⁶³ Eton College, Gg.2.7; Scaliger, *Opus* (1598), 503: ‘supersunt in eo libro Philonis (posteriorem dico) quae expendi mereantur.’ I am grateful to Anthony Grafton for providing me with this transcription.

¹⁶⁴ E.g. Juan de La Puente, *La conveniencia de las dos monarquias Catolicas, la de la Iglesia Romana y la del imperio Español* (Madrid, 1612), 165: ‘la nacion enemiga.’ On La Puente, see Richard L. Kagan, *Clio and the Crown: The Politics of History in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Baltimore, 2009), 6, 186.

¹⁶⁵ La Puente, *La conveniencia de las dos monarquias Catolicas*, 175: ‘Apostol de los Hebreos, avezindados en las naciones Gentiles’

were Jews in all the pagan kingdoms, so there would also be this type of philosophical and religious Hebrews.’¹⁶⁶ La Puente’s discussion, and his privileging of local traditions over universal ones, shows both how necessary and how impossible Baronio’s consensus building was.

Still, while Baronio was under attack from Spain, Jesuits on the confessional frontlines of Northern Europe gathered to defend both the cardinal and monasticism against Scaliger’s criticisms. One particular thorn in Scaliger’s side, Martin Delrio—‘whether he is a man or a beast or rather filth made soft by shit I do not know’—took on the defence of the Dionysian corpus.¹⁶⁷ Another Jesuit, Nicolaus Serarius, challenged Scaliger’s treatment of the Essenes and *therapeutae* in a work that notionally targeted a friend of Scaliger’s, the Franeker Hebraist Johannes Drusius.

In the concluding chapters of his *Trihaeresium* (1604), Serarius—a long-term admirer of Baronio—essentially systematized the Church historian’s position on the Essenes using *Scaliger’s* division between ‘practical’ and ‘theoretical’ (or contemplative) Essenes.¹⁶⁸ The Jesuit claimed that the practical Essenes (discussed by Josephus and Philo) were Jewish and had predated Christ, but that many had subsequently converted, while the ‘theoretical Essenes all appear to have been Christians.’¹⁶⁹ Very much like Baronio had done, Serarius built his argument out of Philo’s and Josephus’s silences. Neither Jew had used the *therapeutae* to defend the excellence of their religion when the need arose.¹⁷⁰ As a Jew, Philo as ‘a man of authority among Jews ...

wrapped Christ the Lord, his Gospel, the sacraments and similar things in silence, and wrote in such a way that since he neither mentioned Christians nor Jews, on account of a similarity in their name and in some of their rites ... Jews would consider them Jews, and Christians would acknowledge them as Christians on account of everything else; and on account of both, they would appear as either to the gentiles.’¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ La Puente, *La conveniencia de las dos monarquias Catolicas*, 183: ‘El mismo autor en el libro *de vita contemplativa* dize, que los Essenos, una secta de Iudios, viven en Alexandria, y en otras partes de Egipto, y en tods las Provincias del munod, y que los Griegos y los Barbaros an recibido este modo de vivir. Desta universalidad colige el Cardenal Baronio, que Filon habla de los Christianos, pero no infiere beien, porque como en todos los Reynos gentiles avia Iudios, assi auria tambien este genero de Filosofos y religiosos Hebreos.’ The index, which includes two pages of anti-Jewish slurs, gives a good indication of La Puente’s general view of Judaism: *ibid.*, 346-47. On the supposed role of Jews in early Spanish Christianity, see also Katrina Olds, *Forging the Past: Invented Histories in Counter-Reformation Spain* (New Haven, 2015), 133–36.

¹⁶⁷ Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii Nicolai Serarii*, 6–7: ‘homo nescio an bellua an potius lutum stercore maceratum.’

¹⁶⁸ On Serarius’s admiration of Baronio, see Jan Machielsen, *Martin Delrio: Demonology and Scholarship in the Counter-Reformation* (Oxford, 2015), 349.

¹⁶⁹ Nicolas Serarius, *Trihaeresium, seu, De celeberrimis tribus apud Iudaeos, Pharisaeorum, Sadducaeorum, et Esseniorum sectis* (Mainz, 1604), 297, 1: ‘Theoretici Esseni videntur omnes Christiani fuisse.’

¹⁷⁰ Serarius, *Trihaeresium*, 298–99. Needless to say, this misses the entire purpose of Philo’s treatise.

¹⁷¹ Serarius, *Trihaeresium*, 306: ‘Cum tamen Iudaeus esset, in eoque, in quo natus erat, denasci etiam statuisset, Iuismo, vel ab ea saltem, perfidia, quod tantae apud Iudaeos auctoritatis vir esset; palam discedere nollet; voluisse data opera; silentio Christum Dominum, eius Evangelium, sacramenta, et familia involuere; sicque scripsisse, ut, cum neque Christianos, neque Iudaeos diceret, ob nominis tamen, rituumque nonnullorum, ...

Philo was thus able to use the ‘Christian’ *therapeutae* to enhance the reputation of Jews among the pagans.¹⁷² Silences, Philo’s Judaism, and some ‘Judaizing’ by early converts created a veritably unverifiable case for ancient monasticism. The contrasting approaches taken by La Puente and Serarius thus not only demonstrate the full range of Catholic responses to Baronio’s project, their work also reveals how gradations of anti-Jewish sentiment could be used to either discredit or protect a Christian reading of a Jewish sect.

When Scaliger came to respond to his Jesuit critics, he moved beyond Philo’s opening words and etymology to survey the practices of the Essenes and *therapeutae* in great detail. In his *Elenchus Trihaeresii* (1605), he claimed that the Buddhist monks of Japan had a better claim of being Christians than the Essenes, even though they predated Christianity by two millennia.¹⁷³ ‘If we believe Serarius,’ Scaliger declared, ‘then monasticism was derived from the foulest founts of Jewish filth and superstitions, forty years before Christ,’ while it would also make Christ himself an Essene.¹⁷⁴ These different parallels destabilized the boundaries between Christianity, Judaism, and pagan religions. The stridency with which Scaliger developed them reflects both the by now ill-tempered nature of the debate and the need to pierce the layers of unfalsifiable bubble wrap with which Serarius had protected the ‘theoretical Essenes’. Possibly, they also reveal Scaliger’s frustrations at the difficulty of demonstrating a shared identity between the *therapeutae* and the Essenes beyond their shared Judaism.

Still, Scaliger’s more extended engagement with Philo’s work also led to a number of important scholarly breakthroughs. First, as Anthony Grafton has famously shown, Scaliger extended his historicizing of the Church Fathers to Philo of Alexandria. Scaliger came to realize that Philo, as a Hellenic Jew knew neither Hebrew nor Aramaic: ‘he may have been more ignorant of either dialect than any Gaul or Scythian.’¹⁷⁵ He thus concluded that the etymology of *hasi*, of which he himself had persuaded Serarius (and Baronio), was wrong because Philo’s etymologies were entirely fantastical. The monoglot philosopher had merely

similitudinem, Iudaeis Iudaei putarentur; ob caetera omnia Christianis Christiani agnoscerentur: ob utraque, Gentilibus utrilibet viderentur.’

¹⁷² Serarius, *Trihaeresium*, 306: ‘Si Iudaeos, opinionem Gentilium non imminutam optavit, qui saepe a Christianis Iudaeos non distinguebant; suaeque gentis gloriae totum id concessum percupivit.’

¹⁷³ Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii Nicolai Serarii*, 235: ‘Ergo et Bonzii Iapponenses iustius Monachi Christiani dici possunt, quam Essaei.’

¹⁷⁴ Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii Nicolai Serarii*, 259–60: ‘Si igitur credimus Serario, a spurcissimis sordium, superstitionum, Iudaismi fontibus monachatus derivatus est, idque quadringentis annis ante Christum.’ See also the similar comment on 264. On Scaliger’s attitude towards the Jews, see W. Den Boer, ‘Joseph Scaliger en de Joden’ in S. Groenveld, M. E. H. N. Mout, and Ivo Schöffer, eds, *Bestuurders en geleerden: Opstellen over onderwerpen uit de Nederlandse geschiedenis van de zestiende, zeventiende en achttiende eeuw, aangeboden aan Prof. Dr. J. J. Woltjer bij zijn afscheid als hoogleraar van de Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden* (Amsterdam: Bataafsche Leeuw, 1985), 65–74.

¹⁷⁵ Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, 2:508–9; Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii Nicolai Serarii*, 132: ‘qui utriusque dialecti imperitior fuerit, quam ullus Gallus aut Scythia.’ For the context of this change of heart, see also: Francis Schmidt, ‘The Hasidaeans and the Ancient Jewish “Sects”: A Seventeenth–Century Controversy’, in *Sects and Sectarianism in Jewish History*, ed. Sacha Stern, trans. Marie-Laure Jocteur Monrozier (Leiden, 2011), 187–204, esp. 195–97.

attempted to derive the Essenes from the *Greek* word for holy, ὅσιοι. No longer bound by Philo's speculations, Scaliger proposed the new etymology of *hashai* (whispering, stillness, secret). This, he argued, was a suitable name 'for that sort of men, who either live communally in villages separately from others [i.e. the Essenes], or live alone in the wilderness [the *therapeutae*].'¹⁷⁶ This insistence cannot quite camouflage a crucial fact: Philo's discredited etymology no longer provided any support for the Essene-*therapeutae* merger at all. As with the Catholic position, the Protestant alternative identity of the *therapeutae*, who were only so called 'by Egyptian Greek-speakers, not by the inhabitants of Palestine,' had become an article of faith.¹⁷⁷

Scaliger made a second historicizing discovery as well, the full importance of which he did not pursue fully. He pointed out that Jerome, usually 'completely devoted to Eusebius,' in his life of Paul the Hermit did not dare to follow Eusebius where Philo's Essenes were concerned.¹⁷⁸ The Huguenot scholar transcribed in full the opening lines of Paul's *Vita*, in which Jerome noted contemporary debates about the origins of monasticism, and he noted Jerome's claim that Paul was 'the first of the monks' who fled to the deserts during the Decian persecutions.¹⁷⁹ Although this overlooked Jerome's reference to the Essenes in his letter to Eustochium, and Scaliger missed the fact that Eusebius had not discussed monks at all, he nevertheless perceived the significance of the disagreements *among* the Fathers. This led him to earlier Fathers, for instance to Tertullian's claim that 'we are not forest dwellers and exiles from life' for vindication, rather than to the conclusion that Jerome and his contemporaries were still working out the meaning of monasticism for themselves.¹⁸⁰ Scaliger's breakthroughs, then, must be placed within a wider—personal and confessional—framework that remained unbending.

Confessional polemic, especially during the opening decade of the 1600s, thus brought new pressures and new insights to bear on the relationship between Essenes, *therapeutae*, and Christians. Neither etymology nor detailed comparisons offered resolution but pressures that prompted new insights also caused unfalsifiable readings to spring up like drug-resistant bacteria. For Catholics, Philo's Jewish identity proved a useful deflective shield. The Protestant weapons chest for the *therapeutae* as Essenes was also seriously depleted. The need to provide the *therapeutae* with an alternate identity persisted, even though the initial readings that had encouraged this approach had been discredited. (Epiphanius's testimony on the Jessaeans, Scaliger also now unsurprisingly dismissed.¹⁸¹) The fact that everyone agreed that the two groups were clearly very different—as different as Carthusians were from Benedictines, as Scaliger put it—should have made the debate

¹⁷⁶ Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii Nicolai Serarii*, 204: 'illi generi hominum, qui aut vicatim ab aliis seorsim κοινόβιοι vivebant, aut in desertis μονάζοντες.'

¹⁷⁷ Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii*, 203: 'a solis Aegyptiensibus Hellenistis, non a Palaestinis.'

¹⁷⁸ Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii*, 231: 'maximum Hieronymus Eusebii studiosissimus.'

¹⁷⁹ Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii*, 232: 'primo Monachorum.'

¹⁸⁰ Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii*, 233: 'Non sumus ... silvicolae et exules vitae'; Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 42.

¹⁸¹ Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii*, 207–8.

moot.¹⁸² It was an age with greater interconfessional dialogue that would put the issue to rest, until *intra*-confessional disputes brought it back to life again.

5. Coming Full Circle: Bernard de Montfaucon, Henri de Valois, and the Anglican Come-Back

If we were to return to the *therapeutae* on the centenary of Scaliger's death much might appear the same. In 1709, Bernard de Montfaucon published his French translation of the *De vita contemplativa*.¹⁸³ Although now divorced from the Essenes and stripped off their monastic garb, the learned Benedictine from the Congregation of Saint-Maur, believed the *therapeutae* to have been Christians, possibly following in the footsteps of his mentor Jean Mabillon.¹⁸⁴ Montfaucon contrasted the 'moderns' who 'pushed *la critique* too far [and] too easily pronounced on things that required more reflection' with the opinion of the Fathers and the 'traditions preserved in the Church without any contestation.'¹⁸⁵ Little, then, seems to have changed. Some of the Benedictine's twelve marks of the *therapeutae*'s Christianity are surprising (notably the serving of hot drinks on the Sabbath) but the contours would have been instantly recognizable to Baronio or Serarius. Philo's Judaism still provides a useful shield: the 'more moderate' Philo 'speaks only in general terms' because he was aware of the hatred many Jews felt for the Christians, without revealing the names of the leaders or the books they are using.¹⁸⁶ There was even a Protestant planning to enter the fray against the Maurist. The Dutch antiquarian Gisbert Cuper declared the *therapeutae* 'pure unadulterated Jews' or possibly just plainly fantastical.¹⁸⁷

And yet underneath these apparent similarities, everything had in fact changed. Despite Montfaucon's protestations of uninterrupted tradition, his French translation was radical only in its attempt to return to a position that Catholics had, in fact, abandoned. The Catholic scholar Henri de Valois in two short but powerful notes to his erudite edition of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* (1659) not only put paid to the theory that the *therapeutae* were Christians, he rejected Scaliger's argument that they were Essenes as well. Valois had noticed that Eusebius had not, in fact, represented the *therapeutae* as monastics but as

¹⁸² Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii*, 262.

¹⁸³ Philo, *Le Livre de Philon, de la vie contemplative, traduit sur l'original grec, avec des observations où l'on fait voir que les Thérapeutes dont il parle étoient chrétiens*, trans. Bernard de Montfaucon (Paris, 1709).

¹⁸⁴ See the question formulated in Jean Mabillon, *Traité des études monastiques divisé en trois parties: avec une liste des principales difficultez, qui se rencontrent en chaque siècle dans la lecture des originaux et un catalogue des livres choisis pour composer une bibliothèque ecclesiastique*, 2 vols (Paris, 1692), 2:204.

¹⁸⁵ Philo, *Le Livre de Philon*, sig. a3r-v: 'poussé la critique trop loin ... trop facilement prononcé sur des choses qui demandoient plus de reflexion ... cette tradition s'étoit conservée dans l'Eglise sans aucune contestation.'

¹⁸⁶ Philo, *Le Livre de Philon*, 261, 262: 'plus moderez'; 'il parle en termes generaux.'

¹⁸⁷ Amsterdam, 25 June 1710. Gisbert Cuper to Jean Le Clerc. Jean Le Clerc, *Epistolario*, ed. Maria Grazia and Mario Sina, vol. 3: 1706–1718 (Florence, 1994), 281: 'je soutiens qu'ils ont esté puri puti Iudaei pour ne parler pas de Fantastiques, et des semblables gens.'

ascetics: ‘these are as greatly different from monks, as a *genus* is different from a species.’¹⁸⁸ Valois expressly agreed with Scaliger that the *therapeutae* were not Christians. Their ancient books and prophets, for instance, could hardly be the Christian gospels ‘which had only just been written in Philo’s time.’¹⁸⁹ He also pointed out, however, that Philo never called the *therapeutae* Essenes in his treatise, and that the two sects differed in many things, notably in their treatment of women. The *therapeutae* accepted them in their midst, while ‘the Essenes recoiled from the female sex.’¹⁹⁰

Valois’s respect for and dispassionate disagreement with Scaliger already show how much the confessional republic of letters had changed since Scaliger’s days. The royal historiographer had been closely aligned with the learned Jesuits Jacques Sirmond and Denis Pétau, the latter of whom had once been among the Huguenot’s assailants.¹⁹¹ Yet Valois also counted some of the most learned Protestant scholars of his day as his friends.¹⁹² The Eusebius edition was dedicated to the bishops and clergy of the Gallican Church. While this dedicatory epistle contained some strident comments about the value of ecclesiastical history for Catholics, it made all bishops—not just the papacy—heirs to interrupted Apostolic succession.¹⁹³ In his preface, Valois also acknowledged his profound debt to the Calvinist Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher, who had provided him with manuscript readings by Henry Savile and John Christopherson.¹⁹⁴ When Valois requested Ussher’s help, he noted that ‘the Italians had offered me nothing but empty words.’¹⁹⁵

Less erudite though perhaps more authoritative, at least from a Roman perspective, was the discussion offered by Lucas Holstenius, a convert to Catholicism and prefect of the Vatican Library, and also listed among Valois’s friends. In 1661, Holstenius, published his exhaustive collection of ancient monastic rules, which he offered to the Holy See ‘with a most humble kiss of the feet’.¹⁹⁶ In a prefatory dissertation, Holstenius opined that ‘they are

¹⁸⁸ ‘Annotationes in Librum II’, in Eusebius, *Ecclesiasticae historiae libri decem: Eiusdem de vita imp. Constantini, libri IV*, ed. and trans. Henri de Valois (Paris, 1659), 34: ‘Hi autem multum distant a monachis, ut genus distat a specie.’

¹⁸⁹ ‘Annotationes in Librum II’, in Eusebius, *Ecclesiasticae historiae libri decem*, 35: ‘vixdum scripta erant Philonis aetate.’

¹⁹⁰ ‘Annotationes in Librum II’, in Eusebius, *Ecclesiasticae historiae libri decem*, 34: ‘Philo diserte testetur Essenos muliebrem sexum aversari.’

¹⁹¹ See the separately paginated notes at the end of volume 2 of Epiphanius, *Sancti patris nostri Epiphanii Constantiae, sive Salaminis in Cypro ... opera omnia*, ed. Denis Pétau (Paris, 1622). Scaliger’s errors and hallucinations receive a string of entries in the index. While Pétau defends Serarius and the Christian identity of the *therapeutae*, his discussion of Philo’s two books recalls that of Scaliger’s *Opus* and he does not at all defend Epiphanius’s Jessaeian etymology (53–54). Valois pronounced funeral orations for Sirmond and Pétau.

¹⁹² Adrien de Valois, *De vita Henrici Valesii, historiographi regii liber* ([Paris], 1677), 12, lists such scholars as Claude Salmaise, Johann Friedrich Gronovius, and Isaac Vossius.

¹⁹³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiasticae historiae libri decem*, ed. Valois, esp. sig. a3v.

¹⁹⁴ Eusebius, *Ecclesiasticae historiae libri decem*, ed. Valois, sig. e4v–i1r.

¹⁹⁵ Henri de Valois to Ussher. Paris, 3 December 1654. James Ussher, *The Correspondence of James Ussher: 1600–1656*, ed. Elizabethanne Boran, trans. David Money, 3 vols (Dublin, 2015), 3:1109: ‘nihil mihi praeter verba inania contulerunt.’ See also Ussher’s replies on 1110–12.

¹⁹⁶ Lucas Holstenius, *Codex regularum, quas Sancti Patres monachis et virginibus sanctimonialibus servandas praescripsere* (Rome, 1661), title page: ‘cum humillimo Pedum osculo.’

deceived who make true and perfect monasticism older than Christianity.’¹⁹⁷ Old Testament prophets such as Elijah provided rather a ‘foreshadowing’ than an ‘exemplar’: ‘the Essenes also, whom the Jews remember and whom Philo describes in their own book (although Saint Jerome considers them to have been Christians) clearly differ in many aspects from the monastic way of life [*instituto*].’¹⁹⁸ The librarian held that evidence of early monastic practice must have perished in the flames of the Diocletian persecution—another argument from silence—and that, accordingly, Antony and Paul were ‘the first authors’ on whom monastic life was built.¹⁹⁹

This emerging ease with the absence of firm evidence reflects a growing comfort with the reality of continual confessional co-existence which is also evident in Valois’s Eusebius edition, although it also marks a hardening of the Christian/non-Christian divide. Notably, Catholic attitudes had not really changed by Montfaucon’s day. It was not Cuper, but Jean Bouhier, the young but erudite President of the Parlement of Dijon, who entered the fray against the Maurist. Familiar arguments were recycled. Later Fathers were still charged with simply copying Eusebius, in language that recalls that of Scaliger a century earlier.²⁰⁰ Bouhier held that Philo ‘a Jew perfectly instructed in his religion’ would not have praised the Christians whom his *confrères* had chased ‘out of their synagogues as reprobates and impious.’²⁰¹ If arguments or even anti-Jewish sentiment had not changed, the tone had. Montfaucon, though he did not change his mind, later conceded that he ‘had never seen so much erudition, tied to so much *politesse*, and that of all those who have held this position, no one, not even Scaliger, has seen the difficulty of the matter as well as [Bouhier].’²⁰²

If the lawyer’s refutation appeared to settle the matter for most onlookers,²⁰³ then his rhetorical question why a Jew would wish to praise Christians prompted an answer from the

¹⁹⁷ Holstenius, *Codex regularum*, sig. b1r: ‘Frustra sunt, qui verum et perfectum Monachismum Christianismo vetustiore faciunt.’ This is the dissertation’s opening sentence.

¹⁹⁸ Holstenius, *Codex regularum*, sig. b1r–v: ‘praesagia potius quam exempla’; ‘Esseni quoque, quorum Hebraei meminerunt; uti et quos Philo libro proprio describit (quamquam hos S. Hieronymus fuisse Christianos putat) multis, ut palam est, differentiis a Monachorum instituto discrepabant.’

¹⁹⁹ Holstenius, *Codex regularum*, sig. b1v: ‘Auctores porro eius primi Paulus et Antonius fuere, quorum exemplis duo genera Monachorum informantur, alterum Eremitarum seorsim sine arbitro degentium, Coenobitarum alterum in domo communi conviventium.’

²⁰⁰ Jean Bouhier, Bernard de Montfaucon and Bernard de La Monnoye, *Lettres pour et contre, sur la fameuse question: Si Les Solitaires, appelés thérapeutes, dont a parlé Philon le Juif, étaient chrétiens* (s.l., 1712), 44.

²⁰¹ Bouhier, Montfaucon and La Monnoye, *Lettres pour et contre*, 5–6: ‘un Juif parfaitement instruit de sa Religion’; ‘chassoient de leurs Synagogues comme des reprovez et des impies.’

²⁰² Cited in Abbé Papillon, *Bibliothèque des auteurs de Bourgogne* (Dijon, 1745), 81: ‘je n’ai jamais vû tant d’érudition, jointe à tant de politesse, et que de tous ceux qui avoient soutenu son sentiment, personne, sans en excepter même Scaliger, n’a vû si bien que lui le point de la difficulté.’

²⁰³ See the ironic review: ‘Lettres pour et contre sur la fameuse question, si les solitaires appelez Therapeutes, dont a parlé Philon le Juif, étoient Chrétiens. À Paris, chez Jacques Etienne, rue saint Jacques, à la Vertu. 1712. vol. 12. pp. 381’, in *Journal des Sçavans pour le Mois de fevrier 1712* (Amsterdam, 1712), 227–36. Reading the review, Cuper wrote to the Abbé Bignon that ‘je suis aussi persuadé que le sçavant Benedictin s’est trompé, que je le suis qu’un et deux font trois’: [Justinus de Beyer], ed., *Lettres de critique, de littérature, d’histoire, etc., écrites à divers savans de l’Europe, par feu M. Gisbert Cuper* (Amsterdam, 1743), 285. See also Basnage de Beauval, *Histoire des Juifs*, 2:596–683, chaps 22 and 23, both written against Montfaucon.

Benedictine monk that reveals the unexpected origins of the temporary Catholic revival of the Christian *therapeutae*. Montfaucon drew a parallel between Judaism and English Protestantism: ‘The whole world knows the aversion the English feel for Catholics, especially monks and monasteries.’²⁰⁴ Yet recent Anglicans had published eulogies of monasticism and lamentations of its destruction.²⁰⁵ ‘The whole world [also] knows that near London there is a convent for Catholic girls for which nearby Protestants have so great a veneration that when someone wants to insult them somehow or disturb them in the exercise of their religion, they join together in their defence.’²⁰⁶ If the English can move in mysterious ways, why not Jewish authors? ‘How can we say anything about why Philo and Josephus have spoken in these terms? How can we judge if they acted prudently by delivering such discourses?’²⁰⁷ Could the Jews of Alexandria have had a similar regard for the *therapeutae* as the English for their Catholic convent?

While the learned Maurist would not be the last continental European to marvel at apparent English eccentricity, there was more to this reference than mere wonder. In fact, it had been Anglican scholarship which inspired and sustained Montfaucon’s attempted revival of the Christian *therapeutae*. After his prefatory lamentation about modern critics, Montfaucon was quick to point out that ‘even Protestants have sustained against their sect that the *therapeutae* were truly Christians.’²⁰⁸ The only dissertation that treated the subject ‘as it should’ had been written by ‘Thomas Browne, an English Protestant.’²⁰⁹ In a footnote, the Benedictine cited two other members of the Church of England who had been of the same opinion.²¹⁰

The earliest use of either the Essenes or *therapeutae* as possible witnesses to apostolic traditions within the Church of England that I have found, dates to 1638, when Joseph Mede, a moderate Episcopalian, used ‘the Essenes, or θεραπευται’ as proof of the existence of churches and oratories in apostolic times.²¹¹ Mede still felt uncertain about Eusebius’s use of

²⁰⁴ Bouhier, Montfaucon and La Monnoye, *Lettres pour et contre*, 132: ‘Tout le monde sait l’aversion qu’ont les Anglois pour les Catholiques, et sur tout pour les Moines et les Monastères.’

²⁰⁵ Bouhier, Montfaucon and La Monnoye, *Lettres pour et contre*, 132. Montfaucon cites the *Monasticon Anglicanum*.

²⁰⁶ Bouhier, Montfaucon and La Monnoye, *Lettres pour et contre*, 133: ‘Tout le monde sait qu’il y a près de Londres un Monastère de filles Catholiques, pour lesquelles les Protestants des environs ont une si grande vénération, que quand on veut leur faire quelque insulte, ou les inquiéter dans l’exercice de leur Religion, ils s’attouent pour les défendre.’ Montfaucon is likely referring here to the community of Mary Ward sisters in Hammersmith. I am grateful to Victoria Van Hynning for discussing this passage with me.

²⁰⁷ Bouhier, Montfaucon and La Monnoye, *Lettres pour et contre*, 133: ‘Comment donc pourrons-nous dire pourquoi Philon et Joseph ont parlé en ces termes? Comment pourrons-nous juger s’ils agissoient prudemment en tenant de tels discours?’

²⁰⁸ Philo, *Le Livre de Philon*, ed. Montfaucon, sig. a4v: ‘Il y a même eu des Protestans qui ont soutenu contre ceux de leur secte, que les Therapeutes étoient véritablement des Chrétiens.’

²⁰⁹ Philo, *Le Livre de Philon*, ed. Montfaucon, sig. a5r: ‘comme il faut’; ‘Thomas Bruno, Protestant Anglois.’

²¹⁰ Philo, *Le Livre de Philon*, ed. Montfaucon, sig. a5v. The other two Anglicans, discussed further below, were William Beveridge and Isaac Vossius.

²¹¹ Joseph Mede, *Churches, That Is, Appropriate Places for Christian Worship Both in, and ever since the Apostles Times* (London, 1638), 17. The publication is an expanded version of a discourse ‘briefly delivered in a colledge chappell.’

the *therapeutae* but he was ‘sure’ of Eusebius’s belief that ‘Churches or Oratories of Christians’ were ‘an Apostolicall ordinance’ or he would not have brought them ‘as an argument or badge to prove Philo’s Essenes to be S. Marks Christians.’²¹² To this curious witness testimony ‘in the First Centurie’—which was really a fourth-century historian’s *belief* about the apostolic age—Mede adduced various ‘traditions’, including one recounted by the still later Bede.²¹³

Mede’s appropriation seemed to have made little or no impact on other pre-Civil Wars scholarship, but it was reprinted in 1672.²¹⁴ During the Restoration, tradition and the history of the early Church more widely, increasingly became part of a distinctly Anglican identity positioned between the religious enthusiasm of the ‘Fanaticks’ and ‘the furious Malice of Papists.’²¹⁵ In a justly famous study Jean-Louis Quantin has shown how in these circumstances the ante-Nicene Fathers, in particular, met ‘almost every requirement of Church of England apologetics’, demonstrating the apostolic character of bishops and the danger of schism.²¹⁶ The appeal of the *therapeutae* proved stronger still, because Philo’s treatise claimed to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. If primitive Christianity was the true face of the Church of the England, then the *therapeutae* held up a useful mirror. At the same time, their revival and the wider appeal to tradition must also be situated within the context of the authentication and publication of genuine texts of an almost apostolic provenance, such as the letters of Barnabas, Clement, and Ignatius of Antioch, during the 1630s and 1640s.²¹⁷ Thomas Browne’s dissertation on the *therapeutae*, when it eventually appeared posthumously in 1687, was appended to an edition of Clement’s letters.²¹⁸

As Quantin shows, English interest in and defence of the Fathers emerged in opposition to the French Huguenot scholar Jean Daillé, whose 1632 *Traicté de l’employ des*

²¹² Mede, *Churches*, 19.

²¹³ Mede, *Churches*, 19, 24.

²¹⁴ There is, for instance, no reference to Philo or the *therapeutae* in Thomas Young, *Dies dominica: Post Sabbatum omnis Christi amator Dominicum celebret diem, resurrectioni consecratum Dominicae, reginam et principem omnium dierum* (s.l., 1639), despite the author’s readiness to cast Sunday as a Christian appropriation of the Jewish sabbat. Joseph Mede, *The Works of the Pious and Profoundly-Learned Joseph Mede, B.D., Sometime Fellow of Christ’s Colledge in Cambridge* (London, 1672), 323.

²¹⁵ Bishop John Fell of Oxford, cited in Grant Tapsell, ‘Introduction: The Later Stuart Church in Context’, in *The Later Stuart Church, 1660–1714*, ed. Grant Tapsell (Manchester, 2012), 4. For a survey of the uses of history within the Seventeenth-Century Church of England, see: John Spurr, “‘A Special Kindness for Dead Bishops’: The Church, History, and Testimony in Seventeenth-Century Protestantism”, in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino, CA, 2006), 307–28.

²¹⁶ Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 2009), 341.

²¹⁷ See Dmitri Levitin, ‘Confessionalisation and Erudition in Early Modern Europe: A Comparative Overview’, sec. ‘England’ (forthcoming).

²¹⁸ Clement, *S. Clementis epistolae duae ad Corinthios ... Accedit Thomae Brunonis ... dissertatio de Therapeutis Philonis*, ed. Paul Colomiès (London, 1687). When Thomas Comber used the Essenes, believed to have been Christians ‘not only [by] Eusebius of Old but divers learned Men of these Ages’, he followed up this testimony with Clement’s ‘Genuine Epistle to the Corinthians (for we need not cite any spurious Tracts)’: Thomas Comber, *A Scholastical History of the Primitive and General Use of Liturgies in the Christian Church Together with an Answer to Mr. Dav. Clarkson’s Late Discourse Concerning Liturgies* (London, 1690), 20–21.

Saints Pères skilfully undermined their authority in part by demonstrating their ignorance.²¹⁹ While one such patristic mistake had been the Christian identity of the *therapeutae* already exposed by Scaliger, their Anglican vindication occurred almost in passing as part of the refutation of another of Daillé's writings.²²⁰ Although Daillé bemoaned the veneration of Christian antiquity in general, he especially denounced the imposters who forged ancient texts 'in which they make [the most ancient Christians] commend and confirm the new-fangled form of Ecclesiastical doctrine and discipline according to their fancy.'²²¹ One target had been the so-called Canons of the Apostles, originally associated with Pope Clement in the first century CE, to which the Huguenot for confessional reasons attributed an implausibly late date.²²²

William Beveridge's 1678 defence of the Canon can indeed be described as 'triumphalist Anglican patristic propaganda' with its depiction of the Anglican Church as a 'Primitive' Church, 'revived in these latest times,' although its official nature has to my knowledge not yet been emphasized.²²³ Not only had the work been dedicated to Archbishop William Sancroft, Beveridge had privately submitted the manuscript for the Archbishop's approval: 'I dare not venture it into the world without the judgement a more judicious person than myselfe. And although God of his infinite mercy hath blessed our Church with many eminent and learned divines there is none whose judgement ... I more desire or rely so much upon as yours.'²²⁴ Although his views on the *therapeutae* remain unclear, Sancroft, following Beveridge, certainly took the Canons to be written 'not by Apostles, but by Apostolic and Catholic men.'²²⁵ Beveridge's letter to Sancroft makes his own confessional motives clear and attributes others to his French Calvinist opponent. The Englishman's defence treated 'most of the rites of the primitive church, particularly about bishops, metropolitans and the

²¹⁹ Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity*, 228–38.

²²⁰ Daillé, *Traité de l'employ des saints pères*, 322–23.

²²¹ Jean Daillé, *De pseudepigraphis apostolicis libri III* (Harderwijk, 1653), sig. *2v: 'in quibus eas novitiam Ecclesiasticae doctrinae, ac disciplinae formam commendare ac confirmare pro sua libidine faciunt.'

²²² The Canons of the Apostles were first published as the eighth book of Giovanni Carlo Bovio, ed., *De constitutionibus apostolicis, B. Clemente Romano auctore, libri octo, nunc primum, e tenebris eruti, et ad orthodoxam fidem astruendam apprime utiles* (Rome, 1563). Daillé's scattershot approach to forgeries also targeted works which Protestants took to be genuine: Jean Daillé, *De scriptis, quae sub Dionysii Areopagite et Ignatii Antiocheni nominibus circumferuntur, libri duo* (Geneva, 1666), 1. For similar confessional reasons, Daillé was keen to place the forged canons in the mid fifth century CE.

²²³ Dmitri Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science: Histories of Philosophy in England, c. 1640–1700* (Cambridge, 2015), 498. William Beveridge, *Codex canonum ecclesiae primitivae vindicatus ac illustratus* (London, 1678), sig. A2v: 'Omnia denique usque adeo eadem in utraque habentur, constituuntur, praedicantur, ut Anglicana iure merito Primitiva nuncupetur Ecclesia, ultimis hisce temporibus rediviva.' See also Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity*, 349–50.

²²⁴ Dated London, 2 January 1676/7. Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 40, fol. 48r.

²²⁵ Beveridge, *Codex canonum ecclesiae primitivae vindicatus ac illustratus*, 9: 'Omnes enim octoginta quinque Canones Apostolorum vulgo dictos ... Joannes autem Dallaeus ab Haeretico aliquo impostore post annum Dom. CCCCL confictos esse affirmavit, nos media insistentes via, eos nec ab ipsis Apostolis, nec a quovis Haeretico; nec ante annum L., nec post CCCCL sed ab Apostolicis Catholicisque viris, secundo, tertio a Christi nativitate seculo constitutos, publicatosque fuisse contendimus.'

fasts of the church for the sake whereof Mr Dailé [*sic*] seems to have written agaynst the whole collection.’²²⁶

It was the subject of fasting, a practice in which the *therapeutae* were exceedingly well-exercised, that prompted Beveridge to turn from the Canons to the Egyptian desert dwellers (and *not* the Essenes) for support. Although not mentioned, Beveridge had clearly read Scaliger and Valois. To the standard distinction between ‘active’ and ‘contemplative’ Essenes, the future Bishop of St Asaph objected that if the *therapeutae* really were ‘contemplative’ Essenes, they hardly needed an additional name.²²⁷ In language identical to that of Valois, he pointed to the Essenes recoiling from the female sex.²²⁸ In language that recalled Scaliger’s, Daillé had castigated Jerome and Epiphanius for following ‘the hallucination of Eusebius.’²²⁹ Beveridge, in turn, criticized Daillé by name, and Scaliger implicitly, for believing that ‘this most learned Father St Jerome was so careless and imprudent that he would follow the opinion of Eusebius in all things without counsel or judgement.’²³⁰ Although he could not be completely certain, the testimony of the Fathers weighed heavy on Beveridge. In an explicit refutation of Daillé’s basic premise, he held patristic testimony to be superior to those born many centuries later.²³¹

Others followed suit, although usually with greater brevity. In 1679, Henry Dodwell, the ‘hero’ of Jean-Louis Quantin’s study, argued that the sect of ‘the Theoretical Essenes’ was the ‘most inclinable to be brought over to the Christian Religion’ because of their shared spiritual and philosophical underpinnings.²³² Christians had persuaded the *therapeutae* ‘that their own Religion was indeed no new one but that very Mystical Judaism which these Philosophical Hellenists had so much boasted of.’ The absence of any mention of them, either as opponents to the Christians or in general, suggested that ‘soon after the very memory of them seems to have been extinguished, very probably by reason of their unanimous conversion.’²³³ Their reputation as a ‘very Philosophical sort of Persons’ clearly recommended them to Dodwell.²³⁴ In 1681, Samuel Parker, a prebendary of Canterbury cathedral, used Philo’s *therapeutae*—who after all, could be found everywhere—to prove

²²⁶ Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 40, fol. 48r.

²²⁷ Beveridge, *Codex canonum ecclesiae primitivae vindicatus ac illustratus*, 370.

²²⁸ Beveridge, *Codex canonum ecclesiae primitivae vindicatus ac illustratus*, 371: ‘Illi muliebrem sexum aversabantur.’

²²⁹ Jean Daillé, *De jejuniis et quadragesima liber* (Deventer, 1654), 247: ‘Eusebii hallucinationem.’ Cited without reference by Beveridge, *Codex canonum ecclesiae primitivae vindicatus ac illustratus*, 372.

²³⁰ Beveridge, *Codex canonum ecclesiae primitivae vindicatus ac illustratus*, 372: ‘doctissimum illum Patrem D. Hieronymum adeo incautum fuisse et imprudentem, ut Eusebii in omnibus sententiam sine consilio et iudicio sequeretur.’

²³¹ Beveridge, *Codex canonum ecclesiae primitivae vindicatus ac illustratus*, 380–81.

²³² For the ‘hero’ label, see Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity*, 21.

²³³ Henry Dodwell, *Separation of Churches from Episcopal Government, as Practised by the Present Non-Conformists, Proved Schismatical from Such Principles as Are Least Controverted and Do Withal Most Popularly Explain the Sinfulness and Mischief of Schism* (London, 1679), 250.

²³⁴ Henry Dodwell, *A Discourse Concerning Sanchoniathon’s Phoenician History* (London, 1681), 65.

that ‘the Gospel of our Saviour like the Sun enlightened all the world at once.’²³⁵ Parker explicitly rejected Scaliger’s interpretation (‘according to his usual custom of quarrelling with Eusebius’) of the opening lines of Philo’s *De vita contemplativa*: ‘Philo no where calls them Essenes, which he would have done, if Essenes they had been of what sort soever.’²³⁶

These scholars seemed to have reached their opinions somewhat independently, though they also moved in the same circles. Going on Parker’s reply, Dodwell appears to have consulted the future Bishop of Oxford on the possible Christianity of the ‘practical’ Essenes. On 14 April 1681, Parker replied to Dodwell that he was ‘little confident’ in the Essenes discussed by Josephus, ‘v[ersus] in Philo’s *Therapeutae*, especially being lately confirmed in it by a Discourse [that] I have met with about it in Dr Beveredge his Vindication of y^e Apostolical Canons.’²³⁷ In 1671, Parker had succeeded Sancroft as archdeacon of Canterbury on the latter’s appointment as archbishop,²³⁸ and it was Sancroft who unites Beveridge, Dodwell, and Parker with the two men who accidentally became the most important Anglican supporters of the *therapeutae*: the canons of Windsor Thomas Browne and Isaac Vossius.

Ironically, the last and most influential Anglican statement on the Christian identity of the *therapeutae* of the Restoration period had actually been written first. It had also never been intended as the stand-alone dissertation. Browne had passed away in 1673, making his old friend Isaac Vossius his principal heir. Vossius’s wandering *Variae observationes* (1685) discusses the transition of ‘those Jewish monks to the Christian camp’ with special praise of Browne’s vast learning.²³⁹ The Dutch canon of Windsor, however, did not acknowledge that his own limited yet idiosyncratic contribution to the debate came from his friend. Browne and Vossius had noticed that by the time of Palladius’s *Lausiac History* (mid fourth century CE) Christian monks had been living on Mount Nitria, described as a mountain on the other side of Lake Mareotis from Alexandria.²⁴⁰ This description was, in Browne’s words more similar than ‘an egg to an egg or milk to milk,’ to the main residence of the *therapeutae* ‘above the Mareotic Lake on a somewhat low-lying hill.’²⁴¹ The argument, then, was that as the Christians could not have dislodged Jews from their mountaintop, the only solution to their mysterious disappearance was their conversion.²⁴² The originality of this topographical

²³⁵ Samuel Parker, *A Demonstration of the Divine Authority of the Law of Nature and of the Christian Religion in Two Parts*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 285:10 (London, 1681), 241.

²³⁶ Parker, *A Demonstration of the Divine Authority*, 246–47.

²³⁷ Dated 14 April 1681. Bodleian Library, MS Cherry 23, fol. 324. The letter makes it clear that by this time Parker’s work had already gone to press, but Parker had shared part of its contents with Dodwell beforehand.

²³⁸ Jon Parkin, ‘Parker, Samuel (1640–1688), Bishop of Oxford’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

²³⁹ Isaac Vossius, *Variarum observationum liber* (London, 1685), 47: ‘Judaeos istos monachos ad Christi transisse castra, quemadmodum optime observatum Thomae Brunoni, admirandae doctrinae viro, de cuius insignibus erga me meritis alibi dabitur dicendi locus.’

²⁴⁰ Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, 7.

²⁴¹ Thomas Browne, ‘Dissertatio de therapeutis Philonis’, in *S. Clementis Epistolae duae ad Corinthios*, ed. Paul Colomiès (London, 1687), 180: ‘vix ovum reperias ovo, vel lac lacti magis simile’; Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 22.

²⁴² Vossius, *Variarum observationum liber*, 46–47; Browne, ‘Dissertatio de therapeutis Philonis’, 178–81.

argument notwithstanding, the idea that the *therapeutae* had been Jews who converted to Christianity—a suggestion also floated by Dodwell, and which Serarius had already made for the Essenes—provided yet another protective layer of unverifiability.

As briefly noted above, Browne’s dissertation on the *therapeutae* appeared in 1687, as an appendix to an edition of Clement’s letters to the Corinthians. The work was edited by Paul Colomiès, Sancroft’s librarian, and dedicated to the Archbishop himself. Browne’s own links to Sancroft date back to the Interregnum, when as a chaplain to princess Mary he had tried to obtain a position for Sancroft.²⁴³ Colomiès had published the dissertation as a specimen from the many manuscripts that Browne had left Vossius. The work was, in fact, assembled from a much larger manuscript now in the University of Amsterdam library. A date on the frontpage suggests that it was completed in 1672, just before Browne’s death.²⁴⁴ As Valois was the often nameless ‘most erudite’ opponent whom the Windsor canon sought to refute, it cannot have been written during Browne’s exile overseas.²⁴⁵

The canon’s dissertation is an amalgamation of highly original and recycled arguments. Although Browne wrote that he was not a person ‘who prefers to err with Scaliger than side with Valois’, he borrowed one argument from the Huguenot scholar to establish the Essene identity of the *therapeutae*.²⁴⁶ This, in turn, enabled another argument from silence: the vanishing of the Essenes ‘immediately from Philo’s time to this day.’ Unlike the apparently multiplying Pharisees and Sadducees, not a single Essene had been found ‘across the whole world.’²⁴⁷ In support of the Judaizing practices of the *therapeutae*, Browne drew on one of the zaniest (authentic) sources surviving about early Christianity, Hadrian’s letter to Servianus, in which the Roman emperor, while discussing ‘the flighty morals of the Egyptians’ of Alexandria, commented on Christian bishops worshipping the pagan god Serapis.²⁴⁸ For Browne, such unexpected behaviour by pagan converts to Christianity made those of Judaizing *therapeutae* more probable.

While Browne clearly influenced Mabillon and Montfaucon in France, his dissertation proved the end of the road for the Christian *therapeutae* hypothesis within the Church of England. Still, there had been good reasons for this unexpected Anglican revival of the *therapeutae*. Crypto-Catholicism was not one of them, although the charge was often levelled

²⁴³ George D’Oyly, *The Life of William Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1821), 94.

²⁴⁴ Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam Special Collections, MS III H 24, title page.

²⁴⁵ Browne, ‘Dissertatio de therapeutis Philonis’, 180 (‘eruditissimo viro’), 184 (‘vir eximius’), 187 (‘vir doctissimus’). Valois’s work had appeared in 1659.

²⁴⁶ Browne, ‘Dissertatio de therapeutis Philonis’, 185: ‘non ego sum, qui cum Scaligero mallet errare, quam cum Valesio bene sentire.’ Browne used Scaliger’s discredited argument that Philo had called the Essenes *therapeutae* in his *Every Good Man is Free*: Ibid., 185.

²⁴⁷ Browne, ‘Dissertatio de therapeutis Philonis’, 183: ‘Iam vero qui, quaeso, fit ut statim a tempore Philonis ad hunc diem usque, omnis haec Essenorum Secta, per quindecim continuata saecula prorsus evanuerit? Qui fit, ut, cum per omnes mundi plagas tot innumeri reperiantur et Pharisaei et Sadducaei, ex Sadducaeis orti et Pharisaeis, ne unus, quantum scimus, in toto terrarum orbe Essenus iam reperiat, aut insequente Philonem saeculo repertus fuerit?’

²⁴⁸ Browne, ‘Dissertatio de therapeutis Philonis’, 202: ‘mores Aegyptiorum leves’.

against Parker.²⁴⁹ As the Catholics that preceded them, however, Anglican scholars, many of them cathedral canons, were in awe of the ‘life of almost continuous prayer’ (to quote Browne) led by the *therapeutae*.²⁵⁰ The *therapeutae* could be used to represent the Church of England, with its liturgy, fasting, and hymn singing, as offering the true primitive face of Christianity, much as Catholics had done before. For the same reason, Anglican opponents of the reading denounced the *therapeutae* as Jews excessively devoted to external worship.²⁵¹

There were deeper reasons as well that went to the core of Anglican confessional identity as it took shape in the later seventeenth century. Seen from the right angle, the *therapeutae* could be pressed into supporting the episcopacy, converted as they had been by the Apostle Mark as the first bishop of Alexandria. Indeed, Browne’s dissertation had been extracted from a much longer manuscript devoted to the episcopal see of Alexandria.²⁵² Perhaps, just as importantly however, defence of the *therapeutae* was a way by which these scholars could pay homage to and defer to the judgement of the Church Fathers. It was the Fathers who, as Beveridge observed, ‘coming across Philo’s treatise *De vita contemplativa*, affirmed with one mouth that the Therapeutae described there were truly Christians.’²⁵³ In all these different ways, then, the *therapeutae* could aid the construction and articulation of a distinct Anglican identity at a remove from other Protestants.

6. Essenes in the Enlightenment and Beyond

Of the arcs that we have been tracing in this chapter, one ended shortly after the mild-mannered debate between Bernard de Montfaucon and Jean Bouhier. On the level of rhetoric, the Christian appropriation of the *therapeutae* reached its logical end point with the *Histoire des Juifs* (2nd ed., 1716) by Jacques Basnage. In many ways, Basnage was a typical Huguenot, rehashing arguments about Philo’s ‘two orders of Essenes’ that went back via La Placette and Daillé to Scaliger.²⁵⁴ Yet, in a clever rhetorical inversion, the Huguenot also declared that he ‘could not sufficiently marvel at the jealousy of the Christians, who are “surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses” [cf. Hebrews 12:1] and possess an almost

²⁴⁹ Parkin, ‘Parker, Samuel (1640–1688), Bishop of Oxford’.

²⁵⁰ Browne, ‘Dissertatio de therapeutis Philonis’, 198: ‘tota vita, una quasi fuerat oratio continua.’

²⁵¹ William Cave, *Antiquitates Apostolicae, or, The History of the Lives, Acts and Martyrdoms of the Holy Apostles of Our Saviour and the Two Evangelists SS. Mark and Luke to Which Is Added an Introductory Discourse Concerning the Three Great Dispensations of the Church, Patriarchal, Mosiacal and Evangelical* (London, 1676), liv–lv. Cave suggested Egyptian Essenes were those denounced by Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians for excessive worship (Colossians 2:18–23).

²⁵² University of Amsterdam Special Collections, MS III H 24, title page: ‘Canonis Sexti Niceni explicatio historica.’ The sixth canon of Nicea extended the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Alexandria across Egypt and Libya, according to its ‘ancient customs’.

²⁵³ Beveridge, *Codex canonum ecclesiae primitivae vindicatus ac illustratus*, 381: ‘Illi autem omnes in Philo tractatum de vita contemplativa incidentes, uno affirmarunt ore, Therapeutas ibi descriptos vere Christianos esse.’ The Huguenot pastor Jacques Basnage had Beveridge in mind when he accused fellow Protestants of using Christian *therapeutae* to defend ‘les Evêques et le Serment qu’on prêtoit sur l’Eucharistie’: Basnage de Beauval, *Histoire des Juifs*, 2:566.

²⁵⁴ On the latter point, see e.g. Basnage de Beauval, *Histoire des Juifs*, 2:572, 605.

infinite multitude of martyrs and veritable saints will steal some phantasms from other religions which dazzled them.’²⁵⁵ Basnage used the same parallels that had fuelled the fevered Christian imagination not to discredit the appropriation, as Scaliger had, but to make the act itself an object of shame. While Basnage forms a useful stopping point in the gradual transition from ecclesiastical history to the (comparative) history of religion, his comments also reflect a growing disdain among Enlightenment *philosophes* for the Essenes, *therapeutae*, and indeed religious enthusiasm itself. Not long after, Johann Lorenz von Mosheim declared the *therapeutae* ‘wild and melancholy enthusiasts, who led a life incongruous alike with the law of Moses and with sober reason.’²⁵⁶ Christians, in other words, no longer had need or want for Philo’s ascetics.

A second, related arc, which we have been more explicitly charting section-by-section, also reaches its natural conclusion in the early eighteenth century. The *longue durée* history of the Christian appropriation of the *therapeutae* and Essenes followed, as we have seen, the confessional history of early modern Europe. Both arguments and tools used against Catholic or Protestant opponents were redeployed for *intra*-confessional purposes, whether to vindicate the episcopacy and ritual within the Church of England, or the precedence of the Carmelites among the other monastic orders. The subsequent appropriation of the two Jewish sects by more heterodox thinkers follows the pattern charted by Dmitri Levitin.²⁵⁷ Possibly their radical otherworldiness provided them with an even greater appeal to contemporary religious enthusiasts, making them still more of a double-edged sword than the other weapons forged in the defence of orthodoxy.

In 1909, then, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* blamed ‘English deists and Continental Rationalists’, as well as ‘Freemasons’, for metamorphizing the Essenes into monks, wilfully unaware of the large role that early modern Catholics had once played in promoting this very reading.²⁵⁸ A nineteenth-century history of freemasonry, which dated the movement’s origins to Ancient Egypt, does indeed include the ‘Essenian Fraternities’, though not (because of their admission of women) the *therapeutae*.²⁵⁹ While the denunciation of freemasons was new, that of unnamed Deists can be traced back to the earliest item in the encyclopaedia entry’s bibliography: Humphrey Prideaux’s *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews* (1715–17). An entirely conventional Protestant account, featuring both

²⁵⁵ Basnage de Beauval, *Histoire des Juifs*, 2:568: ‘Pour moi, je ne saurois assez admirer la Jalousie des Chrétiens, qui, environnez d’une grande Nuë de Témoins, et riches par une Multitude presque infinie de Martyrs et de véritables Saints, vont dérober aux autres Religions quelques Phantômes qui les ont éblouis, et qui tâchent de s’en faire Honneur.’

²⁵⁶ Johann Lorenz von Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern ... A New and Literal Translation from the Original Latin, with Copious Additional Original and Selected*. J. Murdock, trans. James Murdock (London, 1848), 15.

²⁵⁷ See Levitin, ‘From Sacred History to the History of Religion’, 1117–60, as well as his contribution to this volume.

²⁵⁸ Edward Graham, ‘Essenes’, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5 (New York, 1909) <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05546a.htm>> [accessed 20 August 2019].

²⁵⁹ David Brewster, *The History of Free Masonry Drawn from Authentic Sources of Information: With an Account of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, from Its Institution in 1736, to the Present Time, Compiled from the Records, and an Appendix of Original Papers* (Edinburgh, 1804), 34–37.

practical and contemplative Essenes, it denounced not only ‘Romanists’ but also unnamed ‘infidel deists of our time’ for whom ‘Christ and his followers were no other than a sect branched out from that of the Essenes.’²⁶⁰ While this comment might seem to foreshadow the direction of later historical scholarship, especially in nineteenth-century Germany, it seems to have been no more than the product of the Dean of Norwich’s fevered orthodox imagination.²⁶¹ Possibly, Prideaux was responding to William Whiston, Newton’s ill-starred successor to the Lucasian chair at Cambridge. In his *Primitive Christianity Reviv’d* (1711), Whiston identified Arianism as the faith of Christ and the apostles, based on the Apostolic Constitutions and Philo’s *De vita contemplativa*—that is, the same texts marshalled by English divines a generation earlier to construct an orthodox Anglican identity.²⁶²

A confessional coda seems warranted here. Confessionalism may be too hospitable or capacious a label to capture the bitter warfare between Scaliger and the Jesuits, the almost aggressive cross-confessionalism of Valois, and the *politesse* of Montfaucon and Bouhier, let alone Whiston’s idiosyncrasies, all under a single banner. These conflicts involved not only different opponents, they possessed different voltages and thus gave off different hues, which this chapter has sought to capture. Boundaries between orthodoxy and heterodoxy also shift and are, in any case, in the eye of the beholder. Henry Dodwell, who had denounced Quakers and other ‘Modern Enthusiasts and Superordinancers’ in the same work in which he praised the Christian *therapeutae*, found himself as a non-juror outside the Church of England after the Glorious Revolution.²⁶³

Inevitably, these rhetorical and confessional endpoints did nothing to resolve the underlying debate as to the identity of the *therapeutae*. Although Christian readings notably declined in number and prominence, others took their place. The arsenal of new texts and arguments kept on growing, as it had done in the time of Galenus, Scaliger, Browne and Montfaucon as well. Past readings—whether Eusebius’s reading of the *therapeutae* as Christians or readings of Eusebius as discussing Christian *monastics*—also structured new ones. New contributions were add-ons rather than displacements. The list of authorities simply grew. While not entirely derivative, Johann Gottlob Carpzov’s 1748 commentary still lined up Scaliger, Daillé, Basnage, and Valois in ‘manly’ (*mascule*) opposition to the arguments of Bellarmine, Baronio, Browne, and Beveridge that the ‘theoretical’ Essenes were Christians.²⁶⁴ These debates were, thus, timeless and repetitive because many of the arguments and most of the authorities did not change. Still, there is a deeper reason for these

²⁶⁰ Humphrey Prideaux, *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations from the Declensions of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah to the Time of Christ*, 2 vols (London, 1718), II, 285.

²⁶¹ Arnaldo Momigliano, ‘Prologue in Germany’, in *Nono Contributo Alla Storia Degli Studi Classici e Del Mondo Antico*, ed. Riccardo di Donato (Rome, 1992), 543–62.

²⁶² See esp. Whiston’s comparison between the rules of the *therapeutae* and the Apostolic Constitutions: William Whiston, *Primitive Christianity Reviv’d*, 5 vols (London, 1712), 3:38.

²⁶³ Dodwell, *Separation of Churches*, 254. Dodwell criticized sectarians for agreeing with Platonic philosophy—a curious charge given Philo’s evident Platonism.

²⁶⁴ Thomas Goodwin, *Apparatus historico-criticus antiquitatum sacri codicis et gentis Hebraeae, uberrimis annotationibus in T. Goodwini Mosen et Aaronem*, ed. Johann Gottlob Carpzov (Frankfurt, 1748), 237–38.

long continuities as well. It was Eusebius's original *interpretatio christiana* that made the debate on the identity of the *therapeutae* into an interminable Scooby Doo episode, with an endless wait for the secret reveal at the end. The structure of the debate meant that the *therapeutae* could not just be *therapeutae*. They had to be given an *alternate* identity, whether Christian, Essene, Jewish, or, as we shall presently see, something else.

The origins of one solution—that the *therapeutae* and/or Essenes would have been well-disposed to convert to Christianity—are difficult to pinpoint. It lurks in the background, as a secondary argument, in the writings of authors as diverse as Serarius and Browne. This *therapeutae*-as-all-things-to-all-people argument had the advantage of being unfalsifiable, because it employed an absence (the eventual but unknown disappearance of the Essenes/*therapeutae*) as evidence. To Christians, it was also generally unobjectionable. This was the, essentially historicizing, position of Edward Gibbon, who otherwise treated both Christian forgeries and monasticism with disdain. Although agreeing with Basnage that ‘the Therapeutae were neither Christians nor monks’, he still considered it ‘probable they changed their name, preserved their manners, adopted some new articles of faith, and gradually became the fathers of the Egyptian Ascetics.’²⁶⁵

Otherwise, the debate essentially rested on two pillars: the shared etymology (or not) of the *therapeutae* and the Essenes, and possible similarities or differences between their and Christian practices. Both of these were mediated by assessments of Philo's identity as author. As we have seen, the etymological pillar collapsed in the wake of Scaliger's attack on Baronio. Scaliger's exposure of Philo's linguistic ignorance discredited the philosopher's etymological musings and seriously devalued attempts to match *therapeutae* and Essenes through that route. Yet the other route remained open, ready to be elaborated by Montfaucon and others. As all ascetic communities inevitably share some commonalities, parallels between *therapeutae*, Essenes, monks, and early Christians could be used either to establish connections or, as Basnage did, to discredit them as pale Jewish imitations of divine Christian truths. The late Géza Vermès, the last major scholar to identify the *therapeutae* with the Essenes (and the Qumran community), still posited a numbered list of similarities and differences between them.²⁶⁶ Philo's ambiguous identity, as we have seen, could be used to assist such readings, by excusing discrepancies or omissions, or glossing over inconvenient facts.

Given this fundamental structure, the only two fundamental shifts in the debate that followed the early eighteenth century relate directly to changing attitudes towards Philo. While inventive, neither of these altered the debate. Firstly, the early Enlightenment saw the revival of Philo's identity as a Platonic philosopher. The most significant cause for this was the brief but powerful 1693 Leipzig dissertation ‘on the Platonism of Philo the Jew’ by Johann Albert Fabricius, though we could also point to other classicizing contributions.²⁶⁷ In

²⁶⁵ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols (New York, 1993), 1:555, n. 1.

²⁶⁶ Vermès and Goodman, *The Essenes According to the Classical Sources*, 16–17. Vermès is more conclusive in some of his earlier writings, see n. 160 above.

²⁶⁷ Johann Albert Fabricius, *Exercitatio de Platonismo Philonis Judaei* (Leipzig, 1693). Space does not permit discussion of the curious and long afterlife of Thomas Goodwin, *Moses and Aaron: Civil and Ecclesiastical*

addition to offering some choice examples, the German classical scholar pointed to the widespread patristic consensus that Philo was a Platonist, leaving it to the reader to judge whether ‘the writings which bear Philo’s name do not breathe the Platonic spirit and [whether] Philo was well-versed only in Jewish and not also in Platonic wisdom.’²⁶⁸ Unsurprisingly, Fabricius in one of the concluding one-line ‘additions’ to his dissertation suggested that ‘Philo’s *therapeutae* in a certain way are the same as Platonic pilgrims.’²⁶⁹ A generation later, this idea—the germ of which, of course, stemmed from Philo’s debts to Platonic philosophy—was seized on by Johann Joachim Lange. In a series of dissertations, this young German professor argued that neither the *therapeutae* nor the Essenes were Jewish but ‘gentile Judaizing philosophers.’²⁷⁰

A final attempt to fundamentally reshape the debate came a century and a half later. It took the form of cutting through the Philonic umbilical cord altogether. In his 1879 dissertation, Paul Ernst Lucius argued that the practices described in the *De vita contemplativa* did not resemble Judaism in the slightest [*ganz und gar nicht*], but that of Christian ascetics ‘as closely as possible’ [*so genau als möglich*].²⁷¹ Noting that the *therapeutae* left no trace in Philo’s other writings or that of his contemporaries, Lucius argued that the work was a Christian forgery of the third century CE, composed shortly before it found its way into the hands of Eusebius.²⁷² In this reading then, the *therapeutae* described in the *De vita contemplativa* were again fully Christian, but Philo was not its author.

By recasting the author of the *De vita contemplativa* both these scholars sought to radically alter the terms of the debate, as set out above. Their attempts, ultimately unsuccessful, highlight that, beyond confessional reasons, a further spur for debate was the appeal of the mystery itself, akin to a modern *whodunnit*, as well as the prestige of solving it. Both Lange and Lucius exemplify the inventiveness—and ambition—of young scholars on the make. Carpzov belittled Lange, just past his mid-20s when his dissertations appeared, as

Rites, Used by the Ancient Hebrewes, Obserued, and at Large Opened, for the Clearing of Many Obscure Texts Thorowout the Whole Scripture (London, 1625). Originally peripheral to the debate, the work reached a wider European audience in Dutch (1676) and Latin translations (1679). It would still form the basis for Johann Gottlob Carpzov’s commentary, who likely was not aware of its antiquity: Goodwin, *Apparatus historico-criticus*, ed. Carpzov, iii–iv, which references the 1690 Latin translation.

²⁶⁸ Fabricius, *Exercitatio de Platonismo Philonis Judaei*, sig. B3r: ‘Iudicet lector ex iis quae iam allata sunt, utrum vere vir eruditus affirmarit, scripta quae sub Philonis nomine feruntur Genium Platonicum non spirare, Philonemque Iudaicae tantum non etiam Platonicae peritum fuisse sapientiae.’

²⁶⁹ Fabricius, *Exercitatio de Platonismo Philonis Judaei*, sig. B4v: ‘Philonis Therapeutae quodammodo respondent θεωποῖς Platonicis.’ On Plato’s concept of θεωρία and the role played by the θεωρός, the traveller removed from daily life, see: Hélder Telo, ‘The Freedom of Θεωρία and Σχολή in Plato’, in *Anthropologie Der Theorie*, ed. Thomas Jürgasch and Tobias Keiling (Tübingen, 2017) esp. 13–14.

²⁷⁰ Langius, ‘Duae dissertationes historico-criticae de Therapeutis et Essaeis’, 99–166. See, in particular, the propositiones on 119 and 162.

²⁷¹ Paul Ernst Lucius, *Die Therapeuten und ihre Stellung in der Geschichte der Askese: Eine kritische Untersuchung der Schrift De vita contemplativa* (Strassburg, 1879), 195, 197.

²⁷² Lucius, *Die Therapeuten und ihre Stellung in der Geschichte der Askese*, 198.

‘clearly on his own ... pursu[ing] a road no-one so far has taken.’²⁷³ (It was not meant as a compliment.) Yet scholarly self-fashioning, by even its most august participants, shaped this debate throughout its history. No one reading Scaliger’s refutation of Baronio can miss the extent to which he saw himself as the supreme expert confidently correcting a bumbling popish amateur. Similarly, when Frederick Cornwallis Conybeare composed his 1895 refutation of Lucius, he not only maintained that ‘Scaliger’s remarks ... furnish in advance a sufficient reply to the critics of to-day’, he was also confidently embracing his inner Scaliger himself.²⁷⁴

To my knowledge, Scaliger’s final resurgence as a witness to the Essene identity of the *therapeutae* came in the writings of Géza Vermès in the 1970s.²⁷⁵ Since then, scholars seem to have given up on this iterative debate, though they have by no means lost interest in the *therapeutae* themselves.²⁷⁶ As stated at the outset, the aim of this chapter was never to unmask the *therapeutae* but to illuminate the context which prompted discussion of their identity over centuries. Despite patristic debts, the debate, especially as to the relationship between the *therapeutae* and Essenes, fundamentally began in the early modern period. It originated in the Catholic defence of monasticism, though the sects were later also put to other ends. Confessional motives thus acted as an important engine but as the later history shows still more clearly, the way the debate was structured also helped make it a merry-go-round. If the chapter has any contribution to offer to this debate itself, then it is to question its very premise. The need to explain the *therapeutae* in terms of another identity, whether Christian or Essene, would likely never have emerged if it had not been for Eusebius’s hallucinations.

²⁷³ Goodwin, *Apparatus historico-criticus*, ed. Carpzov, 240: ‘Plane singularis est in eo Langius, viamque insistit a nemine hactenus tritam.’

²⁷⁴ Philo, *About the Contemplative Life*, 322. He added that ‘Scaliger’s arguments, if they told against Serrarius [sic] and his friends, tell against Lucius with double force.’ The refutation is laced with irony and sarcasm, though not with scatology.

²⁷⁵ Vermès, ‘Essenes and Therapeutae’, 35.

²⁷⁶ See e.g. the short summary in Maren R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven, 2018), 86–88. Joan Taylor has studied the *therapeutae* from a gender perspective: Joan E. Taylor, *Jewish Women Philosophers of First-Century Alexandria: Philo’s ‘Therapeutae’ Reconsidered* (Oxford, 2006).