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# "THE REACTION IN PAGAN THOUGHT TO CHRISTIANITY FROM CELSUS TO JULIAN"

## C H A P T E R        O N E

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The period before us is one of alternating peace and persecution for the church. Between the years 178<sup>1</sup> and 363 A.D.<sup>2</sup> the Christian community became the target for attacks both physical and intellectual. That this was no new crisis is evident from a study of the history of the church during the first two centuries of our era, throughout which time attacks were repeatedly made both on Christian believers and on Christian beliefs.<sup>3</sup>

Persecutions are alleged<sup>4</sup> to have taken place in the reigns of Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Septimus Severus, Maximin, Decius, Valerian, Diocletius and Maximian. Beyond dispute is the fact that many believers were martyred or suffered punishment in various parts of the Empire. The final opponent of Christianity was Julian the Apostate, who also qualifies as a persecuter, although his was a bloodless persecution.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that in the first four centuries the years of persecution were outnumbered by the years of peace. M. Allard has calculated/

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1. Date of Celsus's Polemic.
  2. Date of Julian's death.
  3. Although the attack of Celsus is the earliest in our possession, many of his arguments are borrowed from earlier anti-Christian debate.
  4. The historical evidence is not always conclusive, e.g. the persecution of Domitian rests on the authority of Eusebius, H.E. IV. 26; Tertullian, Apol. 5.

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calculated that, in the period from Nero to Constantine, the church endured 129 years of persecution, and enjoyed 120 years of comparative peace.<sup>1</sup> When we add to this the years of peace prior to the year 64 A.D., as well as the years of freedom under the house of Constantine, we reach a more balanced conception of the position of the church in the first four centuries A.D.

The main problem arising from the earlier persecutions is that of the legal status of the Christian community. How soon did there exist a distinct anti-Christian legislation? Duchesne<sup>2</sup> cannot allow any anti-Christian legislation before Domitian. (L. Duchesne, *Les Origines Chretiennes* p.115). M. Allard is convinced that Nero published an edict against the Christians, the general gist of which was "Christiani non sint". It is this edict that Tertullian calls "institutum Neronianum".<sup>3</sup> What is certain is that by the time that the Younger Pliny sought the advice of the Emperor Trajan<sup>3</sup>, in 115 A.D., some form of legal policy was in vogue against the Christians.

On what charge the Christians were put on trial constitutes yet another problem. It appears unlikely that the charge was that an infringement of the "lex majestatis", as the known cases are relatively few, and none/

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1. Paul Allard, *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs*. London 1907. Lecture III, 80 ff. M. Allard discovers 6 years of persecution in the first century, 86 in the second, 24 in the third, and 12 at the beginning of the fourth.
  2. Tertullian *Apology* V.
  3. Pliny, *Letters* X. 96, 97.



none of these have any reference to religious belief. Likewise, the advice of Trajan to Pliny, "non conquirendi sunt"<sup>1</sup>, opposes the opinion that it was by magisterial "coercition"<sup>2</sup>, that the Christians were held.

Nor was it the traditional Roman practice to persecute those who believed in other gods. Rather was the policy one of marked tolerance towards new religious sects, a tolerance abandoned only in exceptional cases. Livy refers to two incidents, in 428 B.C. and in 213 B.C., when severe measures were taken against separate religious groups.<sup>3</sup> The chief cause of the resentment appears to have been certain outrageous practices by the sects involved. So too, in 186 B.C., the devotees of Bacchus were outlawed because of barbarous crimes perpetrated in their nocturnal gatherings. Livy does not assert that any new legislation was introduced to effect this persecution, nor that an established law was violated. Other cases of precisely the same nature can be cited. The intolerance of Augustus towards the Druids, of Tiberius towards the Moloch worshippers in North Africa, and the persecution of the Isiacs all stemmed from the abhorrence aroused by the secret practice of immoral and demoralising rites.

Both/

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1. Pliny, Letters X.97.

2. Mommsen. "Der Religionsfrevel nach römischen Recht". H.Z. 1890 Vol. 1 XIV, pp. 388-429; also c.f. "Christianity in the Roman Empire". The Expositor, 1890 Vol. III

3. Livy, IV, 30, 7 ff. XXV 1,6 ff.

Both Last<sup>1</sup> and Bigg<sup>2</sup> see in the earlier cases of intolerance a significant precedent for the persecution of the Christians under Nero. The Christians were suspected of similar immoral conduct to that of the worshippers of Bacchus, Moloch and Isis. Tacitus<sup>3</sup> informs us that because of popular hatred against the Christians, Nero found it convenient to shift the blame for the fire of Rome from himself to the Christians. At the same time, Tacitus insists on the "flagitia" of the Christians, a statement which confirms that all Rome was incensed at the extravagances of the followers of Christ. Their secret nocturnal meetings aroused suspicion; their practices were barbarous involving cannibalism at the Eucharist, and sexual immorality in their services after dark.<sup>4</sup> By the time of Tertullian<sup>5</sup> every public calamity was chargeable to the Christians.

On this interpretation of events, no new law was necessary for Nero to satisfy the public hostility against the lawless sect of the Christians. However, another theory/

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1. Hugh Last, "The Study of the 'Persecutions'". Journal of Roman Studies, 27.1937, pp. 80-92.
  2. Charles Bigg, The Origins of Christianity, Oxford 1909, Chapter 3.
  3. Tacitus Annales XV.44.
  4. Fronto in Octavius, 9; Justin 1 Apol. 1.10; Tertullian Apol. 1-3; Epistles to Diognetus 5 - "We have our meals in common, but not our wives."
  5. "Si Tiberis ascendit in moenia, si Nilus non ascendit in arva, si caelum stetit, si terra movit, si fames, si lues, statim 'Christianos ad leonem' adclamatur."



theory may supplement our understanding of the first persecutions against the Christians. In terms of Roman law sects and organisations were classified either as "licita" or "illicita". These organisations were called by various names - collegia, sodalitates, factiones, corpora, *ἑταίρια* or *θίασος*. Two things were forbidden, the first being the sheltering of immoral or illegal practices, the second being political disaffection. Under normal circumstances a "collegium illicitum" was tolerated by law, but if it proved troublesome, the sect could be officially dissolved. If the members of the collegium disobeyed, the sentence was that of death. If the Christian church was classified as a "collegium illicitum", then in times of ban, mere membership of the church was sufficient to bring the death penalty, once the general charge was believed against the sect. Thus, it would appear to many Christians that they were being condemned "for the name<sup>1</sup> only."

In the case of Nero, the charge against the Christian body appears to have been that of arson. The interesting thing is that when Pliny sentenced Christians to death in Bithynia, it was as members of an illegal society under ban.<sup>2</sup> His enquiry to Trajan concerns the putting into operation of the law, rather than the fact of the law itself. The/

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1. It was this that annoyed Tertullian, Apology.
  2. Pliny, Letters X, 96.



The arrests of Pliny appear to have been by "cognitio", not "coercitio". The answer of Trajan regarding procedure against the Christians is important, as it apparently set the custom for the rest of the century.<sup>1</sup> After stating "non conquirendi sunt", the Emperor departs entirely from all known legal procedure.

"If someone denounces them, and they are convicted, they must be punished; with this reservation, that he who declares that he is not a Christian and shall prove his statement by an act - by sacrificing to our gods - shall obtain pardon by his repentance, even if his past life has rendered him suspicious."

Thus, the acquittal or condemnation has to depend on the reply of the Christians alone!!

The first part of this edict was confirmed by Hadrian in the year 124 A.D. in a rescript sent to the proconsul of Asia, Minucius Fundanus, also by the Emperor Antoninus in rescripts to various cities in Macedonia, Thessaly and Greece.<sup>2</sup> The second part of Trajan's rescript was renewed by Marcus Aurelius in an interview with the legate of the province of Lyons.<sup>3</sup> In 197 Tertullian protests against this same procedure in his Apology.<sup>4</sup> Thus to the end of the second century a jurisprudence was in practice based on Trajan's reply to Pliny.

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1. Pliny - Letters X.97.
  2. Excerpt from the Apology of Melito, Eus. H.E. IV, 26.
  3. Justin. Apols.
  4. Tertullian Apol. V.

No witnesses were called, nor did the judge make any effort to extort a confession, rather the reverse.<sup>1</sup>

With the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. a change comes in the legislation against the Christians. The same tests as laid down by Trajan (i.e. sacrificing to gods or swearing by the genius of the Emperor) were in use, but now each new outburst of persecution tended to depend on the publication of new and separate edicts by the Emperor of the day. A formal declaration of war now proclaims each fresh attack on the Christian church.

Septimus Severus forbade either by edict or rescript any pagan from becoming a Christian. The motive is more clearly seen in this new mode of persecution. Severus is alarmed at the rapid spread of Christianity and the propaganda of the church, and he strikes back by aiming at two classes, the converters and the converted.<sup>2</sup> The church at Carthage and Alexandria both suffered through the operation of this edict. One cannot but notice the change of emphasis in the motives of persecution from the time of Nero, when the attack was founded on groundless suspicions, to the time of Severus, when the growth of the Christian community struck fear into the Emperor. The Church was becoming an "imperium in imperio". Loyalty to the national gods and to the Emperor loom even larger in future edicts. Thus Decius, in the year 250 A.D., launched/

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1. In trials of Polycarp, Justin, Martyrs at Lyons, Ptolemaeus, Apollonius and the Martyrs of Scillium - this method laid down by Trajan was followed.
  2. Spartian Vita Severi, 17. Eus. HE. VI. 1-4.



launched the most thorough persecution yet experienced by the church. His was the policy of extermination. His Edict demanded that all Christians must be summoned on a stipulated date to make public sacrifice to the gods, and those who conformed to the terms of the edict were to be given a "libellus";<sup>1</sup> those who refused would suffer exile or death!! It must be noticed that Decius did not apply the death penalty.

The other persecutions followed this same legal procedure. Valerius in his two Edicts of persecution sought to strike a blow at the heads of Christian communities. (257 A.D.)<sup>2</sup> Likewise he sought to close the places of worship attached to Christian cemeteries. In his Edict of 258 A.D. he extended his attack to the higher classes and also to the lower classes. The Senators and Knights either worshipped the gods or faced death; the slaves of the Imperial household either denied Christ or lost their property and rank.

So too in the fourth century persecution was by edict only. In the first eight years no fewer than six persecuting edicts appeared, the result of which was another crop of martyrs, as the faithful refused to sacrifice to the pagan gods. A new aspect of the persecution is seen in the Edict of 303 A.D. With the erection of many church buildings in both East and West there enters into the edicts of the period, instructions to/

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1. It was this that later gave rise to the sever<sup>g</sup> controversy over the Church's attitude toward the "Libellatici"
  2. Eus. H.E. VII, 11- 6-11.



to destroy all churches, while the burning of the Holy Scriptures is also enjoined.

We shall have cause to look more closely at the Edicts issued by Julian concerning the Christians. Suffice it to add, that on the accession of Constantine the old familiar type of bloody persecution was at an end in the period of the Roman Empire.

1. For a most valuable article on the anti-Christian legislation between the years 303-312 A.D. see Harvard Theological Review 47, 1954. "Aspects of 'the Great Persecution' by G.E.M. de Ste. Croix.

## JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

In our brief survey we have sought to assess the legal status of the Christian church in the pagan Roman Empire. It would, however, be quite misleading to suggest that all the opposition to Christianity arose at the instigation of pagans. There is an overwhelming weight of evidence to prove that much of the hostility against the church was inspired by Jews. The earliest record of Christianity, the New Testament, indicates occasions of Jewish hostility against Jesus, in so far as He appeared to them as a blasphemer and a law-breaker,<sup>1</sup> and likewise against Paul, in so far as he abandoned Judaism in his mission to the Gentiles.<sup>2</sup>

Justin emphasises Jewish hatred of the Christians, claiming that the Jews have "spread slanders "concerning Christians",<sup>3</sup> and have also slandered the Christ, by "selecting and sending out from Jerusalem "chosen men throughout all the land", who showed great zeal in publishing "bitter, dark and unjust things against "the only pure and righteous light sent by God." Justin further states that it was the Jews who inspired other nations to persecute the church.<sup>4</sup> Tertullian<sup>5</sup>, Origen/

1. e.g. St. John 19, v. 7.

2. The Peter-Paul controversy which brought a rift within the church, made an even wider gulf between the Christians and the Jews outside the Church.

3. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho XVII.

4. -do- -do- XCVI.

5. Tertullian, Adversus Judaeos 13.



Origen<sup>1</sup>, and Eusebius<sup>2</sup> all repeat this charge against the Jews. According to these writers, the slanders so widespread in the second century A.D., were invented and propagated by Jews. We shall consider later some of the specifically Jewish insults aimed at the person of Jesus.

There is not much evidence for actual Jewish participation in the persecutions themselves, although it must be remembered that in the first two centuries these persecutions reflected the popular distrust of Christians, whose atrocities and licentious rites were now, thanks apparently to the Jews, common knowledge. It is certainly probable that Nero's vicious onslaught on the Christians in 64 A.D. may well have been prompted by the Empress Poppaea, whom Josephus calls a *Θεοσεβής*<sup>3</sup>. It seems likely that she, a Jewess, turned the anger of Nero away from the Jews<sup>4</sup> towards the Christians, all the more so as the Emperor was hardly likely to be able to distinguish between the two sects.

That a bitter hostility existed in the second century A.D. is also fully attested. Justin in his First Apology<sup>XXXI</sup> writes, "In the Jewish war which lately raged, Barchochebas, the leader of the revolt of the Jews, gave orders that Christians alone should be led to cruel punishments, unless they would deny Jesus Christ and utter blasphemy." There are also signs of a/

1. Origen, Against the Jews.

2. Eusb. On Isaiah 18, v.1. "letters written by priests and elders living in Jerusalem (c.135 A.D.) filled with revilings against Jesus and his followers."

3. Josephus, Jewish Antiquities XX, 8.11.

4. In the first century especially anti-Semitism was rife, and Jews were bitterly persecuted by Vespasian and Domitian, Eusb. H.E. III, 5 ff; III, 20 ff.



a literary battle between Christians and Jews in the first centuries, preserved in the writings of the Fathers. Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Aristo, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Cyprian, Novatian, Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Augustine etc. all wrote against the Jews. Unfortunately there are no similar documents written by Jews against Christians. The writings of Celsus and Porphyry reflect certain current Jewish arguments against the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> Only one actual Jewish writer is mentioned, who is specifically stated as a bitter assailant of Christianity. Epiphanius<sup>2</sup> classes alongside Celsus and Porphyry a certain Philosabbatius, describing him as "he who assails us from among the Jews, a fierce and deceitful serpent." This is the only reference to Philosabbatius, but from what Epiphanius adds, we can deduce that this Jew sought to expose the contradictions in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> Epiphanius must have considered his work formidable, to compare him with Celsus<sup>4</sup> and Porphyry<sup>5</sup>.

This rivalry and hostility between Jew and Christian remained throughout the third and fourth centuries. Porphyry presumably praises the Jews<sup>6</sup> in order to add a sting/

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1. There are references also to public debates between a Jew and a Christian, e.g. The debate between Papiscus and Jason. Origen c. Celsum I,28, I,5, II,31 ff. Tertullian. Adversus Judaeos. Introduction.
2. Epiphanius, Haereses 15, 51 8.
3. E.G. "How did Jesus come to be carried off to Egypt on the night of his birth, when he stayed to be circumcised the eighth day?"
4. B.W. Bacon in H.T.R. XXII 1929 sees Epiphanius as a prototype of the Jew in Contra Celsum I and II.
5. Karl Holl in Epiphanius 1915 identifies Epiphanius with Porphyry.
6. Eusebius Praep. Evang. IX 10. Augustine De Civitate Dei XIX 23.

sting to his attacks on the Christians. So too Julian the Apostate attempted to play off the Jews against the Christians, particularly in his project to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem. Gregory Nazianzen accuses Julian of "stirring up against us the 'nation of the Jews.'"<sup>1</sup> The espousal by Julian of the Jewish cause must have raised the hopes of every Jew, especially after the stern anti-Jewish legislation of Constantine, the Christian Emperor. Not only were the Jews banned from the Holy City, but also from Dio Cesaraea, Nazareth, Capernaum and Tiberius, all of which had close associations with the birth of Christianity. Moreover, Constantine legally forbade any Jew to stone or endanger the life of a Christian, on the penalty of death; no Jew was permitted to possess Christian slaves.<sup>2</sup> Sozomen<sup>3</sup> alleges that the Jews inaugurated a furious persecution in the East against the Christians, in which Jews vied with Magians in their deeds of violence. This only served to increase the severity of the law against them. Constantius forbade Jews to marry Christian women,<sup>4</sup> and reinforced Hadrian's interdict against entry of Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> Against this new severity the Jews again rebelled, joining sides with the pagans in the disputes of the Arians and Athanasians at Alexandria

Julian/

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1. Gregory Nazianzen 2nd Invective III.
2. Codex Theod. XVI, VIII.
3. H.E. II.9.
4. Codex Theod. XVII.
5. Sozomen, H.E. III, 17.



Julian, on the other hand, reversed the policy of his predecessors towards the Jews,<sup>1</sup> freeing them from the burdensome taxes levied against them, and promising them a renewal of their ancient system of sacrificial worship.<sup>2</sup> The Jewish monotheism received praise from Julian, likewise Jewish fidelity to their faith.<sup>3</sup> Julian himself even claims to worship the God of Abraham.<sup>4</sup> In his rescript to the community of the Jews, Julian asserts his policy of tolerance to all men, as the prerequisite of peace and security within the Empire. He also requests the Jews that they will "offer more fervid prayers for my reign to the Most High God, the Creator, "who has deigned to crown me with his own immaculate right hand."<sup>5</sup> It is, however, Julian's scheme to rebuild the destroyed Temple of Jerusalem which excited most fervour among the Jews.<sup>6</sup> All are agreed<sup>7</sup> that the proceedings came to an abrupt end due to some supernatural intervention which scared off the workmen.

The motives behind Julian's project have been variously interpreted. Firstly, he has been imputed with the desire to annul/

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1. Sozomen HE. IV, 7.5.
  2. Julian, Fragment of a Letter 295C; Letter 51 (Loeb Classics); 25 (Hertlein); 204 (Bidez-Cumont).
  3. Julian, Letter 20 (Loeb); 63 (Hertlein); Also letter to Arsacius, High Priest of Galatia 22 (Loeb), 49 (Hertlein), 84A (Bidez Cumont), 89A (Bidez-Cumont) - To the High Priest Theodorus 453 C.D. "They revere a God who is truly most powerful and most good".
  4. Julian, Against the Galileans 354B, "for He is very great and powerful".
  5. Julian, Letter 51 (Loeb); 25 (Hertlein); 89A (Bidez-Cumont) - also Sozomen V.22; Socrates III, 20.
  6. Lydus, "De Mensibus", IV, 5,3 quotes Julian as saying ἀνεγείρω... τὸν ναὸν τοῦ ὑψίστου θεοῦ. Amm. Marcellinus states that the work was entrusted to Alypius. That the story became embellished as time went on is clear from a comparison of the various accounts in the Christian historians.
  7. Theodoret H.E. III, 15-20; Gregory Nazianzen HE, IV, III; Sozomen HE V.22; Socrates HE II, 20; Gregory Nazianzen "In Judaeos" IV; even the heathen historian Ammianus admits a supernatural element (Am. Marcell. XXIII 1,2,3); Philostorgius VII, 9; Rufinus, HE. X 38-40.



annul Christ's prophecy<sup>1</sup> concerning the final destruction of the Temple.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, his own love of sacrifices may have urged him to restore the sacrificial system of ancient Israel. Again, his motive may have possessed a political significance, in order to rally to his standard the Jews of Mesopotamia in his campaign against the Persians.<sup>3</sup> The Mesopotamian Jews remained faithful to their Persian masters. And Julian died in the Campaign.

1. Luke 21, 5; Matt. 24, 2; Mark 13, 2.
2. Socrates III, 20; Sozomen V, 22, Theodoret III, 5.
3. Andre Piganiol, "Julien l'Apostat," Ch. IV p. 138;  
 E.H. Milmann, "The History of the Jews", (Everyman's Library Vol. II p. 142, BK XV) Milmann has the interesting theory that the underground caverns and passages were choked with highly inflammable rubbish by the Zealots and the party of Eleazar. This could account for the mysterious explosions.

## THE VIEWPOINT OF THE PAGANS

The purpose of this work is to attempt a classification of the pagan viewpoint concerning the major articles of the creed of contemporary Christians. We shall therefore deal with the pagan reaction to the Christian belief in God, Jesus, the Church, and the Scriptures, taking note also of the reaction to certain doctrines such as Salvation through a Mediator, Justification by Faith, the Resurrection of the Body, etc.

Our evidence for the pagan attack will come from various sources: the Apologists, the Fathers and extracts from the pen of actual pagans. Most of the evidence from the Apologists and the Fathers will be included in foot-notes, but I shall include a small section in the main body of the thesis from the "Adversus Nationes" of Arnobius, mainly because of the interesting detail with which he preserves the pagan point of view. For the rest, a few significant criticisms of the 'faith' of the Christians comes from the physician, Galen; a section also will deal with the position of Plotinus, with particular stress on his opposition to the precise type of religious revelation claimed by the Christians. The large bulk of our material, however, comes from three men, Celsus, Porphyry, and the Emperor Julian.

Before we examine the pagan argument against Christianity, we shall spend some time in clarifying the historical and biographical details of the chief characters, especially of Julian whose apostasy will claim our particular attention.



CELSUS

The first systematic attack, preserved for us in Origen's *Contra Celsum*, came from the pen of a certain Celsus, about whom little other than his name is known. Eusebius<sup>1</sup> states that Origen wrote his reply to Celsus during the reign of Philip the Arabian, when Origen was over sixty years of age, i.e. sometime past 245 A.D. The internal evidence points to a date prior to the Decian persecution<sup>2</sup> and the suggestion of a threatened crisis may well indicate the years 247-8 A.D.<sup>3</sup>

The date of the polemic by Celsus is even more difficult to posit, although what evidence there is points to a date between the years 177-180 A.D. Origen himself does not know when Celsus wrote, merely asserting that he was "dead a long time"<sup>4</sup> Origen followed by Eusebius think Celsus to be an Epicurean, probably because two Epicureans named Celsus were known, the one under Herod, the other under Hadrian and later. Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet* was dedicated to the latter Celsus<sup>5</sup> Keim<sup>6</sup> and others have argued that the Celsus of the *Contra Celsum* was the Epicurean, the friend of Lucian. However, it is obvious to the reader that our Celsus can be assigned to no particular philosophical school, at least certainly not the Epicurean school. If anything, Celsus is a Platonist, but more clearly, he is a compiler, utilising whatever argument will/

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1. Eusebius .E. VI, 36, 2.
  2. Origen I, 3; II, 45; *Contra Celsum* III, 15; VIII, 39, 49, 68.
  3. The ingenious suggestion that Origen's reply was prompted by the millenium celebrations of Rome in 247-8 A.D. unfortunately possesses no internal corroboration.
  4. Origen *Contra Celsum* Praef 4.
  5. Origen *Contra Celsum* I, 66.
  6. Theodore Keim *Celsus' Wahres Wort* (Zurich 1873) pp. 275-293.



will carry weight against Christianity.<sup>1</sup> The internal evidence points to a time of persecution.<sup>2</sup> Other references reveal that Gnosticism was well established, and the mention of Marcellina involves a date later than 154 A.D., when she founded her sect in Rome. Likewise, Celsus shows some dependance on Justin's writings. Perhaps the most significant sentence comes in Book VIII, chapter 71 where the language of Celsus implies more than one ruling Emperor. This would point either to the joint reign of M. Aurelius with Verus (161-9 A.D.) or that of M. Aurelius with Commodus (177-80 A.D.). Further evidence<sup>3</sup> suggests a time of political crisis such as the late seventies when the Persians, Quadi and Marcomanni were harassing the empire. Thus we reach the conclusion that the likeliest period of Celsus's writing is 177-80 A.D.<sup>4</sup>

The place of writing likewise is uncertain. Patrick<sup>5</sup> felt that the imperial tone and the political appeal both pointed to Rome, as well as references to Western heresies. Yet Celsus's interest in Egyptian lore<sup>6</sup> may suggest Alexandria as a likelier place of writing. Chadwick<sup>7</sup> suggests that the confusion of the/

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1. Origen even becomes suspicious of Celsus's brand of Epicureanism *Contra Celsum* I, 8, III, 22, 35, 8, IV, 54, V, 3.
  2. *Contra Celsum* VIII, 69.
  3. *Contra Celsum* VIII, 68, 71, 73, 75.
  4. This is the conclusion of Henry Chadwick. Introduction *Contra Celsum* (Cambridge 1953).
  5. John Patrick *Celsus* Part 1, Ch. 1 p. 9. cf. Keim pp 274 ff.
  6. *Contra Celsum* III, 17 is a commonplace of apologetics.
  7. Chadwick also suggests that Celsus shows a knowledge of the Logos theology of Hellenistic Judaism (*Contra Celsum* II, 31), a further point in favour of Alexandria. Clearly Celsus could have gained a knowledge of Logos theology at Rome, for example from the writings of Justin (Second Apology), which Celsus apparently has read.



the true church with heretical sects was more likely to occur at Alexandria than at Rome, where a clear-cut distinction was made. In all, the evidence points either to Rome or Alexandria in that order.

The purpose behind the attack by Celsus has been variously assessed. Some would see, in the final appeal to Christians to help the Emperor, a purely political motive.<sup>1</sup> Others<sup>2</sup> regard Celsus as a highly religious man of pagan belief to whom Christianity is a weird absurd doctrine to be bitterly attacked.<sup>3</sup> Christianity and culture have nothing in common. One of the most striking things about this pagan attack on Christianity is that it does not represent any one aspect of pagan thought. Rather has Celsus made a compilation of every possible type of argument in order to bring ridicule on the Christian faith. He borrows arguments from current Jewish anti-Christian apologetic to pour scorn on Jesus;<sup>4</sup> he uses the Platonic theology to counter the theology of the church;<sup>5</sup> he uses the arguments of both the Academy and the Stoa to belittle the Christian conception of Providence.<sup>6</sup> We are fortunate in possessing so much of Celsus's attack. This is largely due to the method of reply adopted by Origen beginning at/

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1. e.g. Harnack Expansion II, Ch. V attached great importance to Contra Celsum VIII, 63 ff, holding the view that what concerns Celsus most is the future of the Roman State, for the wellbeing of which the support of traditional religion is essential. Christians are therefore dangerous to the state.
  2. e.g. Pierre de Labriolle. La Reaction Pailenne (Paris) 1942. Part II, Chp. I p. 111 ff.
  3. It becomes more and more evident as we read the pagan attacks that the writers were genuinely mystified by the strange doctrines of Christianity.
  4. Celsus admits knowledge of a Jewish-Christian debate, Papias and Jason, IV. 52.
  5. Contra Celsum IV, 35, 14 etc.
  6. Contra Celsum IV, 74 ff.



at Chapter 28 of the first book. Neumann<sup>1</sup> thinks we possess three-quarters of the original text of Celsus; Glockner<sup>2</sup> also affirms that we have all the essential parts of Celsus's treatise. Certain omissions have been necessary by Origen, for example, of secondary objections to Christianity. He has also had to prune a little.<sup>3</sup> We also detect that on occasion Origen merely summarises the words of Celsus.<sup>4</sup> IN another<sup>5</sup> place Origen refers to words of Celsus, which he had not quoted.

On the whole, we can review Origen's quotations from Celsus with great satisfaction, and our only wish would be that some similar reply to Porphyry's attack had been preserved for us.

1. Neumann, Real - Encycl. fur Protest Theologie III, p.773  
Article Celsus.
2. O. Glockner, Ed. of Logos Alethes in Kleine Texte series  
1924.
3. Contra Celsum II, 79; VI, 26; III, 64; VI, 17, 50, 74;  
VII, 27, 32.
4. Contra Celsum II, 7.34, 40-2; III, 73; IV, 20.
5. Contra Celsum IV, 79, 97.

PLOTINUS

The biographical details of the life of Plotinus are unfortunately scanty.<sup>1</sup> Born in Lycopolis in Egypt c. 205 A.D.<sup>2</sup> Plotinus showed an early interest in philosophy, in quest of which he arrived at Alexandria in the year 233 A.D. Disappointed with the main schools here, Plotinus on the recommendation of a friend, sought out the lecture-room of Ammonius Saccas, whom he immediately recognized as "the man I was seeking". For eleven years the pupil imbibed the wisdom of the Master, and the subsequent philosophy of Plotinus must have owed much to Ammonius Saccas.<sup>3</sup>

In 244 A.D. Ammonius died, and Plotinus went with the expedition under Gordian to Persia and India. The mission proved unsuccessful, but at least it affords us proof of the interest of Plotinus in the Orient. At the age of 40 Plotinus reached Rome via Antioch in the year 245 A.D. at the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Philip. Both at Alexandria and at Rome the strength of the Church could not have escaped the notice of Plotinus; likewise, the favourable policy of Philip could not escape notice. No less could the hostility of Decius have failed to challenge the mind of Plotinus concerning the claims of Christianity.

That/

1. The main source is the Vita Plotini composed by his pupil Porphyry. Eunapius adds a detail or two, Lives of the Sophists and Philosophers.
2. This information concerning the birth place of Plotinus comes from Eunapius.
3. G. S. Mead writes "What Plato was to Socrates, Plotinus was to his master, Ammonius Saccas. Neither Socrates nor Ammonius committed anything to writing. Plato and Plotinus were the great expounders of the tenets of their respective schools, and, as far as we can, far transcend their teachers in brilliancy of genius." Preface, Select Works of Plotinus Bohn's Philosophical Library, London 1914.

see



That Plotinus acquired noteworthy success and popularity as a lecturer is apparent from Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*. His very countenance evidently inspired confidence! It was here in Rome that Plotinus met and converted his successor Porphyry. It was here, too, that he rose to such heights of esteem as to enjoy the friendship of the Emperor Gallienus and his consort Salonina, both of whom he enlisted in his scheme to found the ideal city - state of *Platō* in Campania, to be christened *Platonopolis*. Plotinus died in the year 270 A.D. at his estate in Zethus.

However, it was while lecturing to his students in Rome that Plotinus met two sources of opposition. The first came from a group, which made the charge of plagiarism, claiming that Plotinus's lectures were mere borrowing from the writings of Numenius. Amelius championed Plotinus, publishing an answer, entitled *On the difference between the dogmas of Plotinus and Numenius* - dedicated to Porphyry. Another cause of trouble was a section of his own students, who were attracted to the beliefs of a sect of Christian Gnostics.<sup>1</sup> Porphyry described them as "sectaries who had departed from the ancient philosophy." We possess the refutation of Gnosticism by Plotinus in the Ninth Ennead of the Second Book.

The question has been asked, "Was Plotinus really aiming at 'The Christians?'"<sup>2</sup> It may well have been the case that in warning/

1. *Vita Plotini* XVI.

2. J. Geffcken. *Zwei griechische Apologeten*, Leipzig 1907 p. 294 f. cf. Pierre de Labriolle *La Reaction Païenne* Paris 1947 p. 229. Carl Schmidt (Texte und Untersuchungen) "Plotinus' Stellung zum Gnosticismus und Kirchlichen Christentum" 1901 p. 82 ff - maintains that Plotinus began the literary attack of the Neo-Platonists against Christianity. M. Wundt. (Plotin: Studien zur Geschichte des Neoplatonismus Leipzig 1919) - states that Plotinus III 2.8-9 shares the same concern as Celsus against the withdrawal from public life of Christians.  
Norman H. Baynes/

## Footnotes cont'd.

2. Norman H. Baynes (The Hellenistic Civilisation in the East 1945 published in Byzantine Studies, London 1955) maintains that the hostility against Christianity implicit in Plotinus became explicit in Porphyry. Chester G. Starr (Civilisation and The Caesars, Cornell University Press, 1954) states that Plotinus wrote against the mystery religions, the Gnostics and against Christianity. Joseph Rheal Laurin (Analecta Gregoriana) "Orientations" "maitresses des Apologites Chretiens, Rome 1954 also maintains that Plotinus attacked Christianity, especially in Enneads II, 7.5. and II, 9.45; 9.15, p.15 He "opposes all form of religion depending on "salvation which operates by way "of a mediation between God and man."



warning his pupils against certain doctrines held by the Gnostics, Plotinus was also warning them against all holders of such doctrines. This is made even more likely by the fact that Plotinus takes trouble to make it clear that he is not addressing himself to the Gnostics, but to his own students. Certainly, much of the attack on the Gnostics could be re-directed on to the Christians.<sup>1</sup> Plotinus attacks beliefs common to Gnostics and Christians. This is the important thing, as it matters little to whom Plotinus addressed himself. What matters is that here we have the reaction of no less a figure than Plotinus to certain doctrines of Christianity, and without the inclusion of the reaction of Plotinus, any study of the reaction of pagan thought to Christianity would be incomplete.

1. No other work brings out so plainly the antagonism between Hellenism and Christianity. Jules Lebreton, *The History of the Primitive Church*, Vol. III, p.721.  
See also Norman H. Baynes *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays. The Hellenic Civilisation and the East* (Athlone Press, University of London, 1955).

PORPHYRY

The attack on the Christian faith, which struck most terror into Churchmen was compiled by Porphyry, a Syrian, born in Tyre, in the year 233 A.D. Originally called Meleck, his name seems to have undergone several linguistic changes, the royal note being preserved. Thus Meleck became Malchus, which in turn became Basileus all signifying a "King". Longinus, his Tutor at Athens is alleged to have given him the name "Porphyrus", indicative of the royal purple. Both Jerome<sup>1</sup> and Chrysostom<sup>2</sup> refer to Porphyry as "Bataneotes", and some have sought to find the derivation of this peculiar title in the township of Batanea in Syria. It may be that Porphyry actually published some of his most bitter attacks on the Church under this pseudonym. We are left very much in the realm of speculation over many details of Porphyry's life as only a few fragments remain of his Fifteen Books Against the Christians."<sup>3</sup> A succession of Christian Emperors attempted to destroy this work and the edict of Theodosius in 449 apparently accomplished the final destructions.<sup>4</sup> The sharpness of his refutation reflects a thorough hatred of the Christian faith, and gives no suggestion of the supposition made by the historian Socrates that in his youth Porphyry had himself been a member of the sect he later tried to destroy. Socrates relates a childish quarrel at Caesarea Philippi which resulted in/

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1. Jerome. Comm. ad Galat IV.
  2. Chrysostom. I Cor. Hom VI.
  3. The only other sources for Porphyry's life are his own Vita Plotini and a short sketch of his life by Eunapius; Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists, Suidas-Lexicon (10th, 11th Century). Eusebius, HE. VI 19.
  4. Constantine, Theodosius II, Valentinian III all made attempts.



in the beating up of Porphyry, thus kindling anger in his heart against the Christians. Socrates specifically connects this incident with his written attack, which was written ἐκ μελαγχολίας<sup>1</sup>. What appears more likely is that while at Caesarea he became intimately acquainted with the articles of the Christian faith through the lectures of Origen. Augustine has been cited as lending credence to the presupposition of Socrates that Porphyry was once a Christian. In his City of God X, 28 he exclaims, "Oh if only you had 'known Jesus Christ' non resilluisses' from his gracious 'humanity'. However the phrase "non resilluisses" does not necessarily imply apostasy and abandonment, but more probably simply means "you would not have recoiled". At Athens Porphyry was educated under the grammarian Apollonius and the rhetor Cassius Longinus, "the first and most searching of critics". Porphyry's subsequent contributions to logic and philosophy give ample evidence of the influence of Longinus, as does the remaining extracts from his attack on the Christians.

It was at Rome, however, that Porphyry met the chief inspiration of his life, the neoplatonist Plotinus, who had lived and taught in Rome for some eighteen years before Porphyry arrived there in 263 A.D. Attracted by the religious philosophy of his new master, Porphyry became an ardent disciple of Plotinus and his life thereafter was a preparation for the beautiful vision of God which Plotinus experienced several times, but Porphyry only once, in his 68th year. For six years Porphyry and Plotinus associated with/

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1. Socrates H.E. III 23, 27.

with each other at Rome, during which time Porphyry tells us in his *Vita Plotini*, "many questions were threshed out!" Without doubt some of these questions must have been concerned with Christianity, as we know that Plotinus wrote against a Christian sect, some of whom were disturbing his lectures<sup>1</sup>. The existence of a church of the authority of the Roman church also makes it most unlikely that Christianity was ignored in the many discussions of Plotinus and Porphyry. Indeed we can trace in the writings of Porphyry a distinct change of thought towards the Christians; a new sternness and hostility becomes evident. The comparative clemency of the book *The Philosophy of Oracles* in which some scholars have detected admiration for Jesus has completely disappeared in the fragments of Porphyry's major anti-Christian work, which was written after his acquaintance with Plotinus. It would seem that Plotinus who attacks Christianity only implicitly has left to Porphyry the task of an explicit onslaught upon Christianity.

Porphyry moved to *Lilubaeum* on the advice of Plotinus after attempted suicide. This was in the year 268 A.D. in the fifteenth year of the reign of Gallienus. Porphyry never saw Plotinus again, as Plotinus died in 270, although he edited his lecture notes while in Sicily. Here too his *Fifteen Books* were written. The death of Porphyry has been placed by Suidas in the year 304 A.D. in Diocletian's reign, the place of his death possibly being Rome, to which he returned/

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1. Plotinus. *Enneads* II. 9.



returned, as we learn from his Vita Plotini.<sup>1</sup>

A complete reconstruction of Porphyry's lost work against the Christians is obviously impossible, although various attempts have been made to reconstruct the order and subject of the Fifteen Books.<sup>2</sup> What has been successfully done is the collection of the remaining references and extracts of Porphyry to be found in the writings of various Christian writers. The main references are scattered throughout the writings of Jerome, Eusebius, Severian, Theophylact, Theodoret, Chrysostom and Augustine.<sup>3</sup> The original Christian replies have perished alongside Porphyry's attack. Bishop Methodius of Olympus issued a brief reply, then Eusebius of Caesarea wrote a lengthy refutation of Porphyry consisting of 25 books. Apollinarius of Laodicea wrote a treatise in reply to Julian and 30 books against Porphyry. Philostorgius also replied. All these works are unfortunately lost. In all, 46 fragments have been collected, which are actually stated to be from Porphyry.<sup>4</sup> As early as 1766 Nathaniel Lardner<sup>5</sup> made a thorough collection of/

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1. Vita Plotini Chp. 2.
  2. The few direct references to sources reveal that Porphyry dealt with the Peter-Paul controversy in Book I, which probably dealt generally with the origin of Christianity from Judaism; in Book II an attack was made on Christian allegorising of the Old Testament, particularly by Origen; in Book IV Porphyry prefers the historical account of the Jews written by the Phoenician Sanchuniathon, to the record of Scripture; in Book XII (the most definite reference we possess) Porphyry made an analysis of the Book of Daniel.
  3. Harnack calculates - 9 passages from Eusebius, 2 from Methodius, 40+ from Jerome, 52 from Macarius, 1 each from Diodorus, Epiphanius, Severianus, Nemesis, Anastasius, Sinaita, Arethas and Theophylact. Of course Harnack believes Porphyry to have been the author of the questions refuted by Macarius in the Apocriticus.
  4. So adduces T.W. Crafer, The Work of Porphyry against the Christians, J.T.S. XV 1914, p.360-395; 481-512.
  5. N. Lardner, A Large Collection of Ancient Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, Chp. 37.



of these extracts,<sup>1</sup> but this century his collection has been supplemented by Harnack<sup>2</sup> and Crafer.<sup>3</sup>

To the 46 extracts mentioned Harnack adds the 50 objections to Christianity preserved in the Apocriticus of Macarius Magnes. Crafer denies that these objections represent the actual words of Porphyry, but agrees that they are a valuable contribution to our knowledge of Porphyry's thought, seeing in them borrowings from Porphyry's attacks by some other opponent of Christianity, in his opinion Hierocles, the hostile provincial governor of Bithynia during the persecution of Diocletian and Maximian Taza. Harnack bases his arguments on the following points of similarity between the objections of Porphyry and those answered in the Apocriticus.

- a) The philosophy of Macarius's opponent is Neoplatonism.
- b) An abhorrence of physical violence.
- c) The belief in the eternal existence of heaven and earth.
- d) A preference for Judaism and the Old Testament especially when compared with Christian lawlessness.
- e) Indications that the period of writing are the same.<sup>4</sup>
- f) The author was a Greek, yet possessed knowledge of the Roman Church.<sup>5</sup>
- g) Usage of the Western Text and Canon of the New Testament in both.

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- 1. Extracts were collected last century by J. von Wagenmann in *Jahrbuchen für deutsche Theologie* XXIII (Gotha 1878) pp. 299-314; and Anton Ignaz Kieffner, *Porphyrius der Neoplatoniker und Christenfeind* (Paderborn 1896).
  - 2. A. von Harnack 1) *Porphyrius Gegen Die Christen*, 1916.  
2) *Neue Fragmente Apokrypher Schriften* 1921
  - 3. See footnote 4 previous page. Also *The Apocriticus of Macarius Magnes, S.P.C.K.* 1919. by T.W. Crafer.
  - 4. *Apocriticus* II, 15; IV, 21; IV, 26.
  - 5. Yet Macarius, *Apocriticus* IV, 15 points to Christian communities further east, which suits Hierocles better than Porphyry.



- h) Both attacked the inconsistencies of the Gospels.
- i) The powers of learning, criticism, and penetration displayed by the opponent of Macarius are reminiscent of Porphyry.
- j) Neither author openly attacks the Founder of the Christian faith, but both are content to focus their criticism on the apostles. This suggests that the authors of both attacks had once been a disciple of Jesus and had apostasised.
- k) In addition Harnack gives certain concrete examples from the Apocriticus eg. III, 1. Christ is contrasted with Apollonius of Tyana. Also III, 6 the objection to calling the "lake" a "sea" is also found in Porphyry.<sup>1</sup>

Crafer is convinced that Harnack's arguments could equally well apply to someone who borrowed from the established arguments of Porphyry. "In the Apocriticus we possess the word, not of Porphyry, but of Hierocles who copied his arguments, but not his language."<sup>2</sup> Duchesne had already suggested Hierocles as the opponent of Magnes.<sup>3</sup> The structure of the Apocriticus lends confirmation to Crafer's position, as there is a division at III, 21, thus suggesting originally two books in the attack. As the only known attack in this form was made by Hierocles, we must look for further similarities. Crafer sees a possible similarity in the titles φιλαληθής πρὸς χριστιανούς and Μονογενής πρὸς Ἕλληνας. Another proof which Crafer brings forward is a common use of uncommon/

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- 1. These similarities (and others) noted by Harnack are important in that they prove not the identity of the authors, but the dependence of Macarius's opponent on Porphyry's major work.
  - 2. T.W. Crafer, J.T.S. XV 1914 p. 360 ff.
  - 3. L. Duchesne, De Macario Magne et scriptis eius.

uncommon words<sup>1</sup> in both the Apocriticus and the small extract made by Lactantius from Hierocles. Two further proofs which favour Hierocles as the author of the objection in the 'Apocriticus' are (1) Hierocles was known for his sharp criticism of the "inconsistencies of the scriptures." Lactantius describes his attack in the following terms. "Ita falsitatem scripturae sacrae arguere conatus est, tanquam sibi esset tota contraria, nam quaedam capita, quae repugnare sibi videbantur, exposuit." (2) Hierocles also made much of Apollonius of Tiana as a rival of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Eusebius felt constrained to make a special reply to this charge in his Contra Hieroclem. One further fact of note is that Macarius refers his opponent to a writing by Porphyry<sup>3</sup> which would have special effect if his opponent were a follower of Porphyry.<sup>4</sup>

1. From the extract from Hierocles in Lactantius, Divine Institutes V. 2, 3. Crafer singles out eleven rare words, seven of which appear in the extracts from Macarius. The eleven words are θρυλῶ, σεμνότης, ἐνάρετος, ἀκμάξω, τερατεία, κομιδῇ, κομπάξω, ψεύστης, ἀπαίδευτος, γόης, κουφότης.
2. Lactantius Divine Institutes V.2.
3. Macarius points his opponent to Porphyry's book De Abstinence Apocriticus III.
4. Since the author of the pagan attacks in the Apocriticus is clearly a follower of Porphyry, his attacks are in this thesis included in the thought of Porphyry.



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## JULIAN

Julian is the final representative of paganism to attempt to overthrow the Christian faith even although that faith is already triumphant. He is also the only emperor who wrote against Christianity. The main mystery surrounding Julian involves the questions as to why he should espouse such bitterness against Christianity. We shall attempt in this historical sketch to reach some solution to this problem.

The short life of Julian falls into three main sections.

- (1) 331-355 A.D. - the years of his childhood and youth.
- (2) 355-360 A.D. - the years of his Caesarship.<sup>1</sup>
- (3) 360-363 A.D. - the years of sole supremacy in the Empire.

The early period of Julian's life also falls into certain sections. The first section dates from 331 to around 341 A.D. These years were spent in the new capital of the Empire, Constantinople, presumably at the Imperial Court, with perhaps some time at Nicomedia,<sup>2</sup> Bithynia. Julian's full name was Flavius Claudius Julianus. From his father Julius Constans, Julian may have inherited his military skill, but it was from his mother Basilinia that Julian inherited his love of learning and his spirit of piety. Likewise his maternal grandfather, Julian the Governor of Egypt possessed a great devotion to literature and philosophy combined with outstanding military/

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1. Ammianus Marcellinus XV 8. 7 ff.

2. Ammianus Marcellinus XXII 9. 4.



military and administrative talents. However his mother died when Julian was still an infant<sup>1</sup> and here we can discern immediately one of the factors which ultimately combined to produce the unbalanced personality which Julian later displayed. From the earliest years he showed an exceptional love of learning, preferring serious study to the more frivolous pursuits of youth.<sup>2</sup> The first ~~few~~<sup>few</sup> years of his life appear to have been the only truly happy ones, as he wistfully looks back upon them in later years in the midst of <sup>the</sup> strain and stress of imperial public life. His mother's family had possessed a small estate in Bithynia where he spent many pleasant holidays. In one of his letters<sup>3</sup> he described the natural beauty of this estate. "It is situated not more than 20 stadia from the sea, so that no talkative trader or quarrelsome sailor comes there to bother you, yet the gifts of Nereus are not wanting. There are freshly caught fish to be had, and from a mound near the house you can see the Propontid Sea, the Islands, and the city which bears the name of the great Emperor. And you can look out on all this, not standing on slimy seaweed, offended by the sight and smell of the refuse thrown out on the sandy beach, but you will find sand and thyme and sweet-smelling meadow grass beneath your feet. It is very restful to recline with a book, and to refresh the eyes from time to time with the pleasant view of the sea and the ships. When still a boy I delighted in the place, with its good springs and pleasant bath, orchard and shrubbery, and after I had become a man, I still felt drawn to the old way of life there, and I often visited the place again."

In the year 337 catastrophe overtook Julian's family in that, quickly following the death of Constantine the great, Constantius/

1. Sources for Julian's youth are his "To the Athenians", The Funeral Oration of Libanius, Ammianus Marcellinus XII, Socrates H.E. III, 1 Re. mother's death, Julian Misopogon 352.
2. Libanius Funeral Oration.
3. Fragment 5 (Hertlein).



Constantius,<sup>1</sup> the contender for the Throne sanctioned the annihilation by the army of the remaining members of the family, including Julian's father and uncles. Julian and his brother Gallus were saved this destruction because of the tenderness of Julian's age and because Gallus was sick of a fever at the time.<sup>2</sup> Anyhow the two boys were excluded from the massacre, and they remained in Constantinople for a few more years during which their education proceeded. Gallus was not given to much study, but Julian excelled under the tutorship of Eusebius and Mardonius. In this primitive act of cruelty by the House of Constantine, we find the fundamental reason why Julian turned against Christianity, since his bitterness against Constantius made him also bitter against the faith of Constantius.<sup>3</sup> Mardonius his tutor who was steeped in classical learning, seems to have made a great impression on the child Julian. In his Misopogon, the attack on the people of Antioch, he later pointed back to Mardonius and gives him the credit of being the first to introduce him to the Hellenic culture. "I was handed over to him in my seventh year. From this time he won me over to these views of his, and led me to school by one straight path - it is he who caused me to be hated by all of you." Libanius the friend of Julian also has a word/

1. Constantius is generally blamed. Athanasius Hist. Ar. ad Monach Ch. 69. Zosimus II, 40. Julian To the Athenians 270. cf. Socrates III, 1. Eutropius X, 9. imply a lesser guilt, whereas Gregory Nazianzen Or. IV, XXI, suggests that Constantius was Julian's rescuer. Others state that Bishop Marcus saved Julian's life.
2. Socrates III, 1. Sozomen II, 19.
3. Ammianus Marcellinus XXI, 2 and especially 5, ff.  
(A rudimentis pueritiae primis inclinatio erat erga numinum cultum). cf. F.R.M. Hitchcock, The Quarterly Review, 509, July 1931, pp. 315-336. P. 316 maintains that Julian could not have made the cruelty of Constantius his excuse for apostasy, since he was shown more kindness than cruelty by Christians, e.g. Basilina, Mardonius, Eusebius, Helena, Bishop Marcus.



word of praise for Mardonius when he writes concerning the early years of Julian. "He spent those years of his life in "the pursuit of learning in the greatest of cities after Rome, "going regularly to school not strutting arrogantly, nor "annoying people, nor claiming public attention by the "multitude of his attendants and the bustle they produce; "but an eunuch Mardonius, an excellent guardian of his "modesty, and another tutor not without some tincture of "learning, accompanied him." <sup>1</sup> Libanius further comments that although there was no difference between Julian and the other boys in dress and in bearing there was a vast difference in learning. It was this same Mardonius who had been the tutor of Basilin<sup>us</sup> in the writings of Homer and Hesiod, and doubtless he enthused the mind of Julian in the great glories of the past.

341-350. Eusebius the other tutor died in the year 341 and this may have been the determining factor in the despatch of the two orphans to a remote villa, the Fundus Macelli, in Cappadocia. <sup>2</sup> Here Julian felt himself to be a prisoner cut off from all his friends, not even permitted to have visitors. <sup>3</sup> This picture however, appears to be coloured by bitterness, as the evidence from the historians points to a comfortable confinement with good food and every opportunity to learning. <sup>4</sup> Here in Macellum, Julian read the great classics including/

1. Libanius. Funeral Oration, cf. Julian Misopogon 351, 352. Letter to Gallust (3 Loeb).
2. Julian To the Athenians 271. G.H. Rendall places dates of Julian's stay at Macellum from 344 A.D. - 350 A.D. The Emperor Julian p. 286. Procrates III, 1. Sozomen V. 11. Gregory Nazianzen Or. IV, 350C.
3. To the Athenians 271B.
4. e.g. Gregory Nazianzen 1st Invective 71. "honoured with a princely maintenance and education in one of the royal castles, being treasured up for imperial power by this most humane emperor."



including some of the many books possessed by Bishop George of Ancyra who was later murdered by the inhabitants of Alexandria. It was here too that Julian displayed an intense interest in Christianity, becoming baptised and finally becoming a reader of the Church,<sup>1</sup> but it was also here that his most impressionable years were spent and that the true spirit of paganism invaded his mind. For example his later worship of the Sun seems to have sprung from the days and nights spent under the open sky at Macellum. In Oration IV<sup>2</sup> he traces his love of the heavenly bodies to this period.

"From my childhood an extraordinary longing for the rays of the god penetrated deep into my soul; and from my earliest years my mind was so completely swayed by the light that illumined the heavens that not only did I desire to gaze intently at the sun, but whenever I walked abroad in the night season when the firmament was clear and cloudless, I abandoned all else without exception and gave myself up to the beauties of the heavens; nor did I understand what anyone might say to me nor heed what I was doing myself. People went so far as to regard me as an astrologer when my beard had only just begun to grow. Never had a book on this subject come into my hands. However let that darkness be hidden in oblivion."<sup>3</sup> The last phrase in this paragraph would suggest that even at this stage in his <sup>youth</sup> when he himself was professedly a Christian he resented Christian teaching.

350-355. In the year 347 Constantius paid a visit to his palace at Ancyra and subsequently issued orders for Julian to return to Constantinople and for Gallus to report to Ephesus where in 351 A.D. he was appointed Caesar of Gaul. It is in this last/

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1. Theod. III 2 Fear of Constantius cf. Julian Ep. 42, 433C. cf. Ammianus XXII V 1 "From the first rudiments of boyhood, his bias was towards paganism."
  2. Julian Oration IV 130, C.D. Hymn to King Helios.
  3. Julian refers to the exclusiveness of his Christian teachers, who forbade to enlighten him in matters of pagan education.



last period of the early years that Julian completed his education. At Constantinople he contacted the pagan teacher Nicodes of Sparta, and the Christian rhetorician Ecebolius.<sup>1</sup> From Constantinople Julian was sent to Nicomedia<sup>2</sup> and in the same year he inherited his estate becoming tolerably rich. With the money and also through the interest of the Empress Eusebia<sup>3</sup> he was enabled to travel at will round the various centres of learning, thereby contacting the most notable teachers of his day. At Pergamum he was introduced to Aedesius the head of the Neo-Platonic school who by this time was a very old man, and also to his pupil Chrysanthius. It was here too that he was directed towards Ephesus where he met the Sophist Maximus.<sup>4</sup> Having heard most extravagant tales from Aedesius and Chrysanthius concerning the magical powers of Maximus, Julian fell an easy prey to the great theurgist when he met him at Ephesus. Most of the historians detect in this meeting the final turning point in the religion of Julian.<sup>5</sup>

1. Socrates III, 1. Sozomen VII.
2. Libanius Or. XVIII (Funeral).
3. Julian Oration III 1/2, 118C.
4. The sources of this period include, Libanius, Or. XII, 29-34, Gregory Nazianzen Or. IV, 31. Socrates III, 1. Sozomen V, 2 etc. Re Maximus Julian Epp, 15, 16, 37. Letter 63 (Loeb) re Ecebolius.
5. The precise date of Julian's apostasy has always caused historians difficulty, but it is generally agreed that Julian's conversion to paganism took place in the period of 350-351 A.D. at the age of twenty. He states in Letter 47 (Loeb) To the Alexandrians that for twelve years he has not been a Christian. This letter was written in 362 A.D. Libanius suggest that Julian was still a Christian at Constantinople, at the age of sixteen. (Funeral Oration 12). A. Puech (Journal des Savants fev. 1931 p. 49-58) claims that Julian believed from the age of fifteen (From Constantine to Julian Lutterwork Press 1950) prefers to see Julian's conversion as the result of his private reading of Libanius's lectures in Nicomedia, rather than the influence of Maximus. However most modern church historians believe that Maximus was instrumental in Julian's final turning away from Christianity, e.g. G. Bardy (Fliche et Martin Histoire de l'Eglise Vol. III Ch. IV), E. Koch (Revue Belge de Philologie/



In the year 355 one of Julian's dreams was fulfilled, when he visited Athens and became acquainted with the famous Academy about which he had only read in the past. There he met Priscus the Head of the Academy, Gregory Nazianzen and Basil the Great, both of whom were destined to become leaders of the Christian church. Gregory has left a very interesting description<sup>1</sup> of the appearance of Julian when they were fellow students at the University of Athens. It is a malicious caricature with some foundation of fact. He speaks of his eager nervous gait, his inability to stand still, the constant twitching of his shoulders and rolling of his eyeballs. His spasmodic outbursts of excited speech, his unexpected bursts of shrill laughter. Ammianus who knew him intimately for the remainder of his life also describes Julian's appearance.<sup>2</sup>

"He was of middle height with soft fine hair, a bushy pointed beard, beautifully bright and flashing eyes which bespoke the subtlety of his mind; fine eyebrows, a very straight nose, a rather large mouth with full lower lip, a thick arched neck, large broad shoulders, a frame compact from head to finger tips whence his great physical strength and agility." It was while at Athens that Julian was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, through the influence of Maximus. On his return from Athens/

5. Cont'd from preceeding page.

Philologie et d'Histoire VI 1927; pp. 123-146),

Pièrre de Labriolle (La Reaction Païenne

A. Piganiol. (L'Empire Chrétien Paris 1947 CW. V) etc.

Certainly Julian's second Panegyric to Constantius written in 357 A.D. is pagan throughout. E.J. Martin

Suggests that Sallustius was instrumental in the change of Julian's ideas in Gaul 356 A.D.

1. Gregory Nazianzen Second Invective 23.
2. Libanius.



Athens he continued his literary travels.

What lies beyond any doubt is the fact that Julian preferred pagan learning to Christian doctrine. Libanius eulogises the studious aspect of Julian's nature not only in the active years of his education, but in later years even on the field of battle.<sup>1</sup> Concerning the years completely devoted to study, Libanius writes "He employed the light of day for his studies and when night overtook him, the light of the fire; he did not make his wealth any greater, though he had every opportunity for so doing, but he made his mind more accomplished. And at last having got into company with those who were full of Plato and hearing from them about the gods and the Genii, and those that had really created and still maintained the universe, and what the soul is and whence it came and whither it goes, and by what things it is submerged and by what it is captured, and by what it is weighed down and by what its liberation, and in what way he might succeed in escaping from the one and attaining to the other - he washed away the brackish tale with a drinkable story and having cast out of his mind the whole of the nonsense that previously occupied it he filled its place with the beauty of the truth, as though replacing in some grand temple the statue of the gods previously prostrate in the mud."

During this period of Julian's conversion to paganism, Gallus through his gross misrule was accelerating his Caesarship to a tragic end.<sup>2</sup> Ammianus who along with Ursicinus, Governor of Nisibis, went to investigate matters describes the situation. "He became offensive to all good men and harassed all the parts of the East. Finally he ordered the deaths of the leaders of the Senate of Antioch in a single writ."<sup>3</sup> The various spies at the Imperial Court were quick to conspire against Gallus, and the names of Arbeto, Eusebius, Oynamius, Picentius and Zampadius all became connected with the plot. Finally Scudilo described/

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1. Libanius.
  2. Re Gallus. Ammianus Book XIV; Zosimus Book II.
  3. Ammianus Marcellinus XIV 7.2.



described by Ammianus as "a skilled artist in persuasion" succeeded in talking Gallus into visiting the Court of Constantius. The displeasure of Constantius was further aggravated by the pompous entry of Gallus into Constantinople, and the climax of the meeting was inevitable. Gallus was demoted from the rank of Caesar to the status of a private soldier<sup>1</sup> and afterwards imprisoned at Histria near Pola where "bound like a guilty robber" he was beheaded. The effect of this tragedy on Julian, coming as it did, at the time when he was wavering between two opinions - cannot be over-emphasised. All his suppressed hatred of Constantius raged anew within him, making him despise the Emperor and all that he stood for. Constantius was a murdered nine times over. Surely Gallus "deserved to live, even if he seemed unfit to govern!"<sup>2</sup>

The second period of Julian's career covers his term as Caesar of Gaul from the year 355 to 360 A.D.<sup>3</sup> His recently augmented hatred of Constantius must have caused him to be naturally suspicious of any imperial honour bestowed on him, and this suspicion received ample fuel when the Emperor commanded him to quell the warlike German troops harassing the frontiers of the province of Gaul. For one thing, Julian was completely untrained in the art and exercise of war, and this factor alone was sufficient to satisfy Constantius that the life of the scholar-prince would be as quickly terminated as that of his brother/

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1. Ammianus XIV 11, 20.

2. Letter to the Athenians 270 D 272 cf. Zosimus end of Book II.

3. Ammianus XV 8 7f. Deeds in Gaul XVI 7.1 XVI II, 1 f in Germany.

brother Gallus.<sup>1</sup> Another precaution, however, was taken by Constantius, in order to effect the end of Julian's career, namely that of equipping him with an army which numbered 360 men, who, in the words of Julian himself, "knew only how to pray".<sup>2</sup> From this description by Julian of his soldiers we have valid grounds for concluding that the future Emperor associated the dastardly actions of Constantius with the Christianity professed by him. Instead of the expected defeat and disaster there came conquest and consolidation. The Western provinces were cleared of Barbarians and a strong native army was enrolled and trained. Several brilliant victories were accomplished, the rumour of which must have rankled sorely in the mind of Constantius. Foremost among these victories was Cologne, and the defeat and capture of Arminius at Strasburg (Argentoratum)<sup>3</sup> - a victory which completely subdued and terrified the neighbouring German tribes. After this victory Julian found it necessary to calm his excited troops, who desired to acclaim him Augustus without/

1. Ammianus XVI 11, 13 speaks of a "current rumour" that Julian was sent to Gaul "not to relieve the distress in Gaul" but "to meet his death in the cruellest of wars."
2. Fragment 5  
Letter to the Athenians 277D cf. Sozomen V II Sozomen denies that Constantius opposed to Julian at this stage.
3. Ammianus XVI 3, 1, 2. Ammianus XLV. 12 1 f.  
To the Athenians 278B Socrates III 1 etc.  
Eutropius X 14.



without any more delay. In all Julian launched four campaigns at the end of which peace and prosperity reigned in Gaul. Constantius had to seek another way of ridding himself of this increasingly dangerous contender for the throne.

The opportunity arose by necessity rather than by choice. Constantius on a state visit to Rome received the calamitous tidings that the Sarmatians, Quadi and the Suedi were plundering the territory around the Danube. He hastened back and during the latter months of 357 and the Spring of 358 A.D. he encountered and made terms with the raiding forces, but although the Sarmatians were reduced, final peace was not yet achieved. At the same time negotiations between Constantius and King Sapor of Persia failed to reach peace in that direction and a serious clash of arms seemed imminent. The Imperial Army was weakened by the desertion of Antonius with secrets of state to the Persian side, added to which the power of <sup>A</sup>most skilful military leader Ursicinus had been diminished, as Constantius on the advice of his informers had given him a subordinate position under the over-cautious and elderly Sabinianus. In the seige of Amida,<sup>1</sup> particularly, the reticence of Sabinianus thwarted the attempts of Ursicinus to relieve the city, for which failure Ursicinus was unjustly degraded in rank. Constantius faced an emergency. More troops must be obtained along with better leadership. As the most highly trained troops were in Gaul - only one course was open to Constantius, which at the same time fitted in with his personal desire to destroy the prestige of Julian, if not Julian/

1. Ammianus Marcellinus Books XVIII, XIX.



Julian himself.

A summons was sent to Julian demanding the "flower of the barbarian troops" to strengthen Constantius's army against the Persians!<sup>1</sup> Four companies of the Heruli, Batavi, Petulantes and Celts were requested, plus selected men from the other companies - to be immediately sent under the command of Lupicinus. This summons was not enthusiastically received either by Julian or the soldiery. Both Julian and the soldiers were afraid lest on the withdrawal of the main force, the Allemani would again raid their territory.<sup>2</sup> Moreover the prospect of crossing the Alps into Asia and waging war with a distant foe did not inspire the Gallic troops with any enthusiasm, as their allegiance was to Julian and Gaul rather than to Constantius and the Roman Empire. Some of the troops had enlisted on the very understanding that they would remain on home territory. Nevertheless, Julian in the first instance felt it his duty to consent to the Emperor's proposal, and sought to lessen the fears of his troops with a scheme whereby their wives and families should accompany them. This may have been Julian's reaction to notices drawn up and posted among the quarters of the Petulantes, complaining that they were being banished "to the ends of the earth" leaving their families in dire danger.<sup>3</sup> Florentius and Lupicinus did not immediately answer Julian's recall to Paris for consultation.

The/

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1. Main sources for the events leading to Julian's accession to the throne are his Letter to the Athenians, Ammianus Marcellinus XX, Libanius, Funeral Oration (XVIII), Zosimus III, 9, Socrates III, 1 f. etc.  
cf. Gregory Nazianzen (First Invective, 45 ff) is very bitter at Julian's scheming for power.
  2. Letter to the Athenians 283, 284.
  3. Zosimus III, 9.



The situation took a new turn at a Farewell Dinner held in Paris<sup>1</sup>, at which spirits ran high among the troops, making some revolutionary move imperative. Julian retired early to his quarters for meditation, but his peace was soon broken by unrestrained cries acclaiming him as Augustus. In his letter to the Athenians Julian describes his mental conflict in which his strongest inclination was to resign all sovereign power, and to retire to a life of philosophical seclusion. Battling against this desire was his alert sense of duty to his men and to the Empire. To discover the will of the gods he barred his closet door, and consulted the oracles, and here as Julian received divine confirmation of his duty to the Empire, he likewise received human confirmation. The soldiers broke down the door, and without more ado crowned him sovereign in approved military fashion. Now beyond any doubt Julian regarded himself as Augustus, and all thought of evading his calling finally vanished. Negotiations with Constantius followed in which Julian suggested peaceful co-existence, a suggestion absolutely rejected by Constantius, who demanded that Julian resume his former status. This being out of the question, civil war seemed imminent, but before it could be effected the opportune death of Constantius saved the Empire from bloody conflict. Then in 361 A.D. Julian entered Constantinople as Supreme Ruler of the Roman Empire.

361-363 A.D. The final years of Julian's life are the years of his greatest influence. His short reign was characterised by great and varied activity in home affairs in which he/

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1. Ammianus Marcellinus XX, IV 1 ff. Sozimus III, 9  
To the Athenians 285 B.C.



he attained to a considerable measure of success. Had Julian's foreign policy been more astute, his reign would not have ended so abruptly.

The very first task set himself by Julian, after he had shed the appropriate amount of tears over the death of his predecessor,<sup>1</sup> was to set the key-note for the remainder of his undertakings. His was from the start a policy of reform.<sup>2</sup> Julian's first energies were directed towards the reform of the Imperial Court, where his immediate predecessors had dwelt amid all the pomp and glory of an Eastern potentate. Julian's philosophical asceticism together with his high conception of a pure and holy monarchy and the longing to restore to the Empire its former standing rendered the luxuries of the court abominable in his sight. Moreover, the retinue of Constantius had consisted of men of evil and deceitful character who were little more than spies and power-seekers. Both of these aspects of court-life were vigorously and radically attacked by the New Emperor.<sup>3</sup> The overcrowded quarters of Imperial servants were cleared out, making way for the merely necessary number of attendants. Libanius, who at no time disguised his hatred of Constantius, describes the palace staff as "a useless multitude, a thousand cooks, a thousand hairdressers" - "a greedy lazy swarm." These/

1. Libanius - Funeral Oration. Julian "burst into tears lamenting 'where is the corpse?' Has he received the honours due?" Philost. IV 6, Gregory Nazianzen V, 16, 17.
2. Libanius has an interesting account of the Reform at court. Also in Ammianus XXII, 4; Zonaras XIII, 12, 2, Socrates III, 1, Mamertinus II. For a modern treatment of the subject see M.J. Bidez Vie de l'Empereur Julien, Paris 1930. Part III, Ch. III, La Reforme de la Cour, p. 213 ff.
3. By clearing away the retinue of Constantius, Julian made way for his own friends and advisors, including Sallust, Nymphidianus (the brother of Maximus), Oribasius, Eutherius, Mamertinus, Anatolus. He also exemplified his alleged tolerance by inviting Christians to the Court, such as Bishop Aetius, Procrasius and Basil (Make haste then, and use the state post!) cf. Sozomen V, V. Niceph X, 5 etc.



These Julian expelled on the spot, plus the intricate civil service machinery recruited by countless secretaries, who cheated the poor, and enriched themselves at the expense of peoples and cities alike. Libanius mentions some of their rascally intrigues which included perjury and forgery. More serious action had to be taken regarding the higher officials of the court of Constantius - the "byes of the Emperor" as they were called.<sup>1</sup> A special State Criminals Court was set up at Chalcedon<sup>2</sup>, where a chosen jury heard and tried the leading men of Constantius's regime. This series of trials caused much satisfaction on the one hand, and much concern on the other. The death penalty passed on men like Eusebius, the Chief Chamberlain,<sup>3</sup> and Paul the Chain appears to have been a source of satisfaction to all, even to the Christians, whereas the harsh sentences passed on certain others aroused much indignation in the minds of all honest men. For example, the banishment of Taurus in the year of his consulship was largely displeasing (especially to the citizens of Rome), and the death sentence on Ursulus provoked a violent popular reaction, so much so that Julian had to make a public statement clearing himself from any guilt in the matter. Ammianus who tends to idolise Julian normally, does not spare his hero in his criticisms of Julian's treatment of Ursulus, calling it a "bloodthirsty ingratitude".<sup>4</sup> Certainly Julian had every reason to be grateful to Ursulus, as when Constantius had refused him supplies for the forces in Gaul, Ursulus had come to his aid.

Julian/

1. Julian, Ep. 12 (Hertlein), 26 (Loeb), 32 (Bidez-Cumont)
2. Manertinus, Novitta, Arbitio, Agilo were included in the court under Sallustius.
3. To the Athenians 272D, Socrates III, 1.49 - Murderer of Gallus, Sozomen V, V, 3. Philost. IV, 1, Zonar XV, II, 12 etc
4. Ammianus XVI, 3.



Julian declared the sentences to have been passed without his knowledge or else he would have disallowed it. The blame instead fell on the influence of the army on the decision of the jury, since Ursulus was hated in military circles over the loss of Amida.<sup>1</sup> Julian may well be exempted from blame in the charges of the jury, but he appears guilty in the first place for including Arbitio, who with Eusebius had been an arch-intriguer in the court of Constantius. Even if Arbitio were chosen to keep a fair balance, the motive was defeated by the fact that Arbitio became the dominating influence on the jury, the praefect Sallustius proving a weak chairman owing to his advanced age. Anyhow, why was not Arbitio himself put on trial?<sup>2</sup>

Having purged the court and dealt with his chief enemies Julian addressed himself to other matters which required reform. One of his first acts as Emperor was to issue an Edict of Toleration<sup>3</sup> which decreed the return of all exiles for religious reasons, and the rebuilding of pagan temples destroyed by Christians.<sup>4</sup> The situation was parallel to that/

1. 'militaris ira' Ammianus XVII 3, 8, XX 11, 5 cf. Julian Letter to Hermogenes.
2. Gibbon remarks that Sallustius was "unimpeachable", Mamertinus "self-satisfied", the remaining four "How violent".
3. Rufinus X, 27, Ammianus Marcellinus XXII, 5, 2, Socrates III, 1, Sozomen V, 5, Theod, III, 4, Philost, VI, 7, VII, 4.  
See Julian Ep. 12 (Hertlein) 26 (Loeb), 32 (Bidez-Cumont) in which he stresses his policy of toleration to Basil "come as friend to friend".
4. Socrates III, 11, 12                      Sozomen V, IV, V, Christians must rebuild Temples or else be imprisoned                      "If Julian shed less blood than others.....he was severer in other respects. C.N. Cochran. Christianity and Classical Culture. Oxford, 1940, p. 263. "In his passion for reform and regimentation, not to speak of his strong interest in theological and speculative issues, Julian curiously resembled his uncle. Both imperial Missionaries.



that of the beginning of the reign of Constantine.<sup>1</sup> Constantine was a new convert to Christianity - Julian is a recently avowed pagan; Constantine on the assumption of his supreme power published the Milan Edict claiming toleration but favouring Christianity; Julian begins his reign with a similar Edict tolerating all religions yet favouring paganism. Julian had already made a public declaration of his allegiance to paganism. It is difficult to put an exact date to the Apostasy of Julian.<sup>2</sup> That the process of de-Christianisation began in his childhood and youth is beyond dispute, although his public rejection came only in 360 A.D. - 361 A.D. As late as 361 Julian celebrated the Epiphany at Vienna<sup>3</sup> - but by this time any sincere worship of the Christ seems quite unlikely. The possible suggestion has been put forward that Julian celebrated the Epiphany with Sol Invictus in mind. Or is it not also a possibility that Julian entered a Christian Church as an example of the religious tolerance which was his declared policy that same year. His chief loyalty was to the gods of Rome and Greece, whose protection he had invoked before setting out from Paris to meet Constantius. In the section on "The Church" we shall consider in more detail Julian's policy against the Christians. Suffice it to comment at this stage that Julian did not actively persecute the Christian church. He shed no martyr's blood.

Another/

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1. Indeed it might be almost said that the policy of Julian was modelled upon that of his predecessor whose actions he endeavoured in a spirit of lavish imitation to reverse.



Another aspect of Julian's economic policy was his bold attack on the taxation problem.<sup>1</sup> His general plan was to tighten the taxation system so that none would evade their duty. The curiales and decuriones were obliged to pay punctually all taxes due - none could escape. The exemptions hitherto granted to the Christian clergy were withdrawn, but certain deserving classes, such as doctors and philosophers were to receive exemption.<sup>2</sup> One cause of heavy taxation to the provinces was the maintenance of the Cursus Publicus, for which oxen, mules, asses, camels, horses and stages all were kept up by the provincial authorities.<sup>3</sup> This system of communication had been abused by the number of free passes granted to officials and their friends, and especially to the clergy,<sup>4</sup> who were given free travel to their convocations and synods. Julian immediately cut down expenses by simplifying the system, permitting horses only to be used, and granted the use of free passes only to a select group of higher officials and then only with his own signature.<sup>5</sup> Many were annoyed at this lowering of the Imperial dignity,<sup>6</sup> and others were critical of the fact that Julian himself issued many free passes to his philosopher friends to convey them to and from the court.

In his taxation policy we see that Julian was mainly just in his/

1. Ammianus XXI, 16, Socrates III, 1 etc.
2. Theod. XI, XII, 2, XIII, III, 4.
3. Theod. Codex VIII, V, 15.
4. Ammianus Marcellinus XXI, XVI, 18.
5. Theod. Codex VIII, V, 12, 13, 14, Socrates III, 1.
6. Ammianus openly criticises Julian here.



his enactments. He made concessions to those in need. For example he excused the province of Africa from their arrears (excepting precious metals); also he sought to alleviate the burden of the Jews.<sup>1</sup> Likewise his immunities,<sup>2</sup> while excluding the clergy, extended beyond the range of physicians to government secretaries, clerks; also as a reward for long services, and as a reward to fathers with thirteen children or more!! For the rest, he insisted on prompt payment of all taxes due. This constituted a real reform, which must have benefitted the Empire had Julian's reign been of longer duration. The Christian clergy certainly must have felt the weight of this new burden laid upon them, although many appear to have been able to produce the money.

Certain other incidents in Julian's short reign do not reveal him in so admirable a light.

This raises the problem as to whether Julian actively persecuted the Christians or not. He himself declares to the very end that he showed nothing but kindness towards them<sup>3</sup> as he had promised in his edict of toleration. Socrates<sup>4</sup> the historian however, detects a change of attitude in Julian towards the Christians, "as time went on he began to display partialities." The three ways in which the Christian suffered most were

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1. Letter to the Community of the Jews.
  2. Loeb X, 7 Letter 31 May 362 'immunity', Codex Theod. XII, 7, 50, XIII, I, 4. Julian Ep. II cf. Sozomen V, V, 2. Philost. XVII, 4, Niceph X, 5. Allowances of corn to pagans. Sozomen V III, 2 cf. Ep. 49, 430 C; Letter to Arcadius, High Priest of Galatia.
  3. Ep. 52 (Hertlein) 438 B, 436 A Libanius Funeral Oration Ep. 37 (Loeb) Ep. 7 (Hertlein) to Artasius "By the gods I want no Galileans to be killed."
  4. Socrates III, 11, 12, Sozomen, V, 11, Theod. III, 15. Orosius, VII, 30 etc.



- (a) As the result of popular violence.
  - (b) As the result of violence instigated by local government officials.
  - (c) As the result of violence caused by the Emperor directly.
- These were not confined to the later part of Julian's reign and Sozomen feels that Julian is directly to be blamed for all three types of persecution in that he did not punish the local instigators.

Some examples of the earlier bursts of popular hatred which resulted in brutal attacks on Christians include the death of Mark of Arethusa,<sup>1</sup> the killing of Cyril the Deacon,<sup>2</sup> the exposure and tearing apart of naked virgins at Heliopolis,<sup>3</sup> with a similar story concerning priests and virgins at Ascalon and Gaza, which included the deaths of the brothers Eusebius, Nestabus and Zeno.<sup>4</sup> If Sozomen<sup>5</sup> is to be trusted then Julian must share some blame in this matter. He is reported as having announced, "What need is there to arrest the fellows for 'retaliating on a few Galileans for all the wrongs they have done 'to them and the gods?'"<sup>6</sup> Another aspect of the popular attack on the Christians was the desecrations and confiscations of church property at Antioch, Caesarea, Sebaste, Emesa, Epiphania and Paneas.<sup>6</sup>

The examples of violence on the part of official governors in the early period come from the East, partly because the source for them is Gregory Nazianzen. At Dorostolus<sup>7</sup> in Thrace, Aemilian/

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- 1. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. IV, Ch. 88, Sozomen V, 10, Theod. III, 7.
  - 2. Theod. III, VII, 3.
  - 3. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. IV, 87, Sozomen, V.10
  - 4. Theod. III, VII, 1. Sozomen, V, ix.
  - 5. Sozomen V, 9.
  - 6. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. IV, 86, Theod. III, VII, 5, Philost. VII, 3, 4.
  - 7. Ammianus XXII, III, 11. Julian, Ep. 74.



Aemilian was burned to death by the Governor Capitolinus; at Merus<sup>1</sup> in Phrygia where the Christians had destroyed pagan statues the prefect roasted to death Macedonius, Theodulus and Tatian; at Ancyra, Genellus<sup>2</sup> was crucified and Basil<sup>3</sup>, after interrogation by the proconsul, finally was questioned by the Emperor himself, who in all fairness merely demanded him to be punished. When Julian left however, Basil was executed. Sozomen notes that this was contrary to the Emperor's will.


To summarise, in the earlier part of Julian's reign it seems obvious that the suffering of the Christians was due to the fact that embittered partisans overstepped their orders. Certainly the Edict of Milan produced an element of tolerance. Also most of the pagan indignation was inspired by a prior display of Christian intolerance.

In the later part of Julian's reign the incidents became more frequent. Artemis, the military Prefect of Egypt was beheaded. Theod<sup>4</sup> states "By the most humane Emperor for zeal "against the pagans under Constantius." At Cyzicus, Bishop Eleusis was banished for destroying the Novation Church.<sup>5</sup> Again the reason given is not a religious one, but because of political agitation. There are other cases where Julian seems to have proved unfavourable towards Christian communities, such as the case of the township of Maiuma<sup>6</sup> which had been elevated by Constantine because of its Christian zeal. Julian degraded it in rank/

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1. Socrates III, 15. Sozomen, V, XI, 1-3, Nic. X, 10.
  2. Ruinart Acta Mart. 507.
  3. Ruinart Acta Mart. 510.
  4. Theod. III, 18.
  5. Socrates III, 11. Sozomen V, 5.
  6. Sozomen V, 3



rank for the same reason apparently. Perhaps Julian is seen at his worst in his dealings with the City of Antioch. In a letter to the citizens of Bostra<sup>1</sup> we see another case of Julian's pettiness in his trumped up charge against Bishop Titus. His dealings likewise with the cities of Edessa, Caesarea and Alexandria, where the citizens put Bishop George to death reveal his hostility to Christianity. The mildness of Julian's letter of rebuke suggests that he condoned this piece of popular hostility. Julian's visit to Antioch prior to his final and fatal Persian campaign greatly roused the indignation of the Emperor against the Christians. The strong Christian population seized upon every opportunity to humiliate Julian, especially in the matter of the pagan shrine of Apollo at Daphne, which was burnt by the Christians. Public demonstrations, psalm singing and open insult were all calculated to embarrass the resident Emperor. Their sneers at his beard, which they said should have been used to make ropes, evoked the very bitter reply entitled The Misopogons, as well as the deaths of certain of the Christians and the closing of the main Church.

Also in this latter period of Julian's reign there were several cases of persecution in the army. The standard was deprived of the Christian symbol .<sup>2</sup> Valentinianus a future Emperor, was demoted from his high rank and relegated to the provinces because he impatiently shook off some pagan lustral water from his tunic. Juventinus and Maximinus, two legionaries were put to death on January 25th because they quoted Scripture at a drinking bout.<sup>3</sup> As in the earlier periods of persecution/

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1. Hertlein Ep. 52, Loeb 41, Bidez-Cumont 114.
  2. Sozomen V, XVII.
  3. Sozomen V, XVII, Theod. III, 12.



persecution many left the army or resigned rank rather than deny their faith. For example, three future Emperors, Jovian, Julian's successor, Valentinian and Valens all resigned their rank.

The following are the four conclusions reached by G.H. Rendall,<sup>1</sup> concerning the persecution of Julian's reign.

- (1) "That no organised or wide-spread persecution prevailed."
- (2) "That the sporadic instances which occurred were in almost every case provoked, and in part excused, by aggressive acts of the Christians."
- (3) "That while culpably condoning some pagan excesses the Emperor steadily set his face against persecution."
- (4) "That he never authorised any execution on the grounds of religion; that where his conduct amounted to persecution he did not abjure (but set a strained interpretation) on the laws of toleration which he professed."

One final aspect of Julian's policy which reflected considerable anti-Christian feeling was his treatment of the educational problem.<sup>2</sup> His educational policy was aimed at the complete elimination of Christian teachers from the system. To Julian, paganism was inseparable from the old culture and to him it was incongruous for a Christian to teach a pagan culture. This was aggravated by the fact that the best teachers tended to be Christians, such as Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzum. These Christian teachers who were numerous were highly esteemed among their pagan counterparts. Libanius wrote a congratulatory letter to the citizens of Caesarea in which he congratulated both them and himself on the appointment of Basil to the Chair at Caesarea, them for securing such a teacher, himself for securing such a colleague. Sozomen the historian, declares, that Christian teachers, "cast all others into the shade."<sup>3</sup>

1. G.H. Rendall, The Emperor Julian, Camb. 1879.

2. Educational Policy, Gregory Nazianzen Or. IV, 5, 55.  
Socrates III, 12, Sozomen, V, 18,



To Julian's credit at least, is the fact that he had a vision of every school becoming a centre of paganism. He also wished to take away from Christian accusers of paganism, the high standard of education whereby their accusations were so effective. Paganism must no longer be the victim of "arrows winged from their own feathers."<sup>1</sup>

The edicts published by Julian were to cause consternation from every quarter. His first edict dated May 12th, 362 A.D. confined itself merely to the privileges of teachers. The second edict dated June 17th, 362 A.D. shortly before his arrival at Antioch limited the appointment of new Christian teachers while leaving in possession those already established. This edict because of its timidity proved ineffective. Julian impatiently published a third edict, his Rescript on Christian Teachers. It was this edict which caused popular outcry including as it did such phrases as the following, "Therefore when a man thinks one thing and teaches his pupils another he fails to educate exactly in proportion as he fails to be an honest man." He addresses himself then to the Christians, "But I give them this choice. Either let them not teach what they do not think to be admirable, or if they wish to teach let them first really persuade their pupils that neither Homer or Hesiod nor any of these teachers whom they expound and have declared to be guilty of impiety such as they declare ..... If they think these writers were in error let them betake themselves to the Churches of the Galileans to expound Matthew and Luke. For my part I wish that you ears and your tongues might be 'born again' as you would say." The gist of this Rescript was that all Christian teachers must leave their posts. Certain noted teachers such as Victorinus did so, but partly/

1. Theod. III, 8, 9. cf. Julian, Fragment. "We are stricken by "arrows. From our writings they take the weapons wherewith they engage in war against us."
2. Julian, Rescript on Christian Teachers (Letter 36 Loeb).



partly because of the popular outcry and partly because of the sudden end to Julian's reign the educational system remained unaffected. Even Ammianus who normally finds something to praise in every action of Julian's, remarks that this law "must be plunged into ever-lasting silence."<sup>1</sup>

Concerning Julian's overall policy towards Christians opinions vary. It cannot be denied that he deliberately opposed physical violence. At the same time it cannot be denied that he waged a psychological warfare against the Christians. His policy took precisely the reverse form of that of Constantine, both professed impartiality, but both openly gave preference to their own party. Julian himself declared that Christians were to be pitied rather than persecuted. The early church historians appear to be biased in the severity of their condemnation of Julian. Rufinus calls him "craftier than all other persecutors." Socrates correctly admires that fact that "he went cleverly to work." Perhaps the most convincing proof of Julian's hostility lies in the fact that so long as he reigned the Christian church regarded him as a persecutor and they rejoiced over his death.<sup>2</sup>

1. Ammianus XVII, 107; XXV, 4, 20. cf. Socrates III, 3. for the attempt by the two Apollinaries who sought to compose the Christian scriptures in Homeric style.
2. Even Julian's pagan friends did not spare him altogether. To them certain of his acts were evidently unjust, a fact which annoyed them all the more because of his customary justice. Both Ammianus and Eutropius stress Julian's natural sense of justice (Ammianus XV, 5, 13; XXV, 4, 7; XXX, 4, 1. Eutropius, Roman History X, 16). Yet both are critical of the vanity of the Emperor who at times lost all sense of justice in order to obtain personal glory. Eutropius writes that Julian was "Gloriae avidus, ac per eam animi plerumque immodici" (X, 16). Ammianus accuses Julian of "amor popularitatis" and of being "levis" (XIV, 7, 5; XX, 7, 34; XXV, 4, 18). At the same time, the strict asceticism of Julian calls forth admiration (Ammianus XVII, 3 "temperantiam ipse sibi indixit"). Eutropius, however, definitely declared Julian to be a persecutor of the Christians (X, 16 - "nimius religionis Christianae infectator, periunde tamen ut 'cruore abstineret').



CHAPTER TWOG O DCELSUS

The concept of a wrathful God which has proved irksome to more sensitive Christian minds through the centuries of our era, had long before the end of the second century, A.D., when Celsus compiled his attack on the Christian faith, appeared distasteful to pagans of culture. Certainly by the time of Celsus a distinct change of religious outlook had emerged within the Empire. Already a new spiritual movement spurred on by the increasing personal desire for sacramental grace and immortality had resulted on the one hand, in a syncretism reaching out towards monotheism, and on the other hand, in a philosophic rationalising of the Deity.<sup>1</sup> The latter gave birth to a growing concern for the good name and character of the gods, and for the higher aspects of worship in general. In the writings of Plutarch,<sup>2</sup> Maximus of Tyre,<sup>3</sup> Dio Chrysostom,<sup>4</sup> Seneca,<sup>5</sup> Epictetus etc., we discover a de-anthropomorphism concerning the nature of the gods. Likewise the pagans who attacked the Christian faith showed the same concern for the spiritual character of the Deity, and criticised strongly the anthropocentric treatment of God at the hands of the Christians.

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1. S. Dill, Roman Society from Nero to M. Aurelius p.398 ff. (London 1905).
  2. Plutarch De Isis et Osidire.
  3. Maximus of Tyre Dissertationes VIII, 1, IX, 9 XVII etc.
  4. Dio Chrysostom Oration XII, 24, 83.
  5. Seneca De providentia I-II, 6 De Ira II, 27.  
cf. Cicero De Natina Deorum II, 70.



It is with this in mind that we must read the first important polemic against the Christian faith, that of Celsus, who is predominantly, but not exclusively Platonic in his philosophy.

Celsus ridicules the Hebrew scriptures as being "manifestly very stupid fables"<sup>1</sup> not even capable of allegorical interpretation, therefore, "far more shameful and "preposterous than the myths."<sup>2</sup> The story of the creation of man and woman is "most improbable and crude as would be "expected from obscure Jews, who were unlearned in the poetry of "Hesiod and thousands of other inspired men."<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew cosmology is then no more than a "legend, expounded to old "women, impiously making God into a "weakling" right from the "beginning, and incapable of persuading even one man whom he had "formed."<sup>5</sup> Here we discover the real reason for Celsus's impatience with the Old Testament writers. They are guilty of presenting an altogether unworthy picture of God. "God is good and beautiful and happy, existing in the most "beautiful state accordingly God could not be capable of "undergoing change which is the characteristic condition of "human beings."<sup>6</sup> Any account of God which makes Him less than perfectly good, perfectly beautiful, entirely beyond change is ipso facto false. For example, the supreme God dwells in Deistic Transcendence since any direct contact with evil humanity would render Him less than perfectly good and beautiful. It is/

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1. Origen Contra Celsum IV, 50.
  2. Origen Contra Celsum IV, 51.
  3. Origen Contra Celsum IV, 36.
  4. Tertullian accuses Marcion of making God into a weakling by robbing Him of all feeling. Such a God never punishes because He is never angry. (Tertullian Against Marcion I XXV ff. cf. Tertullian II XV, II, XVII).
  5. Origen Contra Celsum IV, 36.
  6. Origen Contra Celsum IV, 14 - Platonic Theology Republic 381 B.C; Phaedrus 246 D.



is for this reason that after referring to "the conspiracies of brothers" Celsus exclaims, "Could God enter into closest contact with such men?"<sup>1</sup>

Every attempt therefore to describe God and His activity in anthropomorphic terms provokes the anger and scorn of Celsus. The days of creation amuse Celsus because they preceeded the creation of days.<sup>2</sup> And the account of God resting on the seventh day thoroughly disgusts Celsus. "After this indeed, 'God exactly like a bad workman was worn out and needed a holiday to have a rest. It is not right for the first God to be tired or to work with his hands or to give orders.'<sup>3</sup>

Still criticising the Genesis narrative of creation Celsus repudiates the statement, "that God made man in His own image" for God is not like that nor does He resemble any other form "at all."<sup>4</sup> A God possessing the human characteristics of being angry, working manually, growing tired is not more fantastic than a God possessing the human characteristics of participating in shapes, colour and movement.<sup>5</sup> Thus Celsus refutes the idea that the first man was made in the image of God. Later he refutes the idea that God is like Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who lived as a slave, became sick and died. "It is blasphemous to ascribe such to God",<sup>7</sup> and Christians make themselves a laughing stock when they follow Jesus and when they look for a father like him.

Celsus states only once what later Transcendentalists basically assumed "God is outside any emotional experience".<sup>8</sup>

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1. Contra Celsum IV, 43
  2. Contra Celsum VI, 60. Origen himself denies the actuality of the days of creation. De Princip IV, 3, 1.
  3. Contra Celsum VI, 61.
  4. Contra Celsum VI, 62.
  5. Contra Celsum VI, 64. This also is Platonic Theology cf. Phaedus 247C, colourless, shapeless and intangible essence. cf. Justin Dial c Trypho 4.
  6. Contra Celsum VII, 13. "For when God eats the flesh of sheep, or drinks vinegar or gall, what else is He doing but eating filth?" σκατοφάγειν.
  7. Contra Celsum VII, 14.
  8. Contra Celsum VII, 36.
  9. Contra Celsum VI, 65 cf. 64 "Moreover God does not even participate in Being. Plato Rep. 509B "The good is beyond Being".



The fact of the matter is that Celsus and the later pagans did not attack merely the distasteful and unbecoming emotions associated with the stories of the gods, but rather was every emotional experience excluded from the idea of God. He could neither be angry nor pleased, neither offended nor propitiated; He was beyond Being and "has no experience, which "can be comprehended by a name."<sup>1</sup>

In Book IV, chapter 14, Celsus gives us his own conception of God, which he affirms to be the traditional one. "Furthermore, "I have nothing new to say, but only ancient doctrines." God is "good and beautiful and happy, and exists in the most beautiful "state."

God is therefore incorruptible, and cannot be the author of anything mortal. Here Celsus again criticises the Mosaic Cosmogony. "God made nothing mortal, whatever things are "immortal are works of God, and mortal things are made by them....<sup>3</sup> The soul is God's work but the nature of the body is different." All bodies are alike in this respect, whether of a bat, frog, worm or man, in that they are equally liable to corruption. Celsus indicates the superiority of Plato's account of Creation in the Timaeus, asserting that no product of matter is immortal.<sup>4</sup> Celsus includes the Stoic doctrine that the whole world being divinely/

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1. Contra Celsum VI, 65.

2. Celsus claims to declare the traditional view of God, common to all thinking men, deducible from nature and from the utterances of the ancients. cf. Dio Chrysostom Oration XII, 27. "A conception common to the whole human race, to the Greeks and to the barbarians alike." Sallustius likewise points to a traditional conception of God known to all men. Those who are eager to reach a true understanding of God "ought also to know the common conceptions to which all men "agree as soon as they are asked, for instance, that God is "good, free from passion, free from change, for whatever "suffers change does so for the worse or for the better." (On the Gods and the World Chapter 1).

3. Contra Celsum IV, 52 - Plato Timaeus 69 C.D.

4. Contra Celsum IV, 61 cf. IV, 59 "none of these are God's work".

divinely created, its parts are also divine. This belief had become part of the philosophy of the age, and later was one of the fundamental tenets of Neoplatonism. In Contra Celsum V, 6 we read, "The first thing about the Jews, which they well cause amazement in that although they worship the heaven and the angels in it, yet they reject its most sacred and powerful parts, the sun, moon and other stars, both the fixed and the planets. They behave as though it were possible that the whole could be God, but its parts not divine ...."<sup>1</sup>

Another aspect of the traditional view of God was that He was unchangeable. It is in this ground that Celsus attacks belief in the Messianic advent. "What is the purpose of such a descent on the part of God?"<sup>2</sup> He asks the further question "did God require to learn what was going on among men?" Must He "come down in order to correct men?" The thought of God leaving "his Throne is not to be tolerated, because if you change any one quite insignificant thing on earth, you would upset and destroy everything. What then would result from taking God out of his Heaven?"<sup>3</sup>

Celsus strongly attacks the Christians insistence on an Incarnation-centred salvation. "Anyhow, God does not need to be known for His own sake, but He wants to give us knowledge of Himself for our salvation, in order that those who accept it may become good and be saved, and that those who do not accept it may be proved to be wicked and punished."<sup>4</sup> Celsus complains bitterly/

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1. See footnote on page

2. Contra Celsum IV, 3 cf. Caecilius in the Octavius of Minucius Felix X - "The Christian's God is a nuisance and shamelessly curious."

3. Contra Celsum IV, 5. This idea is akin to the Stoic in the universe, binding all things together. cf. Plotinus, Ennead. II. 9.

4. Contra Celsum IV, 7. cf. VI, 78. It is this conception which eliminates any possibility of an Incarnation of God, as well as rendering the Christian eschatology ridiculous. The world and the heavens are eternal and beyond destruction. "The eternal order of things cannot be disturbed" cf. Octavius Minucius Felix XI.



bitterly. "Is it only now after such a long age that God  
 "had remembered to judge the life of man? Did He not care  
 "before?"<sup>1</sup> To Celsus then it is quite clear that Christians  
 babble about God impiously and impurely.<sup>2</sup>

God simply has no reason to come down to earth, nor  
 could He come down even if He so desired it, which He would not.  
 "If then, He comes down to men He must undergo a change, a  
 "change from good to bad, from right to wrong, from happiness to  
 "misfortune and from what is best to what is wicked. Who would  
 "chose a change like this? It is the nature only of a mortal  
 "being to undergo change and remoulding, whereas it is the  
 "nature of an immortal being to remain the same without alteration.  
 "Accordingly God could not be capable of undergoing this change."<sup>3</sup>

Even if evil be alleged as the necessitating factor in  
 God's descent this cannot be accepted either. On this score  
 Celsus attacks both the Jews and the Christians, the Jews for  
 claiming a descent of God in the events of the Tower of Babel  
 and the Flood; the Christians for claiming that the Son of  
 God has in fact come, both Jew and Christian positing evil as the  
 reasons for these descents. On the origin of evil Celsus  
 declares that evils are not caused by God,<sup>4</sup> but inhere in  
 matter, and dwell among mortals. Moreover, "neither good nor  
 "bad can increase among mortals; God has therefore no need to have  
 "a new reformation; God does not inflict correction in the world  
 "like a man who has built something defectively and created it  
 "unskillfully when he purifies it with a flood or conflagration."<sup>5</sup>

How/

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1. Contra Celsum IV, 18
  2. Contra Celsum IV, 10.
  3. Contra Celsum IV, 14. This belief that God's activity is  
 limited by His divine nature, that God can do only what is  
 consistent with His character, is the basis on which Celsus,  
 and the other opponents of Christianity, attack not only the  
 doctrine of the Incarnation, but also that of the  
 Resurrection of the body, and other aspects of eschatology,  
 including the destruction of the world by fire. The pagan  
 philosophers in fact deny the Christian claim that "all  
 things are possible with God". Celsus describes this as  
 "a most outrageous refuge" to which Christians escape  
 (Contra Celsum V 14) "But indeed neither can God do  
 what is shameful, nor does He desire what is contrary to  
 nature/

3. Cont'd from preceeding page.

nature" (Ibid). "The resurrection of the flesh is both contrary to nature and to reason.

cf. Alexandria of Aphrodisias (De fato)  
 "It is impossible for God to make the diagonal of a  
 "parallelogram commensurate with the sides, or to make  
 "twice two five or undo some past event". cf. orphry  
 in Macellum Mag IV, 24. Contra Celsum III, 70  
 "He will not want to do anything unrighteous."

In Cicero "de Divinitate II, 41, 86 it appears that  
 the Stoics appealed to divine omnipotence as a proof of  
 divination. So too in De Natura Deorum III 39,92 we  
 read "nihil esse quod deus efficere non possit"  
 Henry Chadwick (H.T.R. XLI (1948) pp. 83 ff.) sees here  
 another instance of Celsus's indebtedness to the Academy -  
 Stoic debates led by Carneades in the Second Century before  
 Christ.

4. Contra Celsum IV, 65, Plato Rep. 379 C. Theaetetus, 176A  
 This is the view of all the anti-Christian writers in our  
 period.
5. Contra Celsum IV, 69.



How then can we know God, laying aside the Christian answer that "He thrust His own spirit into a body of ours "that we might be able to hear and learn from Him?" For Celsus Christians are materialists "completely bound to the "flesh"<sup>1</sup> and therefore he expresses despair of their ever attaining to a knowledge of God. Had not Plato realised that "to find the Father and Maker of the Universe was difficult, and "after finding Him it was impossible to declare Him to all men?"<sup>2</sup> Man and his universe are creatures of being and becoming, intelligible and visible.<sup>3</sup> God "is neither mind, nor intelligence, "nor knowledge, but enables the mind to think, and is the cause " of the existence of intelligence and the possibility of "knowledge and causes the existence of intelligible things and of "truth itself, and of being itself, since He transcends all "things and is intelligible by a certain indescribable power."<sup>4</sup> Christians cannot rise above flesh and body. They expect ultimately to see and know God through the physical means of sense-perception.<sup>5</sup> This appears to explain their belief in the Resurrection of the body as well as the soul, since they will require the sensory organs, hands, eyes, ears etc. in order to grasp and discern God.<sup>6</sup>

There/

1. Contra Celsum VII, 42
2. Timaeus 28C. This statement of Plato is quoted time and time again by both Christians and pagans to stress the exclusiveness of a knowledge of God, as here. cf Tertullian Apology XLVI, 9. "But there is no Christian working man but "who is able to find God and to demonstrate Him, and indeed "to assign to Him all that is required in God, though Plato "affirms that the Maker of the Universe is not easy to find, "and when found, he is hard to declare to all men." Moreover, the secret knowledge of God sought by Gnostics sprung from this opinion that the pathway to the knowledge of God did not lie open to all men.
3. Plato Republic 534A. Timaeus 29C.
4. Contra Celsum VIII, 45 cf. Plotinus V, 3, 17.
5. Contra Celsum VIII, 36.
6. Contra Celsum VII, 33.

There is a distinct note of sincerity in the appeal of Celsus. "Let them listen to me. If you shut your eyes, "and look up with the mind; if you turn away from the flesh, "and raise the eyes of the soul, only so will you see God."<sup>1</sup> Christians leave themselves open to ridicule in blasphemously accusing the other Gods to be phantoms, while they worship a wretch and a dead one at that. It seems folly to Celsus to suggest that the Supreme God resembles Jesus in His wretched life, and no less than blasphemy when one realises that Jesus is now a corpse. Christians should follow in their aspirations towards God, the inspired poets and wise men, especially Plato, "a more "effective teacher of the problems of theology."<sup>2</sup>

One other aspect of the Christian conception of God rankles in the mind of Celsus. It is the limitations which such a conception sets on Divine providence. In their boastful claims to a special revelation, Jews and Christians are like bats or frogs in a marsh.<sup>3</sup> "They say 'God shows and proclaims himself to 'us beforehand; He has even deserted the whole world and the motions 'of the Heavens, and disregarded the vast earth to give attention 'to us alone.' He even sends messengers to them alone."

Next Celsus likens Jews and Christians to worms who say, "there "is God first, and we are next after Him in rank, since He made us "entirely like God, and all things have been put under us."

This self-centred arrogance of the Christians was to cause a similar disdain in the mind of Julian two centuries later. Had God then no concern for the remainder of mankind? Celsus sees this as another stumbling-block in the theory of the Incarnation. "If/

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1. Contra Celsum VII, 36.

2. Contra Celsum VII, 42.

3. Contra Celsum IV, 23.

ἐνεργέστερον διδάσκαλον τῶν θεολογικῶν πραγμάτων.



"If He did wish to send down a spirit from Himself, why did He  
 "have to breathe it into the womb of a woman?"<sup>1</sup> There is no place  
 within Celsus's general revelation of God for a particularised  
 special revelation. "Why on earth did He send this spirit that  
 "you mention into one corner?"<sup>2</sup> He ought to have breathed it into  
 "many bodies in the same way, and sent them all over the world."

Other nations, such as the Chaldeans, Egyptians, Persians and  
 Indians have been endowed with the highest inspiration from  
 the beginning, yet they too will perish.<sup>3</sup> The doctrine of  
 the Christians condemns the rest of the world. "Where will we go  
 "to, and what hope have we? To another world better than this  
 "one?" If this is the sum and substance of the Christian hope,  
 had not the inspired poets of Greece and Plato himself  
 proclaimed the same hope?<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the Greeks have reached  
 the true doctrine of Providence as they have discovered that  
 "God is common to all men. He is both good and in need of nothing,  
 "and without envy."<sup>5</sup>

In the Contra Celsum we discover distinct traces of the  
 Ancient/

1. Contra Celsum VI, 73 - "such foul pollution" The body, being  
 matter is evil. Lactantius quotes objections made by  
 pagans against the Incarnation. One was akin to this  
 objection of Celsus - "Why did God not come as God to  
 "teach men?" (Divine Institutes IV, XXII).
2. Contra Celsum VI, 78 cf. IV, 36 "in some corner of Palestine."  
 This is a common criticism of Christianity, that its  
 beginnings were so obscure and shameful. cf. Minucius  
 Felix Octavius 8 "In publicum muta, in angulis garrula"  
 "Silent in public, garrulous in corners."
3. Contra Celsum VI, 80.
4. Contra Celsum VII, 28. Homer Od. IV, 563-5 Plato Phaedo 109A.B.
5. Contra Celsum VIII, 21. From Plato Phaedrus 247A, Timaeus 29E.

ancient arguments between the Stoa and the Academy. Indeed, when Celsus puts forward the points of view of one side Origen puts forward the opposing opinion. For example, the arguments about the transient nature of fire in Book VI, chapter 72 is made intelligible only in the light of the academic anti-Stoic argument preserved in Cicero's *de Natura Deorum* III, 14. 35-37. As Henry Chadwick points out it is far more common to find Origen<sup>1</sup> supporting the Stoa against the Academy as in *Contra Celsum* V, 28, where he affirms that the virtues are not relative but absolute. The most notable example of this indebtedness to the earlier debates is found in the long discussions at the end of Book IV on the rationality of animals and their inferiority to human beings. However when Celsus proceeds to argue the superiority of certain animals because of their foreknowledge of the future, Origen turns to use the traditional academic arguments against divination.

We shall first outline the actual debates between the Stoics and the Academicians as we find it preserved in *De Natura Deorum*. In Book II, Chapter 15, to the end, the Stoic arguments are set forth. Balbus begins his speech in these words:

"It remains for me to show, in coming finally to a conclusion that all the things in this world which men employ have been created and provided for the sake of men." He traces the providence of God in that the world itself was provided by God for the enjoyment of men although the vegetable kingdom may appear to bring forth its produce equally for the sake of beasts and men, the fact that the beasts provide food for men shows that God's first thought and care is centred on man. Every aspect of animal life has been utilised for man to advance his own comfort/

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1. Origen is indebted to the Stoics for their emphasis on the doctrine of Providence



comfort. The sheep provide food and clothing; the dog by its fawning of affection declares the mastery of man; the oxen possess strong necks to carry the yoke, and broad shoulders for drawing the plough. After drawing attention to the undoubted service of mules and asses Balbus displays the distaste of his party for the pig, commenting, "it can only furnish food."

The superiority of man in hunting down the animals is a further proof that God placed man above all other living creatures.

"The great beasts of the forest we take by hunting, both for food and in order to exercise ourselves, while in the case of the elephants to train and discipline them for our employment."

Finally Balbus notes that certain birds are used by men for the sake of divining the future. The Academic reply, in this case spoken by Cotta,<sup>1</sup> put animals on a level with men, both having an equal share in the providence of God. According to Cotta the gift of reason does not benefit us but injures us.. It is reason that allows criminals to plot disasters and countless other calamities. Was not Medes criminal but also perfectly rational as was also Thystes. The somewhat gloomy conclusion of the Academy is "just as right actions may be guided by reason so may wrong ones, so that it would have been better if the immortal gods had not bestowed upon us any reasoning faculty at all than that they should have bestowed it with such mischievous results."<sup>2</sup>

Turning to Book IV of the Contra Celsum we discover Celsus making the Academic claim, "everything was made as much for the irrational animals as for men ....<sup>3</sup> Why were things made for man's nourishment any more than for plants, trees, grass and thorns? Even if those things grow for men why do you say they<sup>4</sup> grow for them any more than for the wildest of irrational animals?"

1. Cicero De Natura Deorum Book III Chapter 65 to end.
2. Cicero De Natura Deorum III, 69.
3. Contra Celsum IV, 74.
4. Contra Celsum IV, 75.

It appears to Celsus that God has made things easier for the animals because everything grows for them, but man has to sow and till and struggle in order to sustain himself.<sup>1</sup> He quotes the lines of Euripides "Sun and night serve mortals" commenting that it is not true, "Why do they exist any more for them than "for ants and flies? For in their case also the night is for "rest and the day for seeing and doing."<sup>2</sup> Celsus then turns to the Stoic argument that man is superior because he hunts the animals. He asks the question, "Why rather are we not made on "their account since they hunt and eat us? Furthermore we need "nets and weapons and many men and dogs to help us against the "hunted prey whereas to them nature has given weapons from the "start in their natural powers, making it easy for them to "subdue us."<sup>3</sup> Celsus even claims that men built cities and invented the arts as a protection against the superior strength of the wild animals.<sup>4</sup> He is certainly on firmer ground when he claims that before the invention of weapons it was extremely rare for beasts to be caught by men. "Therefore in this respect it is "true to say that God subjected man to wild beasts."

The animal kingdom according to Celsus displays every aspect of wisdom and forethought which we normally associate with mankind.<sup>5</sup> The animals too live in cities and form social groups, particularly the ants and the bees "at any rate the bees have a leader, "attendants and servants; they slay the vanquished, they have "cities and even suburbs; they pass work on from one to another, "they condemn the idle and the wicked - at least they drive out "and punish the drones." Then follows a fairly long account concerning the forethought of ants. The main points noted are these. They undertake one another's burdens when they see someone in toil; they pick out the growths of their fruits before they are ripe in order to sustain them throughout the winter; they have funerals for the/

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1. Contra Celsum IV, 76.
  2. Contra Celsum IV, 77.
  3. Contra Celsum IV, 78.
  4. Contra Celsum IV, 79.
  5. Contra Celsum IV, 81.



the dead and ancestral graveyards; they have discussions with one another.<sup>1</sup> "Accordingly they also have a completely "developed rational faculty and universal notions of certain "general matters, and a voice to make clear their experiences "and meanings. Come then, if any one were to look out from "heaven on the earth, what difference would appear between what "is done by us and by ants and bees."<sup>2</sup>

Celsus at this point departs from the customary Academic arguments. The Academy opposed divination, but Celsus utilised the miraculous prophetic instincts of certain birds and animals as a proof of their superior wisdom and knowledge over man. It is here that Origen also changes his ground and uses the Academic arguments against divination. Among the animals and birds that Celsus mentions are snakes and eagles who "know many antidotes and prophylactics and furthermore the powers "of certain stones to keep their young from harm. If men fall "in with these, they think they have some wonderful possession." Surely such birds and animals because they are able to teach us about God are themselves nearer in communion with God and therefore dearer to God.<sup>3</sup> Celsus also says that intelligent men who know about these matters claim that the birds have associations obviously more sacred than ours. Even the animals are loyal to each other. "No animal appears to keep "oaths better than elephants, or to be more faithful to the Deity "no doubt because they have knowledge of them. The storks are "more pious than men and more affectionate since the young bring "food to the parents. The Arabian bird the Phoenix brings its "daddy

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1. Contra Celsum IV, 84.

2. Contra Celsum IV, 85. cf. Lactantius Div. Inst. II X ff.

3. Here Lactantius claims that man may not have the sole monopoly of reason, indeed he admits that the animals do possess a rational faculty, giving the precise reasons that Celsus did. But for Lactantius the distinguishing factor was that man alone could know and worship God. Animals "are "certainly without religion."

3. Contra Celsum IV, 88.

"dead to Egypt to the shrine of the sun." Celsus therefore concludes this section with the words "accordingly all things have "not been made for many any more than for the lion, the eagle "or the dolphin, but so that this world as God's work may be made "complete and perfect in all its parts.<sup>1</sup> For this purpose all "things have been proportioned, not for one another except "incidentally but for the universe as a whole."

This harangue on man and beast is merely part of Celsus's wider argument against the Christian claim to a specific revelation from God. Celsus believes that God would never favour one part of His universe more than another. Anyhow there was no necessity for such an intervention by God in the affairs of men. Celsus knows full well that the Christians make evil the cause of God's descent, but this is inconsistent with his general view of providence. Everything is maintained in perfect harmony by God, man and beast alike, nor is there any fluctuation between good and evil. "God takes care of the "universe and providence never abandons it, nor does it become "more evil." The Christian picture of an angry god sitting in judgment over a sinful world is also inconsistent with Celsus's conception of divine providence. "Nor does God turn the world "back to Himself after a time, nor is He angry because of men "any more than He is because of monkeys or flies; nor does He "threaten them. For each of them has received his destiny in "his turn.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of Book VII and in his final book the eighth against the Christians, Celsus scorns their claims to monotheism. Celsus has assimilated something of the syncretism of his age in accepting the Deities of every nation, while maintaining a philosophical belief in the one supreme God. It is also bound up with his conception of Providence, as the one God with the aid of/

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1. Contra Celsum IV, 88.
  2. Contra Celsum IV, 99.



of His subordinates can the better control the world. Do not the demons and angels, as well as the heroes keep a law given by the greatest God?<sup>1</sup> "Would not a man therefore who worships God rightly, worship the being who has obtained authority from Him." But what of the saying of Jesus that it is not possible for a man to serve two masters? Celsus admits that in practical human affairs, it is advisable to remain loyal to one master,<sup>2</sup> and he even concedes that it is reasonable not to serve different heroes and demons. "But where God is concerned, whom neither harm nor grief can affect, it is irrational to avoid worshipping several Gods in principles similar to those which apply in the case of men and heroes and demons of this sort. The man who worships several gods, because he worships some one of those who belong to the great god, even by this very action does that which is loved by Him".<sup>3</sup>

The Christians therefore must realise three things. First of all they must realise that they run the risk of offending the Gods, "the satraps and subordinate governor or officer or procurator of the Persian or Roman Emperor, even those who hold lesser positions or responsibilities could do much harm if they were slighted. Would the satraps and ministers both in the air and in the earth do but little harm if they were insulted?"<sup>4</sup> Nor is it sufficient for Christians to reply that they have already insulted the images of the gods with impunity, because no one has suffered such violence as the Christians themselves, even to the extent of banishment and crucifixion, without any harm resulting to their persecutors. Even those who persecuted Jesus suffered nothing for so doing, not even afterwards as long as they lived.

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1. Contra Celsum VII, 68 cf. Max. Tyr. XXXIX, 5 (contemporary of Celsus) "The gods are one nature but many names.. it is only from ignorance that we give God many names." Dio Chrysostom XXXI II "Some say, Apollo, Helios and Dionysius are the same god - many men take that all the gods are simply one particular force and power so that it makes no difference whether one worships this one or that one."
2. Contra Celsum VIII, 2.
3. Contra Celsum VIII, 2.
4. Contra Celsum VIII, 35. cf. V. 35-41 ff. "It makes no difference what we call Zeus". cf. Philox. De Decal XIII position. cf. Aelius Aristides Or. XLIII, 18.



In the second place let the Christians be consistent in their monotheism. If they must worship no other God let them cease worshipping "to an extravagant degree that man who appeared recently." Otherwise, the Christians might have a valid argument to present.<sup>1</sup> Yet they insist on including this Jesus aswell. "Thus it is not their object to worship this "supra-celestial God, but Him whom they suppose to be the father "of Jesus, who is the central object of their society. They "want to sorship only this son of man, whom they put forward as "leader, under the pretence that He is a great God, and they say "that He is mightier than the lord of the god who is mighty."<sup>2</sup> If the Hebrew and Christian God exists for Celsus, it is only as a subordinate of him who is above the heavens the Supreme God.

Thirdly, the Christians have to learn that the worship of the lesser gods enhances the worship of the great god. "Therefore we ought never to forsake God at all, neither by day "or by night, neither in public or in private. In every word and "deed and in fact let the soul be directed towards God."<sup>3</sup>

It must then be emphasised that honours paid to the lesser deities does not constitute blasphemy towards the most high God.

This is where the Christians have erred "if any one tells you to "praise Helios, or with a noble paeon to speak in enthusiastic "praise of Athena, in so doing you will appear much more to be "worshipping the great God, when you are singing a hymn to them. "For the worship of God becomes more perfect by going through "them all."<sup>4</sup> In this connection Celsus rebukes the Christians

for despising the tribute paid to the Emperor for "even if someone "tells you to take an oath of the emperor among men, that also "is nothing dreadful for earthly things have been given to him, "and whatsoever you receive in this life, you receive from him."

In the words of Dr. J. S. Whale "To celsus God is pure "intelligence, changeless, transcendent, inaccessible. To Origen "god is love, eternally operative, immanent yet transcendent, "self-revealed in Jesus Christ. This is the ultimate difference "between the Hellenic and the Hebraic temperament."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Contra Celsum VIII, 12 cf. Julian Against the Galileans 159E
  2. Contra Celsum VIII, 15.
  3. Contra Celsum VIII, 63 cf. Porphyry Letter to Marcella  
cf. Clement Stromata IV, 9, 5.
  4. Contra Celsum VIII, 67.
  5. J. S. Whale. Great Attacks on Christianity - Celsus.  
The Expository Times, 1930 (42) p. 119 ff.



GALEN

Another elaborate criticism of the Mosaic Cosmogony is found in the eleventh book of the physician Galen's anatomical work *De Usu Partium* composed at about the same time as the polemic of Celsus. Galen is discussing the unvarying length of the eye-lashes when he asks the question, "Did our demi-urge simply enjoin this hair to deserve its length, always equal, and does it strictly observe this order either from fear of the master's command, or from reverence for the God who gave this order, or is it because it itself believes it better to do this?"<sup>1</sup> Galen goes on to say that this is Moses' way of treating of nature, and as such it is superior to that of the Epicureans. But there is a better way than either of these, namely by adding to the Creator principle of Moses the material principle whereby the natural conditions were fulfilled. "When he had determined to make it so, he set under part of it a hard body, as a kind of cartilage, and under another part a hard skin attached to the cartilage through the eyebrows. For it was certainly not sufficient merely to will their becoming such; it would not have been possible for him to make a man out of a stone in an instant by simply wishing so." For Galen then, the Genesis account of creation is unsatisfactory because it simply fails to explain natural causes, deeming it necessary only to point to the fiat of God.

In another extant quotation from one of Galen's works *On Hippocrates' Anatomy*<sup>2</sup> (Below . 2. ), which according to Walzer<sup>3</sup> was translated into Arabic, out of which Walzer/

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1. Galen, *De Usu Partium* XI, 14.
  2. *Περὶ τῆς Ἱπποκράτους ἀνατομῆς*
  3. R. Walzer. *Galen on Jews and Christian*, Oxford 1949.

Walzer translates. "They compare those, who practise medicine without scientific knowledge, to Moses, who framed laws for the tribe of the Jews, since it is his method in his books to write without offering proofs, saying, 'God commanded, God saepe'".

As with the account of the giving of the Law, so in the account of Creation, Moses is non-philosophical, and thereby misrepresents God in His creative act. As in the attack of Celsus, so in the criticisms of Galen we discover the Platonic Cosmogony being preferred before the Mosaic. Galen proceeds in the eleventh book of De Usu Tertium, "It is precisely this point in which our opinion and that of Plato and the other Greeks who follow the right method in natural science differ from the position taken up by Moses. For the latter it seems enough to say that God simply willed the arrangement of matter and it was presently arranged in due order; for he believes everything is possible with God, even should He wish to make a bull or a horse out of ashes. We however, do not hold this; we say that certain things are impossible by nature and that God does not even attempt such things at all, but that He chooses the best out of the possibilities of becoming. We say therefore, that since it was better that the eyelashes should always be equal in length and number it was not that He just willed and they were instantly there, for even if He should just will numberless times, they would never come into being in this manner out of a soft skin; and in particular it was altogether impossible for them to stand erect unless fixed in something hard. We say thus that God is the cause both of the choice of the best in the products of creation themselves and in the selection of the matter." If God had planted the eyelashes in a soft and fleshy substance He would have suffered in a worse failure, "not only than/

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1. It would seem that Christians often had recourse to the phrase "With God all things are possible", in order to explain difficult parts of their faith, e.g. the resurrection, e.g. Contra Celsum V, 14.



"than Moses, but always than a bad general who plants a wall or a "camp in marshy ground."<sup>1</sup>

It is significant that Galen refers to the narrative of Genesis 1 as an account of creation comparable in fame to that of Plato, although he accepts the demi-urge of Plato's *Timaeus* rather than the creator of Moses' Genesis. As Walzer comments "Moses is "evidently examined like a Greek philosopher and his fundamentally "different attitude to life and reality is not recognized."<sup>2</sup> (p.20) The Aristotelian *causa materialis*, is missing in Moses' Cosmogony, and this constituted the weakness of the Hebrew story especially in the eyes of those who believed that nothing comes to being from non-being. (*Nihil ex nihilo fit*). The charge that God cannot do the impossible by nature appears often in early writers and as we shall see later was one the grounds of refutation as far as the resurrection of the body was concerned.

Galen's main quarrel then with the Jews and the Christians lies in the fact that they place faith higher than reason, and that their truths of faith do not demand rational demonstration.<sup>3</sup> From *De Pulsu Differentis* (II 4) comes yet another statement which confirms this conclusion. Galen is evidently about to offer certain proofs of some theory, when he adds, "in order that one "should not at the very beginning, as if one had come into the school "of Moses and Christ, here talk of undemonstrated laws (*ἀνυπόδεικτων νόμων*) and that where it is least appropriate." This unsatisfactory connection/

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1. Sallustius has a similar section concerning the ordering of creation by God. "One can deduce the same result (i.e. "divine order) from the Evidence of Providence in Nature, e.g. "the eyes have been made transparent with a view to seeing, "the nostrils are above the mouth to distinguish bad-smelling "food; the teeth are sharp at the front to cut, at the back "broad to grind." (On the Gods and the "world IX).
  2. R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians*, Oxford 1949.
  3. cf. Celsus, *Contra Celsum* II, 9  
"Do not examine, but believe.

connection between faith and reason in the doctrines of both Jews and Christians is further implied in another extract extant only in its Arabic translation, from the otherwise lost work Against Aristotle's Theology *Ἔς τὸ πρῶτον κινεῖν ἁ κινήτου*

"If I had in mind people who taught their pupils in the same way as the followers of Moses and Christ teach theirs - for they order them to accept everything on faith - I should not have given you this definition."



ARNOBIUS' OPPONENT

Arnobius writing against the pagans in seven books at the beginning of the 4th century apparently quotes verbatim the actual criticism employed against the Christians. This may well be true as Arnobius himself was not very long converted to Christianity when he wrote this refutation of paganism, and certainly if not verbatim quotations the criticism can distinctly be taken as current pagan opinion concerning Christianity.

That this is the common pagan outlook and not the cultured philosophic reaction is best illustrated in the conception of the pagan gods contained therein. This is the anthropomorphic conception of the gods, which portrays an angry, jealous Deity. According to Arnobius the pagans put forward the charge, "that "after the Christian race began to exist on earth, the world went "to ruin, mankind was afflicted with various ills, and even the "denizens of Heaven themselves as the result of the abandonment "of the ceremonial sacrifices, by which they were formerly "induced to look after their affairs, were exiled from the "regions of the earth."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as a result "pestilence and drought, and wars, famines, locusts, mice and hailstorms and other harmful things with which human affairs are visited, are brought upon us by the gods, in their anger at your wrongs and evil doings."<sup>2</sup> " The Christians are to blame for every calamity which/

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1. Adversus Nationes I, 1.

2. Adversus Nationes I, 3. cf. Tertullian Ad Nationes I, 7. I, 9 "If the Tiber overflows its banks, if the Nile has "remained in its bed, if the sky has been still or the "earth been in commotion; if death has made its "devastations, or famine its afflictions, your cry "immediately is: this is the fault of the Christians." cf. Tertullian Apol. X I, XI I - Christianos ad leonem cf. Aristides Apology XVI Here Aristides turns back the charge on to the pagans. Speaking of the Christians, he asserts - "Because they acknowledge the goodness of God "towards them, lo, on account of them there flows forth the "beauty that is in the world." If God shows anger, it is towards the pagans!! Cyprian wrote a letter to Demetrianus a pagan who blamed Christians for the calamities in the empire.

which has befallen mankind.

The reply of Arnobius to these charges is interesting, because he in fact denies the existence of Divine anger, very much as Celsus had done, having as yet not fully understood Christian doctrine. "Do you really not notice, do you not see how shameful how disgraceful are the mad feelings that you thus impute to the Deities?<sup>1</sup> What else is this anger than madness? And what necessarily follows from your statement, but that from their eyes fiery flashes shine out, their breathes give forth a pant, foam rushes from their mouths and from their burning words their lips become dry and pale."

Another point of interest is the alleged reason for the hostility and anger of the gods against the Christians. It is not the monotheism of the Christians, and their consequent rejection of the other gods that causes these self-same ignored gods to be angry.

No, "the gods are not hostile to you because you worship the Omnipotent God, but because you maintain that a man, born of a human being, and one who suffered the penalty of crucifixion, was God, and you believe that he still exists and you worship him in daily prayers."<sup>2</sup>

After further ridiculing Christ and His miracles the pagans provoke Arnobius to a great flash of loyalty. "There was nothing magical as you think, nothing human, deceitful or crafty; no deception lurked in Christ, though you may jeer as usual and split your sides with hilarious laughter. He was God sublime."<sup>3</sup>

Likewise this descent of God to earth assuming the form of man perplexes the pagans of Arnobius's day. "But if Christ was God they say, why did He appear in human form? And why was He slain in the manner of men?"<sup>4</sup> Also in the next chapter we read, "Well now", says our opponent, "was the most high unable to accomplish all these things which He had decreed should be done in the world, without pretending to be a man?"<sup>5</sup> As we have seen earlier/

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1. cf. Lactantius De Ira Dei re Stoic impassibility III, 1, 36.
  - 2.
  3. Adversus Nationes I, 53.
  4. Adversus Nationes I, 60.
  5. " " 61



earlier, one of the most vexing questions troubling pagans minds concerning this saving descent of God was, "why was it so late in time?" What happened to all the nations before Christ came? Arnobius also records this criticism, "But if Christ was sent by God for this purpose that he might free unhappy souls from the destruction of extinction, what were the former centuries guilty of, which before his coming were annihilated by the lot of mortality?"<sup>1</sup> Moreover, "If Christ came as the preserver of the human race as you say, why does He not free all without exception, and with equal kindness?" At least God might change our minds towards Christ, since "unless I am a Christian, I cannot have the hope of salvation." The absurdity of the Christian claims is further seen in the newness of their religion, in contrast to the centuries of pagan discovery and tradition. <sup>2</sup>"Why did God the king and prince decide that barely a few hours ago,<sup>3</sup> as it is said, Christ should descend from the heights of Heaven as Saviour?"

Anyhow, the Christian God does not save His followers from evil and persecution. "Why therefore if you serve the Almighty God and trust that He has care for your health and safety, whye does He permit you to suffer through persecutions and to undergo every kind of penalty and punishment?"<sup>4</sup>

Arnobius devotes the whole of his third book to an attack on The Anthropomorphic Gods. At the beginning he asserts that if the pagan gods do exist, then the Christians worship them in rendering homage to the Supreme God. This was the very point that Philo of Alexandria had made. "Tentatively we can say this: in attending to the worship of the Godhead, the First God - the First God I repeat - the Father of things and the Lord; the Establisher and Governor of all things, is enough for us. In Him we worship everything that must be worshipped. And as in earthly kingdoms we/

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1. Adversus Nationes II, 63. All these pagan objections are found in Celsus.
  2. Adversus Nationes II, 74.
  3. Athenagoras Apology XVII ff. counter-charges that the pagan gods, being originally men, are of recent origin, and "but of yesterday".
  4. Caecilius in the Octavius of Minucius Felix makes the same charge: "Why doesn't God help the Christians? - Where is this God of yours, who is able to help those who come to life again, but not those living?" (Octavius XII).



"we are forced by necessity to show reverence by name who, along with the Sovereigns compose the Royal families, but whatsoever respect is attached to them is tacitly understood to be implied in homage to the Kings themselves, so in precisely the same manner these gods whoever they are whom you suggest for our worship, if they are Royal in descent and sprung from the primal Head, though they receive no worship from us by name, nevertheless understand that they receive homage in common with their King and are included in acts of reverence accorded him."<sup>1</sup>

Among the anthropomorphic features of the Gods which most annoys Arnobius is the attribute of sex. "For in the first place we cannot be induced to believe this that that immortal and most extraordinary nature goes by a division of sexes, one part males the other part females."<sup>2</sup> Christians do not even consider God as male although His name is of the masculine gender. Certainly it is inconceivable that the Gods have bodies with genital organs, for, "The obscenity of intercourse is far from the gods."<sup>3</sup> He further adds, "the physical inconveniences of childbirth cannot be ascribed to the gods. So too, the alleged shapes of the gods are to be rejected as being anthropomorphic. Earthly bodies are unworthy of the gods. What are we to say then? That the gods bear a head compressed into a smooth roundness, bound to the back and to the chest by a network of muscles etc."<sup>4</sup> They must possess all the internal organs of human males and females as well as the external, and if the gods possess hair, skin and so forth, then "whoever believes this true, necessarily also accepts this as true, that the gods are fullers, barbers, who wash their sacred garments or trim the locks when matted with fleece of growing hairs."<sup>5</sup> It is even inconsistent for pagans to maintain that the gods preside over these arts, care for them, but are not themselves artisans.<sup>6</sup>

Arnobius/

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1. Adversus Nationes III, 2 and 3 Arnobius appears to be willing to include the pagan gods in worship.
  2. Adversus Nationes III, 6.
  3. Adversus Nationes III, 9. cf. Objection Six Recognitions of Clement Book II XLIX Simon Magus - "Remember that you said that God has a son, which is doing Him wrong. For how can He have a Son when He is subject to passions like men or animals."
  4. Adversus Nationes III, 13. cf. Cicero De Natura Deorum 2, 55.38
  5. Adversus Nationes III, 15.
  6. Adversus Nationes III, 26. ff.



Arnobius likewise attacks the evil deeds of the mythological gods, such as Mars, setting the whole world at variance,<sup>1</sup> or Venus, inspiring the lust and passions, thus proving them to be unworthy of worship. Janus, Saturn, Jupiter and Juno are also eliminated from the list of gods, as is the case of Minerva, Neptune, Mercury etc. Another weakness in the pagan theology, which Arnobius exposes, is the deification of parts of the universe. "If the world is an animate being and is moved by the impulse of a single mind, it cannot be dispersed into several Divinities; nor can particles of it, if they are gods, be united and turned into the consciousness of a single living being. The moon, sun, earth, stars are members of the world. Now, if they are parts and members, they are certainly not independent living creatures ..... the whole matter boils down to this that the sun is no god, nor the moon, nor the other, nor earth and the rest."

Arnobius also touches on the matter of statues, and images of the gods. "We worship the gods by means of the images."<sup>2</sup> But, "how do you know whether all these images you form as substitutes for the immortal gods reproduce and bear a resemblance to the divine? It may be that one is bearded in heaven who is fashioned by you as beardless."<sup>3</sup> He further ridicules the idea that the gods possess bodies with the appropriate physical limbs and members. Then he deals with the aspect of pagan idolatry which roused most comment from Christian apologists. "Those images which intimidate you and which you adore in all the temples, prostrate upon the ground are bones, stones, brass, silver, gold, clay, wood taken from a tree or glue mixed with plaster. They are congeries coming possibly from the trinkets of harlots or women's toilet tables, from camel bones or the tooth of the Indian beast from cooking pots and pans, from candle sticks and lamps, or from still more repulsive vessels. They have been melted down and cast into these shapes and forms which you see, baked/

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1. Adversus Nationes III, 26 ff. Cicero De Natura Deorum II, 27, 68. III, 21, 52. Lactantius Div. Inst. 2. 5.
  2. Adversus Nationes VI, 9.
  3. Adversus Nationes VI, 10.



"baked in kilns, produced from anvils and hammers, reduced with scrapers, ground with rasps and files, cut hewn, and hollowed out with saws, augers, axes, bored out with the turning of bits smoothed off with planes."<sup>1</sup>

Much of Arnobius's criticism of the anthropomorphic forms of the gods strikingly reminiscent of the Stoic argument on the Divine Nature in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*.<sup>2</sup>

In his seventh book against the pagans Arnobius makes a contrast between pagan and Christian theology. He deduces the following five points:-

(a) The pagan gods were born by intercourse, but "we declare the gods unbegotten and eternal."

(b) The pagan gods have sex, male and female, but "we deny emphatically that the heavenly powers are distinguished by sex."

(c) The pagan gods are divided into dissenters and good gods, but "we judge such things alien to the disposition of the Divinities." ("In your appraisal the Divinities grow angry - we think that such emotions are foreign to them for they belong to savage beings and those who run the course of mortality").

(d) The pagan gods rejoice in the blood of cattle etc., but "we think that among the heaven dwellers there is no love of blood."

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1. *Adversus Nationes* VI, 14. cf. Minucius Felix *Octavian* 23, 9.13.
  2. Book II, XVII, 45. *De Natura Deorum* Balbus on the Divine Nature. "It remains for us to consider the qualities of the Divine Nature and on this subject nothing is more difficult than to divert the eye of the mind from following the practice of bodily sight." 5 - "For they, the gods have no framework of veins and sinews and bones - nor consume food and drink --- disease, exhaustion. On the contrary, they are endowed with suspense beauty of form, they are situated in the purest region of the sky and control their motions and courses, conspiring together to preserve and to protect the universe."



(c) The pagan gods "are delighted and influenced by the "clash of brass, the sound of pipes, by horse races and games in "the theatre - by which their wrath is quelled, but we deem it "out of place." 1

1. I have included Arnobius's attack on pagan theology to show that the reaction was not one-sided, and that one attack provoked the other. This contrast, made by Arnobius, pin-points the essential difference between the two theologies, a difference which made the bitter controversy which ensued inevitable.

G O D  
PLOTINUS

A. H. Armstrong writes "The philosophy of Plotinus is more "even than other philosophies of the Christian era, not only a "philosophy, but a religion, a way for the mind to ascend to God."<sup>1</sup> One would therefore expect, as is the case, that the philosophy of Plotinus would deal with the same fundamental themes as the Christian religion, God, man, the world. In all three of these, the view of Plotinus clashes with the Biblical and Christian viewpoint. It is our task at this stage to discover the differences between the Neo-Platonic conception of God and the Christian conception of the Deity. First of all, it ought to be noted that Plotinus does not attack Christianity and its doctrines specifically by name, but he does at times oppose certain ideas which as it happens were held by Christians. Moreover, undoubtedly the Weltanschauung of Neo-Platonism is fundamentally different from that of Christianity.

Plotinus begins by asserting the utter transcendence of God. This is not simply the abhorrence of Celsus or Julian at the grosser misrepresentations of the Deity, the anthropomorphisms which attributed passions such as anger, lust and envy to the gods, which were also present in the Christian conception of God. For Plotinus it is not that we dare to think evil of God, so much that we dare not think of God at all. Indeed we cannot, as He transcends thought. We find ourselves therefore at a loss to know how to describe God, as Plotinus woefully laments. Its definition, in fact could be only 'the undefinable': what is not a/

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1. A. H. Armstrong. Plotinus G. Allen & Unwin 1953 p.24.



a thing, is not some definite thing. We are in agony for a true expression; we are talking of the untellable; we name, only to indicate for our own use as best we may. And this name, the One, contains really no more than the negation of plurality.<sup>1</sup> Thus Plotinus entitles the Supreme God, 'the One' (τὸ ἓν). Even Anaxagoras in his assertion of a mind pure and

mixed, affirms a simplex, as do Herakleitus, Empedocles and Aristotle later.<sup>2</sup> The One is the derivation of all things yet derived from no thing; it therefore must be primal.

"Number, quantity is not primal; obviously before even duality, 'there must stand the unity.'<sup>3</sup> This primal unity then precedes all being, and can possess no being in itself. "In order that 'Being may be brought about the source must be no Being, but 'Being's generator." Neither can the One possess vision or

knowledge, as this would destroy its unity, leading to duality and multiplicity.<sup>4</sup> "This assuredly cannot be one of the things 'to which it is prior. We may not call it Intellect; therefore 'too we may not call it the Good if the Good is to be taken in the 'sense of some one member of the universe. If we mean that which 'precedes the Universe of things, the name may be allowed."

We find the favourite terms of Plotinus to describe God are these two, the One and the Good (τὸ ἄγαθόν), and Plotinus emphasizes that the term Good used in this connection has no moral connotation, the One transcending and defying every category of thought. The God of Neo-Platonism is therefore non-moral. It is also beyond shape and body "Our One-first is not a body: a body is 'not/

1. Plotinus. Enneads V, 5.6. Celsus (Contra Celsum VI, 65) was confronted by the same difficulty "He cannot be named" Celsus thus admits his debt to philosophers who by synthesis, analysis and analogy have made it possible for others to "gain 'some conception of the Nameless" (cf. Enneads VI 7.30) Lactantius Divine Institutes I 4-6 likewise states that God "had no peculiar Name". See also Minucius Felix. Octavius XVIII "You need not seek a name for God. God is His Name" also Justin, Apology II, 6; Cicero De Naturu Deorum I, 12.30; Clement Stromata V 8, 12.

2. Plotinus. Enneads V, 1.9.

3. Plotinus. Enneads V, 1.5.

4. Plotinus. Enneads V, 3. 10-12.



"not a simplex, and as a thing of process cannot be a first, the source cannot be a thing of generation; only a principle outside of body and utterly untouched by multiplicity could be the first."<sup>1</sup>

This completely transcendent God fails to explain the creation of the world and man. Therefore Plotinus has to add to the One in order that the more immanent aspects of God might be included.

Now, "anything existing after the First must necessarily arise from that First, whether immediately or as tracing back to it through intervenients. The second hypostasis of the Plotinian Godhead is the Nous."<sup>2</sup> This is the knowing aspect of the Godhead, and is

as such eternal. "Again, all that is fully achieved engenders, therefore the eternally achieved engenders eternally as eternal Being. At the same time the offspring is always minor; what then are we to think of the All Perfect but that it can produce nothing less than the very greatest that is later than itself. This greatest, later than the Divine Unity, must be the Divine Mind, and it must be the second of all existence, for it is that which sees the One on which alone it leans while the First had no need whatever of it."<sup>3</sup> The knowledge ascribed to this knowing

principle is not discursive, but immediate and intuitive, the object of thought and the thinker are one (Nous and Noeta).

The Noeta are for Plotinus what the Ideas were for Plato, but Plotinus sees these ideal archetypes of created things to be dynamic, the eternal thought of the eternal God.<sup>4</sup> The Nous and the Noeta are inextricable, dual only by a logical necessity. Yet it/

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1. Plotinus. Enneads V 4.1.
  2. Stephen Mackenna translates Nous as "the Intellectual Principle". "Spirit" is a less awkward translation. We shall simply retain the Greek word "Nous".
  3. Plotinus. Enneads V 1.30.
  4. P.V. Pistorius. Plotinus and Neoplatonism. Bowes and Bowes. 1952. cf. V 3.11 "Plato's ideas are the Universe as it is. The Noeta of Plotinus are the Universe as it should be. It is the teleological goal of the visible Universe, the vision of the heart of the artist who, succeeds in translating that vision on canvas, or in music but never perfectly."



it is one step removed from the utterly transcendent One and one step nearer the world of sense. Yet a third hypostasis is necessitated for a sufficient Godhead. "There exists a Principle which transcends Being; this is the One whose nature we have sought to establish in so far as such matters lend themselves to proof. Upon the One follows immediately the principle which is at once Being and the Intellectual-Principle. Third comes the Principle, 'Soul'."<sup>1</sup>

Soul ( $\psi\chi\eta$ ) is the immanent phase of the Plotinian Godhead, its creative Logos or Reason-Principle, by which the Godhead has contact with the visible Universe. This Principle of Life has three stages, the lowest being the purely vegetative stage, whereby all things grow and have animation; the middle stage is that of human reason, the power to rationalize discursively by the method of analysis and synthesis; the highest stage of the Psyche is the Divine Intellectual stage, found in man but not always active. It is in us the organ by which we know God. Soul is the means by which the Nous through its self-vision reproduce the visible Universe. Just as the Intellectual-Principle is the Image of the One so the Soul is the image of the Nous, the "unquiet-faculty, always desirous of translating elsewhere what it saw in the Authentic Realm." It is, according to Plotinus, like a "seed at rest, unable to bear within itself all the dense fulness of its possession. The nature principle (Logos) within, uncoiling outwards, makes way towards what seems to it a large life,----- it is so with this faculty, when it produces the Kosmos known to sense, the mimic of the Divine Sphere, moving not in the very movement of the Divine but in its similitude, in an effort to reproduce that of the Divine. To bring this Kosmos into being, the Soul first laid aside its Eternity and clothed itself with Time."

Soul/

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1. Plotinus. Enneads V 1.10.
  2. Plotinus. Enneads III 7.1.

Soul thus seen is the Divine immanent principle, through whose activity the visible Universe came into being as a copy of the Noeta and through which the visible Universe is maintained. (logos spermatikos). Thus all ensouled things are thereby divine.

It is precisely on this point that Plotinus expresses his impatience with a certain Christian Gnostic sect, members of which had been causing trouble in his lecture room at Rome.<sup>1</sup> He attacks the various doctrines of this sect in the 9th Ennead of his second book, generally known as Against the Gnostics.

"There are men, bound to human bodies and subject to desire, grief, anger who think so generously of their own faculty that they declare themselves in contact with the intelligible world but deny that the Sun possesses a similar faculty less subject to influence, to disorder, to change; they deny that it is any wiser than we, the late born, hindered by so many cheats on the way toward truth. Their own soul, the soul of the least of mankind, they declare deathless, divine; but the entire heavens and the stars within the heavens have had no communion with the immortal principle, though these are far purer and lovelier than our own soul ..... We are to imagine the deathless soul choosing to design the less worthy place, and preferring to abandon the nobler to the soul that is to die."<sup>2</sup> Later he elucidates, "And the stars, those of the upper and the under spheres, moving in their ordered paths, fellow-travellers with the Universe, how can they be less than Gods? Surely they must be morally good - what could prevent them? All that occasions vice here below is unknown there, no evil of body perturbed and perturbing. Knowledge too in their unbroken peace, what hinders them from the intellectual grasp of the Godhead and the intellectual Gods."<sup>3</sup> Thus by their rest, order and proximity to/

1. Porphyry, Vita Plotini. XVI.

2. Plotinus, Enneads. II 9.5.

3. Plotinus, Enneads. II 9.8. We have already noted that this was one of the fundamental points of disagreement between the pagans and the Christians. The Christians with one voice maintained that the Sun and Stars were matter created by God, the Creator, who alone was worthy of worship e.g. Aristides Apology (Syriac) IV? V? VI; Clement, Exhortation V ff. Athenagoras, Apology XVI; Lactantius Divine Institutes I, V.VI, etc.



to the supernals, as well as by the fact that all animated things participate in soul, the heavenly bodies are described as gods.

"Through soul this universe is a god; and the sun is god because it is ensouled; so to the stars, and whatsoever we ourselves may be, it is all in virtue of soul."<sup>1</sup>

We have already noted Plato's account of the Divine creation of the visible Universe, a replica of the super-sensual world of ideas, and how Celsus, Golen and Julian emphasised its superiority to the Mosaic cosmogony. We have also seen the more dynamic conception of the intellectual realm held by Plotinus, with its vital connection to the world of sense. The visible universe is divine by its being ensouled and is therefore the eternal generation of the eternal Nous. If the visible world falls short of the Noeta it is because of the perversity and resistance of Matter.<sup>2</sup> Certainly any suggestion of the Universe being created in time, such as the Christians and Gnostics maintain is out of the question. "In other words, things commonly described as generated have never known a beginning; all has been and will be. Nor can anything disappear unless where a later form is possible: without such a future there can be no dissolution."<sup>3</sup> Thus Plotinus not only denies a beginning<sup>4</sup> to the world of sense but also the ultimate destruction prophesied by the Christians.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Gnostics in order to uphold the creation of the world by the soul or demi-urge must/

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1. Plotinus Enneads.V 1.2.
  2. This, of course, is the view of all the philosophers of our period, that evil inheres in matter.
  3. Plotinus Enneads.II 9.3.
  4. An interesting pagan objection to the Christian doctrine of Creation in time is found in Origen's De Principiis III V.3. "What was God doing before the world began, if the world had a beginning in time?" cf. Sallustius XII.
  5. cf. Sallustius.On the Gods and the World VIII.



must postulate a fall of the soul to explain the evil in the visible world. In answer to this Plotinus asserts "No such disgrace could overtake the soul of the All. If they tell us of its falling, they must tell us what caused the fall. And when did it take place? If from eternity then the soul must be essentially a fallen thing; if at some one moment why not before that? We assert its creative act to be a proof not of decline but rather of its steadfast hold. Its decline could exist only in its forgetting the divine; but if it forgot, how could it create? Whence does it create but from the things it knew in the divine? If it creates from memory of that vision it never fell.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the soul will not destroy its work. If it will it must repent of its work. What is it waiting for? If it has not yet repented it will never repent." This last statement is the crux of the matter; the Divine is unchangeable and unalterable and has no place in it or its products for sudden change.

What is more, the world is not so ugly and evil as some would declare. In this same chapter Plotinus adds, "and yet, what reflection of that world (to Noeta) could be conceived more beautiful than this?"<sup>2</sup> Anyhow, Plotinus as often states the antiquity of his viewpoint "that this world has neither beginning or end but exists for ever as long as the Supreme stands is certainly no novel teaching."<sup>3</sup> Also, "to ask why God has created the Kosmos is/

1. Plotinus Enneads II 9.4.

2. A most interesting parallel exists in Tertullian's impatience with Marcion at his lack of respect for the world, and for the Creator of this world. Tertullian accuses Marcion of being a repudiator of His Maker, in the following terms. "A single flower from the hedgerow, I say not from the meadows; a single shellfish from any sea, I say not from the Red Sea, a single stray wing from a moorfowl, I say nothing of the peacock - will, I presume, prove to you that the Creator was but a sorry (sordidum) artificer." Against Marcion XIII, XLV. Tertullian would have agreed with Plotinus in his attack on the Gnostic belief in an inferior evil creator, but he would part company from Plotinus in the assertion that the beauty of the universe declares its divinity. Christian writers stress the beauty of nature, pointing beyond to the beauty of the Creator. e.g. Minucius Felix. Octavius XVII, Lactantius, Divine Institutes II, v. cf. Cicero De Natura Deorum II, 2.

3. Plotinus Enneads II, 9.7.



"is to ask why there is a soul and why a creator creates. The question also implies a beginning in the eternal, and further represents creation as the act of a changeful being who turns from this to that." Therefore any suggestion that the world was created by a deliberate fiat of the Divine mind posterior to the existence of the Divine is refuted. The generation of the Universe is therefore the necessary act of the Nous operating through Soul even as the generation of the Intellectual-Principle is the necessary act of the One, but no chronological sequence is suggested.<sup>1</sup>

In this tractate against the Gnostics Plotinus once again returns to the divinity of the heavenly bodies. Again he rebukes the arrogance of those who place themselves higher than those superior beings. We are reminded of the impatience of Celsus and Julian with the Christian view, that they possess a special revelation of God, and are in a special relation to the Divine, and possess a peculiar providence. "This Universe too exists by Him and looks to Him - the Universe as a whole and every god within it - and tells of Him to me; all alike revealing the the plan and will of the Supreme. These in the nature of things, cannot be what He is, but that does not justify you in contempt of them in pushing yourself forward as not inferior to them. The more perfect the man, the more compliant he is even towards his fellows; we must temper our importance, not thrusting insolently beyond what our nature warrants; we must allow other beings, also, their place in the presence of the Godhead; we may not set ourselves alone next after the First in a dream flight ..."

Plotinus continues in this vein with the Christian Gnostics in mind, "yet imbeciles are found to accept such teaching at the mere sound of words."<sup>2</sup> You yourself are to be nobler than all else, nobler than men, nobler than Gods. Human audacity is very great; a man, once modest, restrained and simple hears 'you yourself are the/

1. Plotinus Enneads II 9.8. Sallustius, the Neoplatonist contemporary with Julian makes the same point (On the Gods and the World XII, XIII).
2. cf. Contra Celsum III 44, 50, 55 re. the low intelligence of Christian converts.



"the child of God; those men whom you used to venerate, those beings whose worship they inherit from antiquity, none of these are His children."<sup>1</sup> These inserted quotations undoubtedly reflect the language of Christian propagandists, and were doubtless part of the teaching of this Christian Gnostic sect, which Plotinus opposes. Likewise the attainment to salvation by a simple act of faith is ridiculed by Plotinus. "You without lifting a hand are nobler than the very heavens; others take up the cry; the issue will be much as if in a crowd all equally ignorant of figures, one man were told that he stands a thousand cubic feet; he will naturally accept his thousand cubits even though the others present are said to measure only five cubits; he will merely tell himself that the thousand indicates a considerable figure."<sup>2</sup>

This is the precise attitude of uncritical faith which annoyed Galen so much. The fact of the matter is that God does not work that way, making favourites of certain men by delivering to them a free way of salvation in a special revelation. Plotinus states this as we have seen the other antagonists of Christianity do -

"Another point (you hold that) God has cared for you - how then can He be indifferent to the entire universe in which you exist? We may be told that He is too much occupied to look upon the Universe and that it would not be right for Him to do so; yet when He looks down and upon these people is He not looking outside Himself and upon the Universe in which they exist? If He cannot look outside Himself so as to survey the Kosmos, then neither does He look upon them." Divine Providence necessarily covers the whole of creation. Every soul is a child of the Father. "Again how can they deny that the Lord of Providence is here? How else can He know either that they are here, or that in their sojourn here they have not forgotten Him and fallen away? And if He is aware of the goodness of some, He must know of the wickedness of others. That means He is present to all."

How/

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1. Plotinus Enneads II, 9.9.



How then do we reach a knowledge of God? Certainly not by despising the gods nor by despising virtue. "This school in fact "Is convicted by its neglect of all mention of virtue: any "discussion on such matters is missing entirely; there is no "word of all the numerous and noble reflections upon it that have "come down to us from the Ancients; we do not learn what "constitutes it or how it is acquired, how the soul is tended, how "it is cleansed. For to say, 'look to God' is not helpful without "some instruction as to what this looking imports; it might very "well be said that one can 'look' and still sacrifice no pleasure, "still be the slave of impulse, repeating the word 'God' but held "in the grip of every passion and making no effort to master any. "Virtue advancing towards the Term and linked with thought, "occupying a soul makes God manifest; 'God' on the lips without a "good conduct of life, is a mere words"<sup>1</sup> For Plotinus the experience of knowing God is a mystical one, which he calls the Term, being the goal of all religious experience, the realisation of ultimate unity with the One. In the last resort it is attainable only through the higher intuitive phase of the soul, although Plotinus does lay down a scheme of religious observance towards the attainment of union with God. First of all there must be a purification (*καθαρσις*), a turning of the Soul to virtue, before it can address itself to its special task. Plotinus admits that somehow the Soul tends to forget God, "their regard for the "mundance and their disregard of themselves bring about their utter "ignorance of the Divine. A double discipline must be applied if "human beings in this class are to be reclaimed, and brought back to "their original, lifted once more towards the Supreme and One and "First. There is a method which we amply exhibit elsewhere, "declaring the dishonour of the objects which the soul holds here "in honour; the second teaches or recalls to the Soul its race and "worth; this latter is the leading truth, and, clearly brought "out, is the evidence of the other."<sup>2</sup> Man must start then by realising/

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1. Plotinus Enneads II 9.16.
  2. Plotinus Enneads V. 1.1.



realising the Soul, the author of all living things, and the participation of man in Soul. "You must honour the Soul elsewhere; honour then yourself."<sup>1</sup> After this exercise man is ready to ascend. "The Soul once seen as precious, thus Divine, you may hold the faith that by its possession, you are always nearing God; in the strength of this power make upwards towards Him; at no great distance you must attain: there is not much between."<sup>2</sup>

The Soul must reach yet higher to the more Divine, the Nous. "Sprung in other words from the Nous, Soul is intellective, but with an intellection operating by the methods of reasonings (i.e. discursive); for its perfection it must look to that Divine Mind, which may be thought of as a father watching over the development of his child born imperfect in comparison with himself."<sup>3</sup> Plotinus suggests an alternative way of mounting up to the Noeta by contemplating the world of sense and the gods therein, thus reaching up to the Arche-types, "Nothing here exists but is Divine Mind, all is God; this is the place of every soul. Here is rest unbroken." We must grasp the first Soul if possible, that image of the Divine Intellect through which we ascend to the One. However this vision is possible to certain people only, so that "anyone not of the strength to lay hold of the First Soul, that possessing pure intellection, must grasp that which has to do with our ordinary thinking and thence ascend: if even this proved too hard, let him turn to account the sensitive phase which carries the ideal forms of the less fine degree, that phase which too, with its powers is immaterial and lies just within the realm of the ideal principles. One may even if it seem necessary begin as low as the reproductive Soul and its very production and thence make the ascent, mounting from those ultimate ideal principles to the ultimates in the higher sense, that is to the primals."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Plotinus Enneads V 1.2.
  2. Plotinus Enneads V. 1.3.
  3. " " "



This quest which is abundantly worth while is described as the approach of God bringing light to the soul. This sudden flooding of the Soul by Divine Light is reached not by *διανοία λογισμός* but through *ἐκστασις*. There are several fine passages on this Beatific vision.<sup>1</sup>

Two other things may be noted finally about Plotinus's conception of God. As one would expect he rejects the validity of the Graeco-Roman gods, but at the same time he retains certain of the old myths interpreting them allegorically.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, Plotinus has an interesting passage against the use of prayers and incantations, "In the idea that these powers will obey a call and be lead about by a word from any of us who is in some degree trained to use the appropriate forms in the appropriate ways."<sup>3</sup> How do these things act upon the unembodied? Passing to exorcism and spiritual healing Plotinus denies that diseases are Spirit Beings or the result of any such Evil Demons. "They can never persuade the intelligent that disease arise otherwise than from such causes as overstrain, excess, deficiency, putrid decay, in a word some variation whether from within or without. The nature of illness is indicated by its very cure. A motion, a medicine, the letting of blood, and the disease shifts down and away; sometimes scantiness of nourishment restores the system: presumably the spiritual power gets hungry or is debilitated by the purge. Either this spirit makes a hasty exit, or it remains within. If it stays how does the disease disappear with the cause still present? If it quits the place, what has driven it out?"<sup>4</sup> Plotinus thus ridicules any spiritual cause for illness, especially any evil cause. Likewise if the cause is physical there can be no spiritual cure. Elsewhere he denies completely any spiritual power of evil whatever. This would cause a dualism between good and evil, a weakening of the Kingdom of God.

1. cf. Plotinus VI 9.11. and V. 3.17.

2. Julian and Sallustius both interpreted the myths allegorically in Neoplatonic terms. Julian - Orations IV, V.  
Sallustius - On the Gods and the World.

3. Plotinus Enneads II, 9.4.

4. Plotinus Enneads II, 9.14.



G O DPORPHYRY

Since Porphyry was the biographer and editor of Plotinus and his lectures, he was therefore thoroughly conversant with the neo-Platonism of his master. Unlike Plotinus, however, Porphyry attacks directly the Christian faith. Before we consider his arguments against the Christian doctrine of God we shall attempt to reconstruct his own conception of the Deity. In his letter to his wife, Marcella, we find an impassioned appeal for loyalty to God.

It is clear that Porphyry believes in one supreme god who is self-sufficient and the source of all goodness and beauty. Man is purified by the knowledge of god who is always at hand to behold every act and every deed. God is not the author of evil, which springs from the human heart and for which man must take the full blame. Porphyry urges his wife to pray to God asking only that for which is worthy of Him, and only for those things which we can attain from no other source. Our words have to be reflected in our deeds. "It is impossible for a man who loves God also, to love pleasure and the body, for he who loves these must needs be a lover of riches. And he who loves riches must be unrighteous."<sup>1</sup>

Porphyry stresses the supreme place of virtue in our relationship with God, placing it in a more conspicuous place than did Plotinus. He is inclined to believe that man is more likely to ascend to God by the paths of virtue, than by the Plotinian ecstatic term, which Porphyry himself experienced only once. He tends to scorn the popular modes of religion because much sacrifice was generally attended by little virtue. His idea of virtue was mainly ascetic,  
"wherefore/

1, Letter to Marcella 14.



"wherefore the gods, too, have commanded us to purify ourselves  
"by abstaining from food and from love." Later he expands his  
ascetic doctrine. "It is a great proof of wisdom to hold the  
"body in thrall. Often men cast off certain parts of the body."<sup>1</sup>

One passage from this epistle has striking resemblances to  
1st Corinthians 13. "There are four first principles that must be  
"upheld concerning God - faith, truth, love, hope. We must have  
"faith, we must strive with all our might to know the truth about  
"God. And when we know this, we must love Him whom we do know.  
"And when we love Him we must nourish our souls on good hopes for  
"our life, for it is by their good hopes good men are superior to  
"bad ones."<sup>2</sup> This passage would almost certainly point to his  
indebtedness to Paul, whom he must have read at an earlier date.

He pays lip tribute at least to the pagan gods, whom he usually  
interprets allegorically, "they who believe that God exists and  
"governs all things have this reward of their knowledge and firm  
"faith: they have learnt that God has forethought for all things  
"and that there exists angels, divine and good spirits, who behold  
"all that is done and from whose notice we cannot escape."<sup>3</sup>

However sincere his belief may have been in spiritual beings he  
certainly does not believe literally in the gods of the Greek  
pantheon. As we shall see later Porphyry ridicules the  
anthropomorphic aspects of the deity, common to both pagans and  
Christians alike. "Anger is foreign to the gods for anger is  
"involuntary, and there is nothing involuntary about God."<sup>4</sup>

Finally/

1. Letter to Marcella 34 cf. De Abŕentia II, 34 (Eusebius Dem.  
Ev. III.2) Vegetarian diet produces tranquility of soul.  
"To the God over all, as Apollonius of Tyana well advised, the  
Best offering is made in silence and contemplation."
2. Letter to Marcella 23.
3. Letter to Marcella 21.
4. Letter to Marcella 18. Here again both pagans and Christians  
attacked the other on the question of Divine Anger.  
Tertullian maintains that a God who punishes must be suscept-  
ible to anger. Arnobius denies any anger in gods, while  
Lactantius his pupil devotes a book to the Wrath of God.  
(Tertullian. Against Marcion IV, XV; Arnobius Against the  
Pagans VII; Lactantius De Ira Dei). Sallustius likewise  
seeks to resolve the problem. "In what sense, although the  
"gods never change, they are said to be made angry and appease  
His answer is that we must allegorise the human passions  
attributed to the gods in the myths (On the Gods and the  
World XIV). cf. Julian Against the Galileans 171E. The  
Hebrews attribute "anger, and wrath and fierce jealousy"  
to God.



Finally before we look at some of the remaining fragments from his fifteen books against the Christians there is one curious passage in the Letter to Marcella which appears to refer to Christians. "Do not associate with any one whose opinions cannot profit thee, nor join with him in conversation about God. For it is not safe to speak of God with those who are corrupted by false opinion."<sup>1</sup>

Coming on to the direct arguments used by Porphyry against the Christians we find that he has given some space to a criticism of the Mosaic Cosmogony. One of his criticisms preserved for us by Severian is as follows "Many say and especially 'they' follow that enemy of God, Porphyry, who wrote against the Christians, and has perverted many from the truth 'Why did God forbid the knowledge of good and evil? He might forbid evil, but why should He forbid good'".<sup>2</sup> What appears to have been another criticism of Moses is found in an objection based on the immortal angels and the finger of God, with which He wrote on the tables of stone. (Exodus 31.18).<sup>3</sup> Porphyry attacks this reference from two angles, the monotheistic and the anthropomorphic. He objects that these angels who stand before God and who are not subject to feeling and death being immortal are those beings whom the pagans speak of as gods. Why do the Christians then demand the worship of one god only? Jesus, in Matthew, 17, 29 and 30, testifies to the divine nature of angels; likewise Moses and Joshua and even Paul speak of gods. Porphyry is opposing the accusation made by the Christians that the gods have no existence but that they were originally men who were later deified by their fellows. "It is not/

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1. Letter to Marcella c.15.

2. Severian, Homily VI on Creation Gen. 3 v. 5.  
cf. Contra Celsum VI, 28. cf. Rec. Clem II, LI<sup>1</sup>;  
cf. Julian Against the Galileans 89A.

3. Mac. Magnes Book IV, 21.



"not men, but the gods who are held in honour by us, that are meant, not only by Moses, but by his successor, Joshua. For he says to his people 'and now fear Him and serve Him alone and 'put away the gods whom your fathers served'; and it is not concerning men but incorporeal beings that Paul says, 'for though there be they that are called gods, whether on earth or in heaven, yet to us there is but one God and Father, of whom are all things'. Moreover, even if God were capable of being angry, He would not be so because men worshipped other gods. He develops his argument on behalf of the gods in an objection based on the monarchy of god. He feels that in virtue of being a monarch, god must rule over other gods. "For a monarch is not one who is alone in his existence, but who is alone in his rule. Clearly he rules over those who are his fellow-tribesmen, men like himself just as the Emperor Hadrian was a monarch, not because he existed alone but because he ruled over men who shared his race and possessed the same nature. Likewise, God would not properly be called a monarch, unless he ruled over other gods."<sup>1</sup>

Porphry's attack on the anthropomorphic aspects of God includes this slander, "It is possible to get hold of this doctrine from another saying which asserts positively that God has no fingers."<sup>2</sup> He also attacks the Christians for postulating anger to God because anger is inconsistent with the nature of God. It is this fundamental belief that God can do nothing contrary to His nature which inspires two further attacks.

The first is on the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body. "For what is the reason that God should act thus, and upset in this random way the succession of events which has held good, whereby He ordained that races should be preserved and not come/

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1. Mac. Magnes IV, 20. cf. 21 Re names of gods. "For she who is called by the Greeks Athene is called by the Romans Minerva; and the Egyptians, Syrians and Thracians address her by some other name. But I suppose nothing in the invocation of the goddess is changed or lost by the difference of the names. The difference is not great whether a man calls them gods or angels."
  2. Mac. Magnes IV, 21.



"come to an end. The things which have once been determined by 1  
"God, and preserved through such long ages ought to be everlasting."

He develops a long argument showing how ridiculous the idea of a bodily resurrection is. "The question of the resurrection is full  
"of silliness, for many have often perished in the sea and their  
"bodies have been consumed by fishes, while many have been eaten by  
"wild beasts and birds. How then is it possible for their bodies  
"to rise up? .... You will tell me that this is possible with  
"God, but this is not true. For all things are not possible with  
"Him.<sup>2</sup> He simply cannot bring it about that Homer should not  
"have become a poet, or that Troy should not be taken. Nor indeed  
"can He make twice two to be reckoned as a hundred even although  
"this may seem good to Him."<sup>3</sup> Similarly God cannot become evil.

Also since God must be true to His eternal nature His creation must remain eternal. God is unchangeable and His act is likewise unchangeable. Porphyry attacks the saying of St. Paul, "The fashion  
"of this world passeth away." This would involve change and alteration, either for the worse or for the better, which would suggest that God has created the world imperfectly. Porphyry cynically comments "Let us pass over this trivial saying with mild  
"laughter."<sup>4</sup>

It is undoubtedly the pupil of Plotinus who speaks the following words, "And pray consider a further point. How unreasonable it is  
"if the Creator shall stand by and see the heaven melting, though  
"none has conceived of anything more wonderful than its beauty, and  
"the stars falling, and the earth perishing: and yet He will raise  
"up the rotten and corrupt bodies of men, some of them, it is true,  
"belonging to admirable men, but others without charm or symmetry  
"before they died, and affording a most unpleasant sight."

#### Two/

1. Mac. Magnes IV, 24.
2. cf. Celsus, Galen etc.
3. Mac. Magnes IV, 24. Porphyry is clearly indebted to Celsus in his claim that God could not become evil.
4. Mac. Magnes IV, 1. cf. Sallustius.



Two further references to the gods ought to be noted. The first is by way of answer to the Christian disdain of the use of Statues.<sup>1</sup> He asserts that pagans do not confuse the statue with the god represented thereby. "Those who make a suitable object of reverence for the gods do not think that the god is in the wood or stone, or bronze from which the image is manufactured;<sup>2</sup> nor do they consider that if any part of the statue is cut off,<sup>3</sup> it detracts from the power of the god. For the images of living creatures and the temples were set up by the ancients for the sake of remembrance,<sup>4</sup> in order that those who approach thither might come to the knowledge of the god when they go." Porphyry compares the value of statues to the value of a portrait of a friend, which honours and keeps alive the memory of a friend. The Christians have no right to oppose the making of statues in the fashion of man, as they hold that man was made in the image of God, and Moses even attributes fingers to God.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Mac. Magnes IV.21.
  2. The language of Porphyry here echoes the language of Christian antagonists, and proves Porphyry's knowledge of the arguments used by Christians against statues. Athenagoras Apology XVI uses the phrase "stones, wood, bronze, silver, god"; Clement, Exhortation to the Heathen I speaks of statues made of "stone, wood, brass"; Letter to Diogenetus II, 1, 10 and Lactantius, Divine Institutes II, 2 use the same phrase. cf. Contra Celsum I, 5.
  3. Aristides, Apology XIII, speaks of parts of statues being "cut off". So too Lactantius.
  4. Lactantius (Divine Institutes II, 2) also deals with the metaphor of a picture of an absent friend. "God is not absent; He is diffused everywhere."
  5. cf. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, XIX, 23 - Treatise Concerning Images. The author of the Letter to Diogenetus makes the accusation. "That is why you hate the Christians, because we do not believe that these objects are gods." II, 1.10. Porphyry, on the other hand, maintains that Christians are inconsistent here, as there is no difference between positing God dwelling in a statue and God dwelling in the womb of the Virgin Mary (Apoc. IV, 22).

The second reference is to Sacrifices. This was a constant source of annoyance to pagans that Christians did not sacrifice to their God. The view of Porphyry is this: "But in the case of sacrifices that are brought to the gods, these are not so much a bringing of honour to them as a proof of the inclination of the worshippers, to show thereby that they are not without a sense of gratitude."<sup>1</sup>

To summarise Porphyry's theology: he worships the Supreme God, acknowledging the existence of other spiritual beings; the Olympian gods he allegorises as attributes of the great god. Also Porphyry is aware that sacrifices are not substitutes for purity of life and spirituality of worship. He is angered by the selfsame aspects of Christian theology as was Plotinus before him, namely the destruction of the world by God, and the special claim to a privileged place in Divine providence and revelation, even to the final raising of their bodies by God.<sup>2</sup>

1. Mac. Magnes IV, 21. Sallustius declares that "sacrifices add
2. Plotinus Enneads II, 9. ("potency to prayers" On the Gods and (the World XV).



G O D

JULIAN

Julian's attack on the Christian conception of God is found in his treatise *Against the Galileans*<sup>1</sup> and follows much the same lines as that of Celsus. For example he describes the Jewish account of creation as "wholly fabulous" for the same reason that Celsus ridiculed it, namely because it gave a false and unworthy impression of God. God is made out to be a simpleton who did not realize that Eve would not be a help-meet. Moreover, what sort of a God "would deny to human beings the power to distinguish between good and evil."<sup>2</sup> He therefore concludes, "In what do such legends as these differ from the myths that were invented by the Hellenes?" Julian also scorns the casting out of Adam from the Garden, and the alleged reason, "Behold Adam has become like one of us, because he knows good from bad." Then he too like Celsus suggests the possibility of an allegorical interpretation, but unlike Celsus who having suggested it, immediately rejects even that possibility, Julian appears to endorse the idea. "Unless every one of these legends is a myth that involves some secret interpretation, as I indeed believe, they are filled with many blasphemous sayings about God."<sup>3</sup> Certainly, like Celsus, he pours scorn on any literal acceptance of the Hellenic myths, since they too are, "incredible and monstrous stories", and must be interpreted allegorically.

Julian/

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1. *Kata Tach Galileen* . Edited Neumann.
  2. *Against the Galileans* 89A cf. *Recognitions of Clement* Book II, LIII Objection Seven. Simon Magus: "For why should he forbid him to eat, and to know what is good and evil, that knowing he might shun the evil and choose the good."
  3. *Against the Galileans* 94A. Julian, himself, only accepts the pagan myths when allegorically interpreted. This was the custom of the Neoplatonic writers.



Julian also spends some time comparing the narrative of Moses with the Platonic account of creation. One can detect something of Galen's dissatisfaction with the Genesis story - so much has been missed out, so little has been explained!!<sup>1</sup> Moses only deals with the immediate Creator of the Universe, and says nothing about the Gods who are superior to this creator, not even is anything said about the nature of angels, only that they serve God; nor is there any word about the generation and the making of the Spirit, which moved upon the face of the waters.<sup>2</sup> "We will compare the utterance of Plato and observe what he says of the creator and what words he makes the creator speak at the time of the generation of the Universe."<sup>3</sup> Julian quotes from the Timaeus of Plato the speech of The Artificer.<sup>4</sup> Then he seeks to demonstrate the superiority of the Platonic accounts; "according to Moses God is the Creator of nothing that is incorporeal, only the disposer of matter that already existed."<sup>5</sup> Plato on the other hand acknowledges the realm that is invisible and incorporeal, "giving the name gods to those that are visible, the Sun, the Moon, the stars in the heavens, but these are only the likenesses of the invisible gods." Plato declares that these intelligible and invisible gods are immanent in and co-existent with the Creator Himself, and were begotten and proceeded from Him.<sup>6</sup> "The creative gods received from their father their creative power. The truth of the matter is that Moses/

1. Galen and Julian agree. cf. 143 AB. Therefore as I said, unless for every nation separately some presiding national God (under him and angel, demon, hero, spirits) established the differences in our laws and characters, you must demonstrate to me how these differences arose by some other agency. It is not sufficient to say 'God spoke and 'it was so'. (must harmonize with Nature)
2. Against the Galileans 96 C.D.E.
3. Against the Galileans 49A cf. Letter to a Priest 292.
4. Timaeus 28A C. and 41 A.B.C.
5. 4 E (K.G.) Genesis 1, 1-17.
6. Against the Galileans 65C.



"Moses has failed to give a complete account of the immediate  
 "Creator of the Universe as can be illustrated by a further  
 "comparison of beliefs."<sup>1</sup>

It is at this point that Julian attacks another aspect  
 of Jewish and Christian belief already combatted by Celsus,  
 namely their claim to special favour in the eyes of God.

"Moses said that the Creator of the Universe chose out the Hebrew  
 "nation, and to that nation alone did he pay heed and cared for it,  
 "and he gives charge of it alone. But how and by what sort of  
 "gods the other nations are governed he has said not a word -  
 "unless indeed one should concede that he did assign to them the  
 "Sun and Moon. (Deut. 4. 19)"<sup>2</sup> Not only Moses and the

prophets, but Jesus and Paul also assert that He is the God of  
 Israel alone and of Judea, and that the Jews are His chosen  
 people. Julian quotes from the books of Exodus, Psalms and  
 the Epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians to prove the  
 exclusiveness of this concept of God.<sup>3</sup> Like Celsus, Julian

protests at the unfairness of such a providence. "And finally  
 "God sent unto the Jews also, but unto us no prophet, no oil of  
 "anointing, no teacher, no herald to announce His love for man  
 "which should one day, though late, reach even unto us also.  
 "May, He even looked on for myriads, or if you prefer for  
 "thousands of years, while men in extreme ignorance served idols,  
 "as you call them, from where the Sun rises to where it sets;  
 "yes and from North to South, save only that little tribe, which  
 "less than two thousand years before had settled in one part of  
 "Palestine. For if He is the God of all of us alike, why did He  
 "neglect us?"<sup>4</sup> The conclusion reached by Julian concerning the

God of the Jews and the Christians is that this is not the  
 Begetter of the whole Universe who is Lord of all, but rather that  
 He is a local Deity, limited to His own empire, and therefore  
 simply/

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1. Against the Galileans 66A.
  2. Against the Galileans 99E.
  3. Against the Galileans 106 A.B.C.
  4. Against the Galileans 106 D.



simply one of the crowd of other gods.<sup>1</sup> How much wiser is the teaching of the Hellenes, "the Creator is the common father and "King of all things but the other functions have been assigned by "him to national gods of the peoples and gods that protect the "cities, every one of whom administers his own department in "accordance with his own nature."<sup>2</sup> Aras rules the warlike, Athene the wise and warlike, Hermes rules the shrewd rather than the adventurous and so on. This is proved by history; the Celts and Germans being fierce, Hellenes and Romans inclined to political life and human, the Egyptians being intelligent and good at crafts, the Syrians being effeminate. Obviously there must be some fundamental reason for such basic differences of temperament and custom, not to mention the differences of language.<sup>3</sup>

At this point Julian criticises the Mosaic account of the Tower of Babel and the confounding of languages. He quotes Genesis Chapter 11 verses 4 to 8, commenting that it is a "wholly fabulous explanation." This tale, so obviously insults the intelligence of both man and God; man's because no people would be so stupid as to think it possible to scale heaven by bricks, God's as no Deity would be afraid of the brutality of His creatures.<sup>4</sup> Julian echoes Celsus's criticism that, anyhow, it/

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1. Against the Galileans 100C.

2. Against the Galileans (134D) 115D Julian holds the pagan position of his age in maintaining the existence of a Supreme God aided by subordinate national deities. Lactantius, the Christian philosopher asks, "What need is there of many to sustain the government of the Universe?" "Each would possess less might and strength. These gods "must be weak" (Divine Institutes) I III).

3. Against the Galileans 134D.

4. Against the Galileans 135 B.C.



it was surely not necessary for God to descend in person to achieve His purpose. "He could not, as it seems do it from on high without coming down to earth."<sup>1</sup> Moses has nothing to say of the confusion of characters and customs.

Thus from historical evidence Julian would reject the Jewish claim to a special revelation from God. "But consider whether God has not given to us also gods and kindly guardians of whom you have no knowledge, gods in no way inferior to Him who from the beginning has been held in honour among the Hebrew of Judea, the only land He chose to take thought of as Moses declared and those who came after Him down to our time."<sup>2</sup> Julian even goes so far as to say that admitting the God of the Hebrews to be the immediate creator of the Universe, Greek traditional beliefs are higher than Jewish, concerning Him and "He has bestowed on us greater blessings than on them" - "Moreover He sent us also law-givers not inferior to Moses, if indeed many of them are not far superior."<sup>3</sup> In sum, the many customs, languages and characteristics are due to the influence of many gods.<sup>4</sup> Later Julian further expands the point already raised that the Romans and Greeks have been granted by God more wise men than the Hebrews possess. Even the Egyptians, the Chaldeans and the Assyrians excel here. Did God "grant the Hebrews to originate any science or any philosophical study?" On the contrary, the study of astronomy, geometry, arithmetic and music originated elsewhere and were developed by the Hellenes. Julian lists a number of philosophers, generals, artificers, law-givers and kings all more excellent than those of the Hebrews. The final truth that God has not forgotten the remainder of the world lies in His gift of Asclepius, who "stretched out over the whole earth his saving right hand." Also "He visits each one of us separately/

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1. Against the Galileans 138A. cf. Contra Celsum IV, 3.
  2. Against the Galileans 141C.
  3. Against the Galileans 141D.
  4. Against the Galileans 143C.



"separately and yet he raises up souls that are sinful, and 'bodies that are sick.'"<sup>1</sup> What similar gift can the Hebrews boast of as bestowed on them by God? Their wisest man Solomon who served one God also was led astray by the argument of a woman.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of his criticism of the law of Moses, Julian is sidetracked into an outburst against the cruder anthropomorphic characteristics attributed to the Hebrew God.<sup>3</sup> Dealing with the injunction, "Thou shalt not worship other gods."<sup>4</sup> Julian exclaims, "To this surely He adds a terrible libel upon God, 'for I am a 'jealous God' (Deut. 4.24), he says, and in another place 'Our 'God is a consuming fire' (Heb. 12.29). Then if a man is 'jealous and envious you think him blameworthy, whereas if God is 'called jealous, you think it a Divine quality!" This is foolishness and terrible blasphemy. Anyway, the Christians have failed to obey this commandment. "For if it is God's will that 'no other should be worshipped why do you worship this spurious son 'of Him whom He has never yet recognised or consider as His own?"<sup>5</sup>

The story of Phinehas in Numbers, Chapter 25, also irritates Julian. "Nowhere is God shown as angry, or resentful, 'or wroth, or taking an oath, or inclining first to this side, or 'suddenly to that, or as turned from His purpose, as Moses tells 'us has happened in the case of Phinehas."<sup>6</sup> The very reasons for God's alleged anger in this story are trivial in the extreme and Julian finds great satisfaction in drawing a comparison between God's behaviour and the mildness of Lycurgus and the forbearance of Solon/

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1. Against the Galileans 200B.
  2. Against the Galileans 224D.
  3. Clement of Alexandria. Stromata IV, XVI tried to explain these very anthropomorphic statements in the Old Testament about God. They were due to the fact that the Lord was "savingly 'accommodating Himself to men."
  4. Against the Galileans 155C.
  5. Against the Galileans 159E. The Christian writers were at pains to clear themselves from this charge. e.g. Athenagoras Apology IV-VI stresses the unity of God in Ancient writers and in IX he maintains that the Christian Trinity is not polytheism, but constitutes a Unity. Interestingly enough, none of the pagan opponents point to the Holy Spirit as a disrupter of monotheism, but always to Jesus as a "second God". Indeed, the Holy Spirit is ignored by anti-Christian writers.
  6. Against the Galileans 160D.



Solon, or even the humane treatments of the Romans towards transgressors.<sup>1</sup> The absurdity of postulating anger and jealousy to God is further illustrated by the best philosophers, that humans should imitate the gods. "But what sort of imitation of God is praised among the Hebrews? Anger and wrath and fierce jealousy!"<sup>2</sup>

At the very beginning of his Polemic Julian outlines the process by which man first arrived at the conception of God. "The human race possess the knowledge of God from nature not from teaching".<sup>3</sup> Julian adduces certain stages in man's God-consciousness. First of all, there exists in all men a desire for the Divine. "All of us have attained to a belief in some sort of Divinity."<sup>4</sup> In the second place all are dependent on the heavens and the gods that are visible therein, and so we conceive of heaven as being the most honourable of all, overseeing all the affairs of the earth. Man therefore instinctively "stretches out his hand towards heaven when he prays", and naturally conceives that heaven is a god (kai) or the throne of a God.<sup>5</sup> Both Hellenes and Hebrews are witnesses to this,<sup>6</sup> as the regular risings and settings of the stars and the indestructible nature of the firmament display God-like qualities "Eternal and ever in movement as we see, it travels in a circuit about the Great Creator whether it be impelled by a nobler and more Divine Soul that dwells therein, just as I mean our bodies are by the Soul in us, or having received its motion from God Himself, it wheels in its boundless circuit, in an increasing and eternal career."<sup>7</sup>

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1. Against the Galileans, 168B, 171D.
  2. Against the Galileans 171E. ὀργή καὶ θυμὸς καὶ ξήλος ἄγριος
  3. Against the Galileans 52B. We are already familiar with this argument.
  4. Against the Galileans 52B.
  5. Against the Galileans 69C cf. 52C.
  6. Against the Galileans 69B.
  7. " " "



It is significant that although Julian generously receives practically any and every god into his all embracing syncretism, all subservient to the One, the Supreme God, yet he excludes Jesus from his pantheon. He scorns all who have been deceived into worshipping Jesus as a God. "Wouldn't any man be justified in detesting the more intelligent among you and pitying the more foolish who by following you have sunk to such a state of ruin, that they have abandoned the everlasting gods and have gone over to the corpse of the Jew."<sup>1</sup> In this regard the Jews are in better case than the Christians, for they agree in their mode of worship with the Gentiles in that they make sacrifices to the God. Why have the Christians ceased to sacrifice?<sup>2</sup> Moreover the Jews adhere to their own scriptures in worshipping only one God.<sup>3</sup> Julian quotes Deut. 4. V. 39 where Moses states "there is none else" also Daniel 37. V. 16 "thou art God even thou alone" likewise Isaiah declares the uniqueness of God. Do they leave any place for a second God?<sup>3</sup> Yet John in his Prologue distinctly identifies the Word with God (John 1 v. 1). Even so was Jesus the Word?<sup>4</sup> Julian seeks to disprove any fulfilment of prophecy by Jesus, especially of Isaiah 7. v. 14, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son", as it makes no reference to a God being born and Mary was no virgin anyway, having lain with her husband before marriage.<sup>5</sup> Julian blames John then for first calling Jesus a God. "At any rate neither Paul, nor Matthew, nor Luke, nor Mark venture to call Jesus God. But the worthy John, since he perceived that a greater number of people in many of the towns of Greece and Italy had already been infected by this disease, and because he heard, that even the tombs of Peter and Paul were/

1. ~~Against the Galileans 305D.~~
2. Against the Galileans 305D.
3. Against the Galileans 262B.
4. In our section on Jesus the problem of the Logos will be dealt with in more detail.
5. Against the Galileans 262D.



"were being worshipped - secretly it is true, but still he did  
"hear this - he, I say was the first to venture to call Jesus God."

1. Against the Galileans 327 A.B.

CHAPTER THREEJ E S U SCELSUS

Before the pagan world began to accuse Christianity by debate and polemic, a complete battery of Jewish accusations and arguments against the faith had been evolved into a fixed tradition of anti-Christian propaganda. Many of these Jewish arguments passed into the hands of the Greek opponents of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> A great number of these arguments dealt with the person of Jesus of Nazareth in an effort to disprove his claim to Messiahship as well as his claim to divinity. Moreover, Christianity had destroyed the solidarity of the chosen race of Israel, and the inclusion of Gentiles within the kingdom of God appeared to abrogate the promise made by God to Abraham. Nor would the strictly monotheistic Jews admit of a second person in their Godhead, as the Christians appeared to demand. At all costs this Jesus must be completely discredited as a person possessing any worth whatever, certainly any divine qualities.

It is therefore significant that when Celsus attacks the person of Jesus most violently, he does so in the name of a Jew. That/

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1. We shall see that Celsus used various Jewish arguments, gleaned from various sources. Apart from his knowledge of the controversy between Jason and Papiscus, Celsus shows clear knowledge of Justin's Dialogue with Trypho, which he used freely. Of particular force is the similarity between the following passages.
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|----------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Dialogue | LXVII, 2: | Contra Celsum | I, 67 |
| "        | LXVII, 5: | "             | II, 4 |
| "        | CII 3:    | "             | I, 66 |



That Celsus was familiar with the current Jewish arguments against Christianity is beyond dispute since he has obviously utilised them.<sup>1</sup> Origen at times implies that Celsus's Jew is no Jew at all; for example, when he declares that no Jew could state that the prophets heralded the "son" of God, rather would a Jew speak of the "Christ" of God.<sup>2</sup> Again, Origen is dubious of the authenticity of this Jew, when Celsus makes his Jew speak in the following terms, "We hope, it is true, to be resurrected in the body, and to have everlasting life, and that he who is sent to us will be a pattern and leader of this by showing that it is not impossible for God to raise someone up again with his body."<sup>3</sup> Origen doubts very much if the Jew of Celsus would expect Christ to be a pattern of the resurrection. This suspicion of Origen is more than outbalanced by the authentically Jewish arguments amassed by Celsus in Books I and II.

In his preface, Origen apologising for his written reply to Celsus, stresses that Jesus has constantly been the object of attack. "Now, Jesus is always being falsely accused, and there is never a time when he is not being accused so long as there is evil among men."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Contra Celsum IV, 52. Celsus refers by name to one such debate, that between Papiscus and Jason. Origen, too, makes reference to debates between Jews and Christians. He himself had disputed with "learned and high-minded Rabbis" (I, 5, II, 31). cf. I, 47, where Origen claims that Josephus interpreted the fall of the temple in terms of the divine retribution on the Jews for putting to death the innocent apostle James, the brother of our Lord. This is found in no known manuscript of Josephus.
  2. Contra Celsum I, 49.
  3. Contra Celsum II, 77.
  4. Praef. II. For an excellent article on the Jewish sources of Celsus to which I am indebted throughout this section see *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*, 1941 p. 1-31. *Etudes sur les sources juives de la polemique de Celse contre les Chretiens*, by Marc. Lods.



As we would expect Celsus denies the miraculous birth of Jesus. He repeats the current accusation that Jesus was born in a poor Jewish village, his mother was "a poor country woman, a spinster, "driven out by her husband, the carpenter, because of adultery. "After being driven out she wandered about in a disgraceful way and "secretly gave birth to Jesus."<sup>1</sup> Celsus adds the slander found often in the Talmud that the father of Jesus was a soldier named Joseph ben Panthera.<sup>2</sup> Justin in his Dialogue with Trypho likewise had/

1. Contra Celsus I, 28. It is to be noted that with his usual disdain for common names, Celsus does not even mention the name of Mary. We can detect various strands of Jewish polemic in this statement by Celsus.
  - (a) "He (i.e. Jesus) fabricated the story of his birth from "a virgin." Nowhere in the Gospels do we find Jesus claiming his own virgin birth. It would seem likely that this was part of the Jewish tradition such as we find in the Toldoth Jeshu I, 46, 47, where Jesus on His return to the temple is made to cry out, "Who are these wicked men who report me "to be of impure birth? ... Did not a virgin bear me?"
  - (b) "He came from a Jewish village and from a poor country woman, who earned her living by spinning." According to various Talmudic references Mary is called Miriam and her occupation is normally that of a weaver of women's hair, which was generally the task of prostitutes.
  - (c) "She was driven out by her husband who was a carpenter "by trade, as she was convicted of adultery." The Toldoth Manuscripts H and W come nearest to the text of Celsus, both of which state that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, and that the mother of Jesus was turned out by the carpenter.

T.T. Sukka and Tol. W both follow Matthew in alleging that the legal father was the carpenter.
2. Contra Celsus I, 32, 33 f. The Talmudic evidence for this accusation is to be found in H.L. Strack, Jesus, die Haretike und die Christen (1910), J. Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth (1925), p. 288 ff., Jos Jooz, The Jewish Talmudic statements about Jesus, R.T. Hertford, Christianity in Talmud and Midrash (L.1903). That Jesus was born out of wedlock appears to have been included in the earliest Jewish attacks. There is an echo of it in Matthew Chp. 1, 19-23. Jesus is accused of being the son of a prostitute in Acta Pilati II, 3 Gesta Pilati, II, 3-6, in the Talmud, Mi Yeb IV, 3, 49A, Kallah 18B, T.B. Shab 104B, Sanh 67A, To Yeb, III, 3. Toldoth SVA I etc.



footnotes continued.

2. continued.

The name Panthera is not easily explained, some say that Panthera was a German soldier, others that Panthera is a confusion of the Greek word Parthenos, a virgin (L. Patterson, J.T.S. (1917) XIX, pp. 79-80 puts forward the latter theory).

had to take account of the accusation that Jesus was the product of an illegitimate union, (LXXVIII) as in Tertullian (De Spectaculis XXX) "This is he, I shall say, the son of the carpenter or of the harlot."

Another aspect of Jewish criticism of the birth of Jesus was that Christians were guilty of fabricating myths of the same sort as the pagan Greek myths. "The old myths attributed the Divine birth to Perseus and Amphion and Aecus and Minos."<sup>1</sup>

Celsus sarcastically scorns any possibility of God desiring intercourse with a woman, especially a poor, obscure, peasant girl! "Then was the mother of Jesus beautiful? Did God have sexual intercourse with her? Is it likely that God would have fallen in love with her since she was neither wealthy nor of royal birth, for nobody knew her neighbours."<sup>2</sup> Manifestly, these things believed by the Christians, "have nothing to do with the kingdom of God."

Again, the Jew of Celsus denies that the mother of Jesus was of royal lineage when he deals with the genealogies in the Gospels.

"The men who compiled the genealogy boldly said that Jesus was the first man's descendant, also from the King of the Jews. The carpenter's wife could not have been ignorant of it had she had such a distinguished ancestry."<sup>3</sup>

The flight into Egypt is ridiculed as unnecessary if Jesus really were a god. "Why also when you were still an infant did you have to be taken away to Egypt lest you should be murdered? It is not likely that a God would be afraid of death. But an angel came from heaven commanding you and your family to escape, lest by being left/

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1. Contra Celsum I, 67. This contrast to the myths of Greece may suggest at first sight the arguments of a Greek, rather than of a Jew. But then we discover that Trypho, Justin's Jew (LXVII, 2) makes precisely the same comparison, even referring to the same myths of Perseus and Amphion.
  2. Contra Celsum I, 39.
  3. Contra Celsum II, 32.



"left behind, you should die. And could not the great God, who "had already sent two angels on your account guard you, His own "son at that very place?"<sup>1</sup> In this quotation Celsus refers to the stay in Egypt of Jesus when only an infant, and so far does not depart from the New Testament narrative. In another place, however, Celsus's Jew draws upon a non-biblical tradition.<sup>2</sup> He charges Jesus with sorcery learned in Egypt. Because he was poor, "Jesus hired himself out to a workman in Egypt, and tried His hand "at certain magical powers in which Egyptians pride themselves. "He returned full of conceit and because of these powers took the "title of God."<sup>3</sup> Exact parallels of this accusation are to be found in the Talmud, in which Jesus is represented as going to Egypt, when he had reached manhood, in order to earn His living.

Also from this last quotation we discover that Celsus disbelieves entirely that Jesus worked His miracles by Divine power. It is interesting that he does not discredit the fact of the mighty works of Jesus, but that fact is due to the magical powers of sorcery, which Jesus had learned in Egypt, as did Moses before Him.<sup>4</sup> The charge of sorcery is repeatedly made.<sup>5</sup> What angers Celsus is not/

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1. Contra Celsum I, 66.  
- to be afraid of death.
  2. This is Jewish tradition. Talm. 4 tells us that Jesus returned from Egypt, chased by famine.
  3. Contra Celsum I, 28. *δυναμειν τωων* - certain magical powers.
  4. Contra Celsum I, 26. *μεγα φρονων* - lit. thinking greatly  
i.e. highly elated or full of conceit.
  5. cf. Sanh 67A. "Isn't this Ben Stada (Jesus) who carried back "magic formulae from Egypt by an incision to his flesh?"  
cf. Tol. V. 2. "Jesus went to Egypt and stayed there a long "time; he learned there the tricks of magic!!"  
Justin also takes note of the charge of sorcery (Dialogue with Trypho LXIX, 7, I Apology XXX) Tertullian also, Apology XXXI, 17; XXXIII, 12. cf. Mark 3, 22; Matthew IX, 24, 12, 24, Luke 11, 5 etc. Clementine Recognitions I, 58; Evang. Nicodemus XII, T.B. Shab 104B; Sanh 67A; 43A, 107B; To Hulein II 22-23; T.B. Aboda Zara 27B etc.



not that Jesus uses magic, but that He does so as a proof of His divinity. Are not all the other sorcerers divine in that case?

"When they speak of cures or resurrection or a few loaves feeding many people, from which many fragments are left over, or any other monstrous tales related by the disciples, the scriptures may be true. Come let us believe these miracles were done by you. They are merely the same as the works of sorcerers who profess to do wonderful miracles and the accomplishments of those taught by the Egyptians who for a few obols make known their sacred lore in the middle of the market place, and drive demons out of men, and blow away diseases, and invoke the souls of heroes, displaying expensive banquets and dining tables, cakes, dishes which are non-existent, and who make things move as though they were alive, though they are not really so, they only appear as such in the imagination. Since these men do these wonders ought we to think them sons of God? Ought we to say they are practices of wicked men, possessed by an evil demon?"<sup>1</sup> For Celsus the actions of Jesus were the actions of one hated by God, and a wicked sorcerer.<sup>2</sup> Did not Jesus himself warn His followers to beware of others who would perform similar wonders as He did, as these were wicked men and sorcerers, inspired by Satan? "Is it not a miserable argument to infer from the same works that He is a god, and they are wicked sorcerers?"<sup>3</sup>

Having refuted the divinity of the miracles of Jesus, Celsus in the person of his Jew continues to abuse the character and conduct of this suprious son of God. As a mere man Jesus was inferior/

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1. Contra Celsum I, 68. μέχρι φαντασίας - in the imagination.
  2. Contra Celsum I, 71 cf. Deuteronomy 21, 23. Justin's Jewish opponent attacks Jesus with this Deuteronomic curse in mind. Dialogue with Trypho XXXII, 1. "We wait for Him ... but this so-called Christ of yours was dishonourable and inglorious, so much so that the last curse contained in the law of God fell on him, for he was crucified."
  3. Contra Celsum II, 49, cf. VI, 42, cf. I, 6.



inferior, "He did not show Himself to be pure from all evils."<sup>1</sup>  
 It is little wonder that "as long as He lived He convinced nobody, "not even His own disciples, and was punished and endured such "shame."<sup>2</sup> For all His boasts, Jesus instead of becoming king became a common beggar, "disgracefully cowering from fear, and "wandering up and down in destitution."<sup>3</sup> Also His choice of friends reveal the character of the leader, "Jesus collected round "Him ten or eleven infamous men, the most wretched tax collectors "and sailors, and with these fled hither and thither, collecting a "means of livelihood in a disgraceful and importunate way."<sup>4</sup>  
 Nor is Celsus impressed by the teaching of Jesus, much of which is only "empty threats and abuse."<sup>5</sup> For the rest, the teaching of Jesus consists of subtle deceits whereby he cheated the Jews into abandoning the law of their fathers.<sup>6</sup> Jesus is therefore a deceiver;<sup>7</sup> He is arrogant; and told "great lies;"<sup>8</sup> He is a "coward" who did not practise what He preached - "And when we had "convicted Him, condemned Him, and decided that He should be "punished He was caught hiding Himself, and escaping most disgracefully, and indeed was betrayed by those He called the disciples."<sup>9</sup>  
 Final proof of the falsity of the claims of Jesus, and of Christians generally/

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1. Contra Celsum II, 41 πάντων δὲ κακῶν καθαρεύοντα  
- pure from all evils.
  2. Contra Celsum II, 39 μηδένα πείσας - having persuaded nobody. τοὶ αὐτοὶ δὲ ἔμεινε - endured such things
  3. Contra Celsum I, 61. κρυπάζων, φοβούμενος, καὶ περιφθιρόμενος ἔνω κίτῳ - cowering with fear, and wandering up and down in destitution
  4. Contra Celsum II, 46.
  5. Contra Celsum II, 76.
  6. Contra Celsum II, 4.
  7. Contra Celsum II, 1  
- were ridiculously deceived.
  8. Contra Celsum II, 7. Celsus seeks to blacken the character of Jesus. This is in line with one strand of Jewish polemic which maligned Jesus as a lawbreaker. But another strand portrayed him, and John the Baptist as strict observers of the law of Moses (Josephus Antiquities XIII, 5.2.) Celsus appears aware of this in Contra Celsum II, 6. "Jesus kept "all the Jewish customs, and even took part in their "sacrifices". For the opposing view that Jesus was a deceiver of the Jews, leading them to abandon the law, compare Matthew 27, 62; John 7, 12, Justin, Dialogue with Trypho LXVII, 2; LXIX, 7; LVIII, 2; Acta Pilati A.II, B.1.1; Acta Petri et Pauli 41; Acta-Phil. 15, Josephus XVIII, 33, 63, 64; T.B. Saub 43A, 67A, 103A, 107B, Tol. S.45 V, 7.8. etc.



generally concerning Him, is found in His pathetic inability to inspire loyalty from His friends. "If He was a God, He would not run away, nor be led away under arrest, and least of all would He, who was regarded as Saviour and son of the greatest God and an angel, be deserted and betrayed by His associates, who had privately shared everything with Him, and had been under Him as their teacher."<sup>1</sup> Even in the army and among the lowest classes of brigands and robbers loyalty binds every man to his leader!<sup>2</sup> We can detect a mixture of Greek and Jewish tradition in the attitude of Celsus towards the events of the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. The Greek is indignant that one, who is divine should suffer such indignation; the Jew is indignant that one who is the Messianic King and Prince should so suffer.<sup>3</sup> Later, when Celsus has discarded the mouthpiece of the Jew he openly states the Greek accusation, referring to the Sibylline books, "However, you have had the presumption to interpolate many blasphemous things in her verses, and assert that a man who lived a most infamous life, and died a most miserable death, was a god."<sup>4</sup>

A distinctly Jewish charge against Jesus is that he seduced Jews from the true worship of their fathers. "What was wrong with you citizens, that you left the law of your fathers, and being deluded by that man whom we were addressing just now, were quite ludicrously deceived?"<sup>5</sup> How could these Jews converted to Jesus have been so foolish to abandon the ancient tradition for some new doctrine,<sup>6</sup> "A very few years ago He taught this doctrine, and was considered by the Christians to be a son of God."<sup>7</sup> Much of the polemic at this point is intended to bring these renegade Jews to their senses by shewing to them that Jesus is not the fulfillment of Jewish/

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1. Contra Celsum II, 9.
  2. Contra Celsum II, 12 cf. II, 20, 'Surely one who had eaten with a god would not become a conspirator against Him?'
  3. Contra Celsum II, 29.
  4. Contra Celsum VII, 53.
  5. Contra Celsum II, 1.
  6. Contra Celsum II, 4.
  7. Contra Celsum I, 26.



Jewish Messianic prophecy, as they suppose.

The Jew still addressing Jesus directly says, "Why should you be the subject of these prophecies rather than the thousands of others who lived after the prophecy was uttered?"<sup>1</sup> No event in the life of Jesus suggests any divine favour only the word of Jesus himself supports the descent of the spirit at His baptism and the voice confirming Him as the son of God.<sup>2</sup> Anyway, why was there this voice, if Jesus wished to remain unnoticed?<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the father didn't help His son very much in His hour of need on the cross, nor was He able to help Himself.<sup>4</sup> "Some thousands will refute Jesus by asserting that the prophecies which were applied to Him were spoken of them."<sup>5</sup>

In the first place, Jesus is an unsuitable candidate as he resembles in no way the prophesied Messiah. "The prophets say that the one who will come will be a great Prince, lord of the whole earth and of all nations and armies. But they did not proclaim a pestilent fellow like Him."<sup>6</sup>

Celsus develops his argument against the Christian use of prophecy later in his seventh book. "Those who base their defence of the doctrines of Christ on the prophets, have not a word to say if one points out some utterance of god which is wicked, or disgraceful, or impure, or abominable."<sup>7</sup> "Moreover God does not suffer the most shameful things, nor does He minister to evil", yet if Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy then God eats flesh and drinks vinegar and gall!!! "What else is He doing than eating filth?"<sup>8</sup> Likewise other aspects of the life of Jesus deny either that/

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1. Contra Celsus I, 50.
  2. Contra Celsus I, 42.
  3. Contra Celsus II, 72. *εἰ ἐβούλετο λανθάνειν* if he wished to remain unnoticed. Celsus suggests that if God were to come with a body and voice, both would have to be of an exceptional nature. Also, he would possess great powers of persuasion, which Jesus lacked. This interesting glimpse of Jesus is given in II, 75. He "was little and ugly, and undistinguished."
  4. Contra Celsus I, 50.
  5. Contra Celsus II, 28. *πονηρὸν . . . αἰσχρὸν . . . ἀκαθάρτου . . . μιᾶρτον.*
  6. Contra Celsus II, 29. (impure, abominable)
  7. Contra Celsus VII, 12. *σεκατοφάγειν.* - wickedst disgusting,
  8. Contra Celsus VII, 13.

that He was the subject of prophecy, or on the other hand, the validity of the original prophecy, since God is incapable of anything unworthy. "If the prophets foretold that the great God would "serve as a slave and be sick and die, would it necessarily follow "from the fact that it was predicted that God must die, and serve "and be sick in order that by His death it might be believed that "He was God."<sup>1</sup>

Another proof that Jesus was not foretold by the prophets of the Jews lies in the fact that the teaching of Jesus contradicted certain of the doctrines given by Moses. Does God change His mind and His laws? Either Jesus or Moses is wrong, and therefore not inspired by God.<sup>2</sup>

It is foolish therefore to claim that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and the subject of ancient prophecy. Equally foolish in the eyes of Celsus is a suggestion that Jesus Himself possessed the gift of prophecy and predicted the events and calamities of His own life. This absurd idea was invented by the disciples, in order to "excuse the events of His life."<sup>3</sup> "It is as if someone, while "saying that a certain man is righteous, shows him to be doing wrong; "and while saying that he is holy, shows him to be a murderer; and "while saying that he is immortal, shows him to be dead; and then "to all this adds that he had predicted." Nothing could be more absurd than that! Would a man who knew he was to suffer not seek to avert his suffering and indeed escape it? "What trustworthy "evidence is there that he made these predictions? How can a "dead man be immortal?"<sup>4</sup> Likewise, if he foreknew who would betray him and deny him, why didn't they fear him as a god and not betray/

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1. Contra Celsum VII, 14.
  2. Contra Celsum VII, 18.
  3. Contra Celsum II, 15.
  4. Contra Celsum II, 16.



betray him and deny him?"<sup>1</sup> None of these things happened because they were predicted, asserts Celsus, although he does not seem to think it possible that they could have been predicted only if they were to happen.<sup>2</sup> If these events happened because God predicted them, God is guilty of making good men into traitors and murderers!! Celsus also seems to think that if Jesus underwent the event of crucifixion in obedience to a decree of His father God, then it was "neither, painful nor grievous to Him."<sup>3</sup> Thus he accuses Jesus of fraud, when he utters loud laments and when he prayed in Gethsemane for the cup of suffering to pass from Him.<sup>4</sup>

While on the subject of the cross and passion of Jesus, Celsus reverts to the idea that it was altogether unworthy of a god so to suffer shamefully. His very accusers met with no retribution!<sup>5</sup> Here Celsus refers to the Greek legend of Dionysius and Pentheus. Then he compares Jesus with Alexander, who showed greater courage, indicating his wounds and declaring his blood to be like Ichor, such as flows in the veins of the blessed gods. Instead Jesus rushed greedily to drink. Manifestly this Jesus was no god. "What fine action did Jesus do like a God?"<sup>6</sup> There is a distinctly Greek flavour about these accusations put to Jesus by a Jew. "A god would not have a body such as yours. The body of a 'god would not have been born, as you, Jesus were born."<sup>7</sup> Also we detect/

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1. Contra Celsum II, 18.
  2. Contra Celsum II, 19. Of course, Celsus denies that they could have been predicted by God concerning Himself, since none of these events could happen to God.
  3. Contra Celsum II, 23. ἀλγεύων - painful.
  4. Contra Celsum II, 24. ἀνίαρ - grievous.
  5. Contra Celsum II, 37. Χανδον ἐπιτονίαν ἐρρηγμένον - rushed greedily to drink.
  6. Contra Celsum II, 37.
  7. Contra Celsum I, 69 cf. II, 35. Re Christ on cross.  
 "Why, if not before, does He not at any rate now show forth something divine and deliver Himself from this shame, and take His revenge on those who insult both Him and His Father? cf. II, 68 "If He really was so great He ought in order to display this divinity to have disappeared suddenly/

footnotes continued.

## 7. Continued.

"suddenly from the cross:" cf. Apollonius.

The whole subject of the Cross is distasteful to Celsus.

As a Jew (in Books I and II) he denies that the Messiah will suffer death ; as a Greek he denies that God can suffer.

Also for a Jew, the Cross was outlawed by Moses. In II, 24 Celsus shows Jesus in Gethesemane a prey to the fear of death. Also, at least Jesus should have shown some divine action on the Cross. That this had a Jewish precedent can be seen by reading St. Matthew's 27, 29-44.

Tertullian opposes the Greek idea that a God cannot suffer.

"The Son of God was born. I am not ashamed of it, because it was shameful. The Son of God died; it is creditable for the very reason that it was silly. And having been buried He rose again; it is certain, because it is impossible."

Credo quia absurdum!! (De Carne XI.1, 5).



Also we detect a dislike of the anthropomorphic conception of the deity in the criticisms which follow - "the body of a god would also not eat such food. The body of a god does not use a voice of that kind, nor that method of persuasion."<sup>1</sup>

Celsus fails to understand how Christians can believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Was it because He predicted it? Many others have promised to rise again.<sup>2</sup> Celsus lists some of these legendary heroes:- Xanolixis, Pythagoras, Phampsinitus, Orpheus, Heracles, and Theseus. "Or do you think that the story of these others really are the legends which they appear to be, and yet that the ending of your tragedy is to be regarded as noble and convincing?"<sup>3</sup> Anyway, who saw this? "A hysterical female, as you say, and perhaps some other one." It is all an hallucination and the result of wishful thinking.<sup>4</sup> In His resurrection appearances Jesus produced only "a mental impression of His wounds."<sup>5</sup> If Jesus really wanted to show forth His divine power, He ought to have appeared to the very men who treated Him despitefully and to the men who condemned Him and to everyone else."<sup>6</sup> This secrecy characterised Jesus both before and after the cross. This attitude is unreasonable. "For what messenger that has been sent ever hid himself when he ought to be delivering the message that he had been commanded to proclaim ... When he would establish a strong faith after rising from the dead, he appeared secretly to just one woman, and to those of His own confraternity." Why should Jesus hide his triumph, when His shame was seen by all?<sup>7</sup>

Celsus's/

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1. Contra Celsum I, 70.
  2. Contra Celsum II, 53.
  3. Contra Celsum II, 55. *γυνή*
  4. Contra Celsum II, 55. *ἡσυχαστὴς* - hysterical female.  
Trypho accuses that "his disciples stole him by night from the tomb ... and now deceive men by asserting that he rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven" (Justin Dialogue with Trypho CVIII, 2). Likewise in the Toldot Jeshu the disciples are accused of stealing the body of Jesus.
  5. Contra Celsum II, 63.
  6. Contra Celsum II, 61 *φαντασίαν* - appearance, mental impression.
  7. Contra Celsum II, 70.

Celsus's Jew declares his own hope of a resurrection in the body, and of everlasting life.<sup>1</sup>

The real assessment of Jesus reached by Celsus is "However, he was a mere man and of such character as the truth itself makes obvious and as reason shows."<sup>2</sup>

1. Contra Celsum II, 77. cf. II, 55. Celsus's Jew denies that man will rise with the same body. This is a Jewish belief 1. Cor. 15, 35 ff. speaks of a "new body". Also in Apoc. (Syriac) Baruch. 51.
2. Contra Celsum II, 79. "a mere man". *2<sup>ος</sup> ἄπωτος*.



PORPHYRY

So much of Porphyry's work against the Christians has been lost that it is difficult to determine his attitude towards Jesus. The historian Socrates states that he was once a convert who had left the Church after being ill-treated as a youth at Caesarea Philippi. His hatred of Christianity began early, as is evident from his work, The Philosophy of Oracles, in which although his position remains doubtful concerning Jesus, there is no doubt about his hatred of the followers of Jesus. In Augustine's De Civitate Dei there are two passages of interest in this connection.

The first important extract from the Philosophy of Oracles quoted by Augustine must be carefully noted. "Someone asked what God he ought to pay homage to, in order to turn back his wife from Christianity; this is the reply Apollo made in verse: 'It would be easier for you to trace characters on the water, or opening nimble wings to the breath of the air to fly like a bird, than to recall to reason your impious and spoiled wife. Leave her to persevere as she wishes in her mad errors. For by lamentations she worships a dead god condemned by fair judges, and who in his fairest year, held by nails, died ...'".<sup>1</sup>

The second passage appears to praise Christ rather than condemn Him. "This philosophy also speaks well of Christ, as if He forgot the outrageous words just quoted. He gives Himself the air of a man who is going to announce something incredible. 'What I am going to say will doubtless appear paradoxical to some. 'Oh well, the gods have proclaimed that Christ was very pious and he has become immortal. They made mention of Him with eulogies. 'As for the Christians they declare them to be spoiled, impure, fallen into the snare of error, and they used concerning them many other terms equally contemptible. Interrogated about the divinity of Christ, Hecate replied that the immortal soul continues its course, when separated from the body ... The soul of which we speak belongs/

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1. Augustine De Civitate Dei XIX, 23.



"belongs to a man very eminent for His piety. But for those who honour Him, the truth is estranged. He cate calls Him then a very pious man. His soul, like the souls of all pious men, has benefitted after his death by immortality. But it is through ignorance that the Christians worship Him".<sup>1</sup>

I have quoted the whole of these passages in order to draw certain conclusions. Firstly, it is important to notice that our assessment of Porphyry's opinion of Jesus depends on which of these two extracts we choose to accept as sincere. If we chose to accept the first which speaks of Jesus being justly condemned, we shall conclude that Porphyry despises Christ; if we accept the sincerity of the second extract, then we conclude that Porphyry had an admiration for Jesus. It is toward either of these two positions that modern historians incline.

~~You see~~ Eusebius stresses the second passage commenting, "You<sup>see</sup> how, far from being a magician, a quack, our Saviour Jesus Christ is known to be filled with piety, justice, wisdom, and as a dweller of the celestial abodes."<sup>2</sup> The comment of Augustine however, is "Who is so soft as not to see that these oracles are a fiction of the schemer, and I add of this embittered enemy of Christianity."<sup>3</sup>

Modern scholars tend to discern praise for Jesus in the writings of Porphyry. Harnack<sup>4</sup> discovers here that Porphyry has a secret admiration for Jesus. Geffcken<sup>5</sup> praises Porphyry for being the/

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1. Augustine De Civitate Dei, XIX, 23.
  2. Eusebius - Demonst. Evang. III, 17.
  3. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, XIX, 23.
  4. A.V. Harnack, Expansion: Vol II, Ch. V. p. 136 f. "he did not identify the Christ of the gospels with the historical Christ." also, Texte und Untersuchungen, 37, 4 p. 141.
  5. J. Geffcken - Zwei griechische Apologeten p. 298 ff.



the first to distinguish between Christ and the Christians, whereas M. Bidez<sup>1</sup> sums up Porphyry's attitude to Jesus in the phrase "noble conciliation". De Labriolle<sup>2</sup> is not quite so optimistic about Porphyry's position, and he can see only hostility toward Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

Our final verdict must take into account all the extracts which we possess, in which Porphyry speaks of Jesus. When we examine the all/

1. M. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre* (Leipzig 1913) p. 298 ff., 72 ff. also C.A. H. XVIII, pp. 611-645.
2. P. de Labriolle *La Reaction Païenne*, p. 233 ff and 279 ff. Concerning the favourable attitude of the others towards Porphyry, he exclaims, "Voilà des affirmations surprenantes!" cf. H. Lietzmann, Vol. III p. 45 ff. "Jesus finds no grace in his eyes."
3. Other church historians have likewise expressed an opinion on Porphyry's attitude to Jesus Christ, e.g. Pierre Benoît *Un Adversaire du Christianisme au III<sup>e</sup> siècle - Porphyre* R.B. 54 (1947) pp. 543-472. M. Benoît with Labriolle sees hostility towards Jesus in the writings of Porphyry. A.B. Hulen detects a change of attitude, turning from admiration of the Philosophy of Oracles to open hostility in the later writings. (A.B. Hulen, *Porphyry's Work Against the Christians - An Interpretation*, 1933 p. 28 ff.) J. Rheaume Laurin discerns a similar change of attitude *Orientations Maitresses des Apologistes Chrétiens* (Rome 1954) p. 46. F. Poulsen sums up Porphyry's attitude as follows, "He pays tribute to the personality of Christ, but he refuses to acknowledge His divinity." - *Glimpses of Roman Culture*, Leiden 1950 p. 269 f.

all too few extracts we discover certain things. First, Porphyry attacks Jesus only as He is portrayed by the Evangelists. In other words, he is really attacking the Gospel narrative rather than the person of Jesus. Secondly, Porphyry is not inconsistent in his criticism of Jesus. His view of Jesus that He is a wise man, and his criticism of the Gospel picture of Jesus is due to two factors (1) The writers at times over-estimate Jesus by making Him divine, i.e. more than a wise man (2) at other times they under-estimate Jesus by making Him less than a wise man.

It is clear that Porphyry abhors the Christian claim that Jesus was a god. In the Apocriticus of Macarius Magnes we have the following attack on the Incarnation. "But even supposing any one of the Greeks were so light minded as to think that the gods dwell within the statues, his idea would be a much purer one than that of the man who believes that the divine entered the womb of the Virgin Mary, and became her unborn child, before being born and swaddled in due course, for it is a place full of blood and gall and things more unseemly still."<sup>1</sup> To Porphyry the very fact that Jesus had contact with mortal flesh precluded Him from being divine.

In another criticism Porphyry objects to the saying, "If ye believe Moses, ye would have believed me"<sup>2</sup> He thinks this saying is "full of stupidity", because nothing which Moses wrote has been preserved. "And even if one were to conceive that the writing/

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1. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes IV, 22.

Celsus (Contra Celsum IV, 75, 77) shows abhorrence of God assuming a human body, on the same grounds that Porphyry here shrinks from the idea of God being born within a human body. To the Greek the flesh was unworthy, if not altogether evil. Thus Celsus claims that if God were to come in a body, it would be a body of much nobler quality than ours.

2. St. John Gospel 5, 46, 47½



"writing is that of Moses it cannot be shown that Christ was anywhere called god, or god the word, or creator."<sup>1</sup> It is to be noted that Porphyry attacks, not the saying of Jesus, but the writings of John, and this confirms the fact that it is the Evangelists whom Porphyry attacks, and who are guilty of inventing these nonsensical sayings attributed to Jesus. From another Fragment which we possess in the writings of Theophylact, it would seem that Porphyry developed a philosophical attack on the Christian claims that Jesus was the Logos, "If," he says, "the sone of God be Word, He must either be outward or inward word (that is, reason, thought or speech). But He is neither this nor that. Therefore He is not Word."<sup>2</sup>

Because Porphyry rejects the idea that Jesus is God, he also rejects all the events in the Gospels wherein Jesus is presented as a god. For example, he utterly scorns the accounts of the resurrection. Commenting on Matthew 28, 6 he writes, "There is also another argument whereby this corrupt opinion can be refuted. I mean the argument about that resurrection of His, which is such common talk everywhere, as to why Jesus after His suffering and rising again (according to your story) did not appear to Pilate, who punished Him and said He had done nothing worthy of death, or to Herod King of the Jewish race, or to many men at the same time, and to such as were worthy of credit, and more particularly among Romans both in the Senate and among the people."/

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1. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 3. cf. Celsus (Contra Celsum II, 31) accuses the Christians of "sophistry when they say that the Son of God is the very Logos himself." The pure and holy Logos would not have been arrested and crucified as was Jesus. Chadwick notes that Celsus appears to have been aware of the Logos - theology of Hellenistic Judaism (H. Chadwick, Contra Celsum, footnote 3, page 93). It is interesting that Porphyry, keeping to his set purpose of discrediting the Evangelists, makes no reference to contemporary Logos - doctrine, and only attacks the original Logos - statement of John's Prologue. (Julian, later, refers to current Christian opinion that Jesus is "God the Word." (Julian, Against the Galileans 290D, 347D, 434C) Also in Fragment Six.
  2. Theophylact. Comment, John.



"people." Further proofs that the narrative concerning the resurrection is no more than an invention of the Gospel writers, lies in the fact that Jesus appeared to "Mary Magdalene, a coarse woman, who came from some wretched little village and had been possessed by seven demons, and with her an other utterly obscure Mary, who was herself a peasant woman, and a few other people who were not at all well known."<sup>1</sup> Also this last part of the narrative must be an invention because it contradicts an earlier saying of Jesus, "Henceforth shall ye see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming with the clouds." Finally, had He shown Himself to men of note all would believe through them "and no judge would punish them as fabricating monstrous stories."<sup>1</sup>

What then did Porphyry think concerning the resurrection? He believed it to be a complete fabrication invented in order to assert the divinity of Jesus, whereas Jesus was not Divine, and He did not rise again bodily. Instead Jesus was only a good man whose soul ascended to its heavenly reward.

Most of the criticisms however in which Jesus figures arise because Porphyry feels that the Evangelists are portraying Jesus in a manner unworthy of a wise man. No sage would utter the nonsensical sayings which are ascribed to Jesus, nor would any wise man perform the base and wicked deeds which He is said to have/

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1. Mac. Magnes II, 24. *μυθους ἄλλοκότους* - monstrous stories. This is substantially the same criticism that Celsus made of the Christ's Resurrection appearances (Contra Celsum II, 61). In Contra Celsum II, 70 Celsus ridicules the fact that Jesus appeared only to "one woman, and to his own fraternity", whereas He should have appeared "to everyone, everywhere." Julian seeks to discredit the Resurrection, by pointing to the contradiction between Matthew's account and that of Mark.



have performed.

Porphyry is filled with annoyance at the alleged sayings and parables of Jesus. Some of these sayings contradicted each other. For example, having said that He would not go up to the feast of Tabernacles, Jesus went up in secret. Jerome exclaims, "Latrat Porphyrius!!, charging our Lord with 'FICKLENESS and INCONSTANCY'.<sup>1a</sup>

Likewise, Jesus is made to utter two contradictory sayings, when He declares, 'None is good save God', yet later says, 'The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good.'<sup>1b</sup> Moreover, why did Jesus claim, 'I am the Light of the world,' after stating, 'If I bear witness to myself, my witness is not true'.<sup>2</sup> Another example of these contradictory sayings is found when Jesus promises, 'I will be with you always', after having said, 'The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always'.<sup>3</sup> Again, how could Jesus say to Peter, 'Get thee behind me Satan', and in the same breath, 'Upon this rock I will build my church'.<sup>4</sup> In this connection Porphyry/

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- 1a. Jerome (Adv. Pelag. II, 17) Commentor in Johan Ch.7v.8, cf.v inconstantine ac mutatione - fickleness and inconstancy.
  - 1b. Mac. Magnes Book II, Chp. 9 ἀντιλογίας μάχη - battle of inconsistency.
  2. Mac. Magnes Book II, Chp. 11
  3. Mac. Magnes Book III, Chp. 7.
  4. Mac. Magnes Book III, Chp. 19.

It is this change of inconsistency, which links Porphyry with Hierocles and the opponent of the Apocriticus. Much of Porphyry's attack seems to have been concerned with the inconsistencies of the Bible. However, Porphyry was not the first to point out these alleged inconsistencies. The same charge against Jesus is made in the Clementine Recognitions, the fictitious debate between Simon Magus and Peter at Rome. In Book II, xxvi, xxvii, Simon deals with the "inconsistency of Christ's sayings", contrasting "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5, 9) with "I am come, not to send peace on earth, but a sword" (Matthew 10, 34). In Book II, xxxii, Simon contrasts the statement/

footnotes continued

## 4. continued.

statement that a city, divided against itself cannot stand, with Christ's declaration that He would send a sword to divide families, father against son etc. (Luke 12, 52) In Book II, xxxiv, we read, "If He is proved to be inconsistent, He shall be proved at the same time to be no prophet." This is precisely Porphyry's mode of approach! e.g. Apoc. of Mac. Magnes II, 7 deals with Luke 12, 52.

T.W. Crafer suggests that Book V of Porphyry's work dealt with the deeds of Jesus and Book VI with the Inconsistencies of His Sayings. If this be true these books may well be followed in the Apocriticus of Macarius Magnes, in which Book I, dealt with the deeds of Jesus apparently (see Eusb. H.E. VI, 18) and Book II, as we know, with the inconsistencies of Christ's sayings.



Porphyry makes clear his mode of attack. "The words, one might say, provoke a battle of INCONSISTENCY against each other". Therefore it is the WORDS of the gospels which make Jesus look like a man who is "drunk or overcome with wine, and He spoke as though in a fit; or else, when He gave this same disciple the keys of the kingdom of heaven, He was pacting dreams in the imagination of His sleep." Not only does Porphyry accuse the Evangelists of putting contradictory sayings into the mouth of Jesus, but also of making Jesus responsible for statements no philosopher would make. Such sayings are both impious and unwise. Sayings in this class include the remark that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Here also Porphyry seeks to exonerate Jesus from any blame, "Wherefore, it seems to me that these cannot be the words of Christ, if indeed He handed down the rule of truth, but of some poor men who wished... to deprive the rich of their substance."<sup>1</sup> The parable of the grain of mustard seed is also ridiculed as is the similar parable of the leaven, both constituting "a piece of teaching even more fabulous!"<sup>2</sup> The parable of the Merchant seeking goodly pearls is even more paltry than "the dreams of women!"<sup>3</sup> All these are "base and unsuitable", possessing "no intelligent meaning nor clearness", and neither written for or by the wise! Yet Christ is supposed to reveal His truth unto babes, while all the time He is made to speak/

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1. Mac. Magnes III, 5 Matthew 19, 24.

There is an echo here of the accusation made elsewhere that Christians are legacy-hunters. (see Section on the Church). Also, both Celsus and Julian are angered by Christ's sayings to the rich. Celsus quotes this very verse, and maintains that Jesus copied Plato here (Contra Celsum VI, 16, Plato, Laws, 743A). Julian (Fragment 5) criticises Christ's command "sell what ye have, and give to the poor", as anti-social teaching.

2. Mac. Magnes IV, 7.

3. Mac. Magnes IV, 7.



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 speak in words which "are wrapped in riddles." <sup>1</sup> Anyway, why wish to hide things from the wise? Other statements classified as unphilosophical by Porphyry are these: "They that are whole need not a physician but they that are sick."; <sup>2</sup> "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword. I came to separate a man from his father etc." <sup>3</sup> "If they shall drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them." <sup>4</sup> Three other sayings provoke Porphyry to still greater wrath. Firstly, Christ's saying concerning the judgment of the world, and Satan being cast out, appears to be sheer nonsense, because it does not say who is to be cast out and where, also "if someone incorporeal, how cast out?" <sup>5</sup>

Secondly, the saying, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in yourselves." <sup>6</sup> This saying is beastlike and absurd, and no one learned from a teacher any knowledge so foul. "Does Porphyry then blame Jesus? He certainly suggests that it was invented by the disciples with a definite purpose in mind, 'Men have made up strange tales, but nothing so pernicious as this with which to gull the simple.'"

Thirdly, Porphyry expresses disgust with the saying of the apostle, "But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified." <sup>8</sup> He blames Jesus' followers for inventing an anti-social rite and basing the authority for it on Jesus.

Jesus is not only misrepresented in word, but in deed, also. Porphyry indicates certain incidents in which no wise man, much less a god, would participate.

The/

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1. Mac. Magnes IV, 9.
  2. Mac. Magnes IV, 10.
  3. Mac. Magnes II, 7.
  4. Mac. Magnes III, 16.
  5. Mac. Magnes II, 15, 16.
  6. Mac. Magnes III, 15.
  7. This jibe is reminiscent of Celsus's sarcasm over the simplicity of Christian converts, and the policy of Christian/



footnotes continued

## 7. continued

Christian evangelists to shun the educated and address themselves to the illiterate classes. Origen,

Contra Celsum I, 9, 27; III, 18, 44, 50, 55, 72, 76; IV, 10, 33; VI, 12, 14, 41; VII, 18, etc.

Plotinus is also concerned about the attraction of this type of religion to the uneducated. Enneads, II, 9, 9; II, 9, 14; II, 9, 18 etc.

Julian, too, scorns the ignorance of Christians.

Against the Galileans, 135 B.C.D; 206 A.B; 238.

That this constituted part of the traditional attack on Christianity by the educated pagan, is further confirmed in the description by the cultured Caecilius of Christians, as "a miscellaneous collection of ignorant people." -

Octavius of Minucius Felix V.4.

## 8. Mac. Magnes IV, 19, 3 III, 18. (See section on the Church).

The incident of the Temptation of Jesus is clearly in this category. Jesus was obviously afraid of taking up the challenge of the tempter. "Cast thyself down." If Jesus had been a god, "He ought to have shown forthwith that He was capable of delivering others from danger by hurling Himself down from the heights, and not receiving any bodily harm thereby ... The really fair thing to do was to demonstrate that He was the Son of God and thereby deliver Himself and His followers from danger."

Another incident which is utterly unworthy of a wise man or a god is that of the swine and the demons.<sup>1</sup> It is no more than a "piece of knavish nonsense. What a myth! What humbug! "What flat mockery!" Just when we feel that we have found proof that Porphyry is really attacking Jesus, we are soon disillusioned. Listen to the scorn in this comment: "Also, what foolish knavery that He should take account of murderous spirits, which "were working much harm in the world, and that He should grant "them what they wished!" Then we read, "If this incident is "really true, (and not a fiction as we explain it) Christ's "sayings convict Him of much baseness, because He drove demons "into helpless swine, and He terrified the dwellers in that "region." This is plainly rascality, a deed full of suspicion "and baseness. It is not safe to flee to this man and be "saved."

Finally, Porphyry is convinced that no wise man would say, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me."<sup>2</sup> Jesus should not have said it since He had already said, "Fear not them that kill the body". These things are not worthy of God's Son, "nor even of a wise man, who despises death." Porphyry avoids openly/

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1. Mac. Magnes, III, 4.

2. Mac. Magnes III, 2.



openly criticising Jesus. The question that arises is "Why"? Various answers can be suggested. There is the obvious suggestion that he may have sincerely admired Jesus and for that reason deliberately avoided direct criticism of Him. Other suggestions are less flattering to Porphyry. He may have been feigning admiration for Jesus, attempting thereby to find sympathy with the Christians for his more devastating accusations against the scriptures. In this way by his cunning<sup>k</sup> he wished to destroy the contents by destroying the container. It might seem that some such intention motivates his attack and if this be the case then Porphyry despises Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

1. At any rate, Porphyry must have despised Jesus on one score - His choice of friends!

JULIAN

It is a great pity that Julian's attack which in all probability constituted the second book of his polemic Against the Galileans, does not remain to us to-day.<sup>1</sup> It seems quite obvious that Julian devoted much more of his argument than we find in his extant writings, to the founder of the despised sect of the miserable Galileans!! However, in Book One we have several references to Jesus which make clear his general attitude. We shall therefore examine them first.

The fundamental supposition made by Julian was that Jesus was a mere man, and not a particularly good one at that. He therefore hotly contests the Christians' claim that Jesus was divine, or even that He was inspired by God in His actions and words. This was very much the same position as Celsus held regarding Jesus, and we have here a proof of the indebtedness of the later opponents to the work by Celsus.

The miraculous account in the gospels, which has elevated Jesus to the rank of a god, is no more than a *πλασμα* - a fiction, and for Julian, the New Testament requires de-mythologising in order to reveal the real Jesus of history.<sup>2</sup> When that is done Christianity is exposed in all its foolishness.

Julian thus felt it expedient to set forth to "all mankind" the reasons why he was convinced that "the fabrication of the Galileans is a fiction, of men composed by wickedness. It has in it nothing divine."<sup>3</sup> The vast success of this sect which surprised/

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1. K.T. 253B.

2. Whereas Porphyry would give the impression that the historic Jesus is a more admirable person than the Jesus of the Gospels, Julian, as did Celsus, holds the reverse opinion.

3. Against the Galileans, 39A *πᾶσιν ἄνθρωποις* - to all mankind.  
*ὅτι κακουργίας συντεθέν* - composed by wickedness  
*οὐδὲν θεῖον* - nothing divine.



surprised Julian would also have surprised Jesus and Paul, neither of whom ever dreamed of anything on the grand scale that Christianity had assumed.<sup>1</sup> "Jesus, who won over the least "worthy of you has been known by name for little more than three "hundred years. And during His lifetime He accomplished "nothing worth hearing of, unless anyone thinks that to heal "crooked and blind men and to exorcise those that were possessed "by evil demons in the villages of Bethsaida and Bethany can be "classed as a mighty achievement."<sup>2</sup> It is of significance that Julian, as was Celsus, is not unduly impressed by the fact that Jesus was a wonder-worker, which would imply that the gifts of healing and exorcism were not altogether lacking in the early centuries of our era.<sup>3</sup> Still attempting to discover the real Jesus, Julian further asks, "When He became a man, what benefits "did He bestow on His kinsfolk? What? How is it that this "hard-hearted and stubborn-necked people hearkened unto Moses, "but Jesus who commanded the spirits and walked on the sea, and "drove our demons, and as you yourselves asserted made the heaven "and earth - could not this Jesus change the disposition of His "own friends and kinsfolk to the end that He might save them?"<sup>4</sup> The conclusion reached is that Jesus possessed no great influence over His friends. How could He, being only a slave Himself?<sup>5</sup> Nor is there any proof that Jesus was morally superior to other men "as for purity of life we do not know as "to/

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1. Against the Galileans 205E. This criticism has particular point coming from Julian living after the Imperial triumph of Christianity.
  2. Against the Galileans 191E. *οὐδὲν ἀκούειν ἄξιον* - nothing worth hearing.
  3. W.R. Halliday speaks of this period as the age of the "decline of rationalism", of which "the wandering miracle-worker was a contemporary feature". The Pagan Background of Early Christianity, London, H. and S. 1925, p. 186).
  4. Against the Galileans 213 B.C. cf. Contra Celsum II, 39 II, 74
  5. Against the Galileans 213A, a "slave because one of Caesar's subjects."



"to whether He so much as mentioned it."<sup>1</sup> Indeed every other nation could produce from the past wiser men than Jesus. Julian is annoyed with the Jewish claim that God would send to them a special Messiah, and more annoyed with the Christian claim that Jesus was this Messiah. Was it likely that God would send a special prophet to them and ignore the rest of the world?<sup>2</sup>

It is because of Jesus that both Jews and Greeks have abandoned the religious tradition of their fathers. "They do not even adhere to the Jewish beliefs, but have abandoned them also and followed a way of their own."<sup>3</sup> Julian accuses Jewish Christians of worshipping more than one God, if as according to them/

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1. Against the Galileans 205E. cf. Contra Celsus II, 41.  
 "He did not show himself to be pure from all evils." It seems somewhat surprising that Celsus and Julian, while claiming a knowledge of the Gospels, should at the same time disclaim any knowledge of the Christian ethic. Plotinus, in his attack on the Gnostics, makes the same charge as Julian. "They have no doctrine concerning Virtue; they have left this matter alone on one side. They do not say what it is, nor how many virtues there are. They are ignorant of the studies of the Ancients.. They do not know how one acquires virtue, how one cures and purifies the soul. It is quite useless to say 'Look to God'." (Enneads II, 9, XVI).
  2. Against the Galileans 106C. We have already noted the constant use of this argument. Plotinus, again, follows suit. "You hold that God has care for you. How then can He be indifferent to the entire universe in which you exist?" (Enneads II, 9 IX).
  3. Against the Galileans 43A - see the section on the Third Race



them, Jesus was a god. "Lay aside this nonsense, for if it is "in God's will that none other be worshipped, why do you worship "this spurious son of His whom He has never yet recognised or "considered as His son."<sup>2</sup> Likewise Greek Christians have no sympathy from Julian, "Would not any man be justified in detesting "the more intelligent among you, or pitying the more foolish, who "by following you, have sunk to such depths of ruin, that they "have abandoned the everlasting gods and have gone after the "corpse of the Jew."<sup>3</sup>

As to the claim that Jesus came as the fulfilment of prophecy, Julian has two things to say in reply. Firstly, that Jesus was not prophesied, and even if He were, the prophets did not suggest that the promised one would be a god. "Let us begin with the "teaching of Moses, who as they claim foretold the birth of Jesus."<sup>4</sup> "But/

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1. Against the Galileans 159E.  
- this spurious son.

2. Against the Galileans 159E.

3. Against the Galileans 194D, 197E

In order to deny the Resurrection, Julian often describes Jesus as "the corpse" (τὸ νεκρὸν). He also points out the inconsistencies of the Gospel narratives on this point. According to Matthew, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the sepulchre at the dawn of the first day of the week; according to Mark, they came in full daylight; according to Matthew they saw an angel, according to Mark, a young man; according to Matthew they went to announce the news to the disciples; according to Mark they keep silent and tell nobody. (Neumann, Text, K.G. p.236, line 4 ff.)

4. Against the Galileans 253A. Julian goes into greater detail than did Celsus on the question of Christ's fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. Justin in his Dialogue with Trypho likewise gave a full treatment to the question (KL cc). One suspects that Porphyry also went into the problem in fuller detail.



"But Moses repeatedly declares that men are to know god only -  
 "the Highest and certainly did not choose out a second god either  
 "like or unlike Him such as you have invented." It is a

prophet whom Moses foretells (Genesis 49, V.10, Deut. 18, V.18).

"A prophet shall the Lord our God raise up unto you' is certainly  
 "not said of the son of Mary."<sup>1</sup> Even if it did refer to Jesus,

He is only a prophet such as Moses was, and not a god. Nor are

the word "A sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a leader  
 "from his loins" said of Mary, but of the royal house of David

which came to an end with king Zedekiah. "Not one of these other  
 "sayings refer to Jesus, for He is not even from Judah, as He  
 "was not born of Joseph, but as you say of the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup>

Julian observes that Matthew and Luke disagree over the

genealogy. He thus calls to task the Christians for departing

from both Jewish prophecy and Jewish monotheism, quoting

John's Prologue as evidence, "the Word was God."<sup>3</sup> Commenting on  
 the favourite prophecy from Isaiah, "The virgin shall conceive and  
 "bare a son", Julian counters, "Does Isaiah say a 'God'? Yet you  
 "keep calling Mary the 'mother' of God." Isaiah does not call

Him the only begotten Son of God or the first-born of all

creation.<sup>4</sup> Nor did Moses use such terms.<sup>5</sup> Anyway how could

she bare a God, since she is, according to you, a human body?

Do you dare call her son a Saviour?<sup>6</sup>

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1. Against the Galileans 253B.

2. There is astonishing silence concerning the Holy Spirit in  
 the pagan writings against the Christian faith, some of the  
 earlier silence may be due to lack of formulation of the  
 doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Creed.  
 However, Julian writing after Nicea (325 A.D.) might have  
 been expected to pass more comment on the doctrine than  
 Celsus in 178 A.D.

3. Against the Galileans 262 B.C.

4. Against the Galileans 262 D.

5. Against the Galileans 290 D. θεοτοκον - God-bearer.

6. Against the Galileans 276 E, 290E.



Julian regrets the fact that this sect of the Galileans followed Christ at all, as it would have been better from them had they followed the Jews or Moses.<sup>1</sup> The Law of Moses was at least of ancient tradition and given for all time. What grounds then had the Christians for declaring "Christ is the end of the Law"?<sup>2</sup> Julian accuses the Christians, "You have thought it a slight thing to diminish and add."<sup>3</sup>

Apart from these references to Jesus taken from Against the Galileans, certain fragments<sup>4</sup> remain which deal with Jesus and His teaching. These are of a more critical nature and this suggests that Julian made a critical attack of the scriptures much as Porphyry had done, which is now lost. Fragments 2 and 3 deal with the same passage of Scripture, namely the beginning of St. Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 4, in which we have narrated the story of our Lord's temptation. Fragment 2 reads "Moses after fasting forty days received the Law, and Elijah, after fasting for the same period was granted to see God face to face. But what did Jesus receive, after a fast of the same length?" This fragment merely reflects the low regard Julian had for Jesus, and his constant policy of seeking to degrade Him as often as possible. The Third Fragment is intended to illustrate the absurdities and the contradictions contained in the Gospels. "And how could he (the devil) lead Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple when Jesus was in the wilderness?"<sup>5</sup>

Precisely/

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1. Against the Galileans 305A, Celsus shows a like veneration for ancient tradition, cf. Julian Fragment 6.
  2. Against the Galileans 319E.
  3. Against the Galileans 320B.
  4. Against the Galileans These fragments are to be found in Loeb. Julian the Apostate, p. 428 ff.
  5. Porphyry had also criticised this incident. (in Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 18) but he attacks Jesus here for being cowardly not referring as Julian to the geographical confusion.



Precisely the same intention lies behind Fragment 4, which criticises Luke 22, 42-47. Within this criticism we discover another criticism, this time of Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane.

"Furthermore, Jesus prayed in such language as would be used by a pitiful wretch, who cannot bear misfortune with serenity, and though He is a god is reassured by an angel. And who told you, Luke, the story of the angel, if indeed this ever happened? Those who were there .... were asleep! In Fragment 5 the

teaching of Jesus is attacked by Julian as being anti-social and altogether impracticable. "Listen to a fine statesmanlike piece of advice, 'Sell that ye have and give to the poor; 'provide yourselves with bags that wax not old'. Can anyone praise this teaching, when if it be carried out, no city, no nation, not a single family, will hold together? For if everything has been sold, how can any house or family be of any value? Moreover, the fact that if everything in the city were being sold at once there would no one to trade is obvious, without being mentioned." Julian again refers to the anti-

social aspect of the teaching of Jesus in his letter to the Alexandrians. The occasion of this letter is a request made by the Alexandrians for the return from exile of the Christian Bishop Athanasius. Julian replies that even if the city's founder had been one of the Galileans, then this request would still be unreasonable. In his disdain of the Alexandrian Christians, Julian points out that Alexander feared the gods, and the city's patron was the lord Serapis.<sup>2</sup> It was under this tutelage and that of the Ptolemies, that the city prospered. "It was certainly not by the teachings of Jesus that they increased her renown, nor by the teaching of the Galileans, detested of the gods, did they perfect this administration which she enjoys/

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1. ὀϊθρῦτος ὀϊλίος - a pitiable wretch.

2. Against the Galileans 432D. To the citizens of Alexandria καλὸν καὶ πολιτικὸν παραγγέλλματος - a fine statesmanlike piece of advice.



"enjoys, and to which she owes her present good fortune."<sup>1</sup>  
 Further the Alexandrians are blind to the beneficent  
 "beams that descend from Helios."<sup>2</sup> The Olympian gods are  
 ignored, "Yet you have the audacity not to adore any one of  
 "these gods, and you think that one, whom neither you nor your  
 "fathers have ever seen, even Jesus, ought to rank as god the  
 "Word."<sup>3</sup>

Yet another anti-social aspect of the teaching of Jesus  
 is preserved for us in Fragment 6, with the curious fact that  
 here, as above, Jesus is entitled God the Word. "How did the  
 "Word of God take away sin, when it caused many to commit the sin  
 "of killing their fathers, and marry their children? And man-  
 "kind are compelled either to uphold their ancestral customs and  
 "to cling to the pious tradition that they have inherited from  
 "the ages or to accept this innovation. Is it not true of  
 "Moses also, who came to take away sin, but has been detected  
 "increasing the number of sins?"<sup>4</sup> We have already noticed  
 Julian's contempt for the prologue of John's Gospel, and the  
 above Fragment may well have been from a passage against John's  
 Gospel.

In Fragment 7 it is Matthew who is attacked for applying  
 unfairly a verse from the prophecy of Hosea to Jesus, when of  
 course it referred to Israel. The reference in Matthew seems  
 to have been Chapter 2, v. 15, "Out of Egypt I have called my son"  
 The alleged reason for Matthew's duplicity is "that he might  
 "mock the simplicity of those of the Gentiles who believed."<sup>5</sup>

It is obvious, even from those few Fragments, that Julian  
 was well acquainted with the Scriptures of the Christians and  
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1. To the Alexandrians 433D.
  2. To the Alexandrians 434B.
  3. To the Alexandrians 434C.
  4. Fragment 6. Julian here may be referring to the  
 declaration of St. Paul, "I had not know sin, but by the  
 "law", Romans Chp. 7, v. 7.
  5. Fragment 7.



that he possessed a fairly acute critical faculty.

There are two further references to Jesus in the writings of Julian which we ought to notice. In the Misopogon, an angry letter written against the citizens of Antioch, we discover an interesting passage on the Chi and the Kappa.<sup>1</sup> "The Chi "say the citizens, never harmed the city nor did the Kappa. I "obtained the interpretation (for this riddle) and I was "informed that these were the first letter of names, and that the "former is intended to represent Christ, the latter Constantius." Having indicated the avarice of his cousin Constantius, Julian then turns to the Chi. "But as for Christ, you love Him you "say, and adopt Him as the guardian of your city instead of "Zeus, and the god of Daphne and Calliope. Did those citizens "of Emesa long for Christ who set fire to the tombs of the "Galileans? But what citizens of Emesa have I ever annoyed? "I have however annoyed many of you."<sup>2</sup> Again in this passage, the rebuke is against the abandonment of the old gods to worship Jesus, and the exaltation of Jesus over Zeus as guardian of the city.<sup>3</sup>

The other reference to Jesus is from Julian's treatise, The Caesars, which describes a contest between the Emperors, judged by the august assembly of the gods. In the end a secret ballot is cast, and Marcus Aurelius is pronounced the victor after which each man is bidden, "Let us every man chose "his own guardian and guide."<sup>4</sup> Alexander hastened to Hercules, Octavian to Apollo etc. "As for Constantine, he "could not discover among the gods the model of his own career, "but/

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1. Misopogon 357A.
  2. Misopogon 357 B.C.
  3. cf. Misopogon 360 D. Accuses Antiochenes for spreading rumours (1) Julian turned the world upside down.  
(2) Julian's beard fit only to make ropes.  
(3) "that I was against the Chi and that you "begin to regret the Kappa."
  4. The Caesars 335 C.D.



"but when he caught sight of Pleasure, who was not far off, he  
 "ran to her. She received him tenderly and embraced him; then,  
 "after dressing him in raiment of many colours, and otherwise  
 "making him beautiful, she led him away to Incontinence. There  
 "too he found Jesus, who had taken up His abode with her and  
 "cried aloud to all comers, 'He that is a seducer, he that is a  
 "'murderer, he that is sacrilegious and infamous, let him  
 "'approach without fear!<sup>1</sup> For with this water will I wash him  
 "'and straightway make him clean.<sup>2</sup> And though he should be  
 "'guilty of those same sins a second time, let him but smite  
 "'his breast and beat his head, and I will make him clean again.'  
 "To Him Constantine came gladly when he had conducted his sons  
 "forth from the assembly of the gods." It is interesting to  
 note that Jesus is not present in the capacity of a god, but as  
 another human being who has in turn attached himself to his  
 guardians Pleasure and Incontinence.

There is a distinct note of dramatic pathos in the legend<sup>3</sup>  
 that Julian, on receiving his fatal wound, threw blood into the  
 air, and cried out, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!"

1. The Caesars 336A, φθορέύς -- μιαιφόνος - εὐαγγής - βδέλυγος  
 - seducer - murderer - sacrilegious - infamous.
2. The Caesars 336A.
3. Theodoret E.H. III, 20.

RIVAL CHRISTS

One of the ways in which pagan writers sought to demonstrate that Jesus was not a worthy saviour of mankind was to put forward others who were better fitted for that role. Celsus in particular suggests a long list of rival Christs. This list includes many of the traditional heroes and gods whose reputation and miraculous powers were allegedly greater than those of Jesus. In Book I, Chapter, 28 of the Contra Celsum we discover that Celsus considered that Jesus was simply a magician who had learned his magical art from the Egyptians, by virtue of which he took the title of God.

He does not think that the miracles of Jesus are more impressive than the miracles of other wonder-workers. "How many others produce wonders like this to convince simple hearers whom they exploit by deceit."<sup>1</sup> Yet these others are not regarded as gods. Anyway, the behaviour of Jesus was anything but god-like in the face of danger. "What fine action did Jesus do like a god? Did He despise man's opposition and laugh and mock the disaster which befell Him? Even His accusers suffered no disaster."<sup>2</sup> Dionysius appears to be more god-like in so far as Pentheus his enemy went mad.<sup>3</sup> Again, "what does He say while His body is being crucified? Was his blood like ichor such as flows in the veins of the blessed gods".<sup>4</sup> This is a reference to the utterance of Alexander the Great as he pointed to his wounds. It is of interest that the silence of Jesus irritated His critics, because they expected a/

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1. Contra Celsum II, 55, See Jean Danielou, Origène (La Table Ronde, Paris 1948) p. 109 ff.
  2. Contra Celsum II, 33.
  3. Contra Celsum II, 34.
  4. Contra Celsum II, 36.



that a god would make some noble utterance. Instead of emulating the courage of Alexander, Jesus "rushed greedily to "drink."<sup>1</sup> Among those other men whom Celsus suggests were more deserving of worship are Heracles,<sup>2</sup> Asclepius,<sup>3</sup> Orpheus<sup>4</sup> - all of whom died noble deaths. If the Christians did not desire any of these, why not Anaxarchus,<sup>5</sup> "who when cast into a mortar "and whil being beatn with great violence nobly showed contempt "for the punishment saying, 'Beat on; beat the pouch of "'Anaxarchus for you are not beating him.'" Celsus also suggests Epictetus<sup>6</sup> who showed such great courage when according to the traditional story, his master cruelly broke his leg, replying, "Did I not tell you that you would break it?" What comparable saying did you god utter when He was being punished? Later attacks suggest Apollonius of Tyana<sup>7</sup> as the ideal divinely-aided prisoner, who baffled his human interrogators by vanishing from the courtroom. Celsus lived before the story of Apollonius was known. Instead he brings forward another rival to Jesus, named Cleomedes<sup>8</sup> of Astypalea, "Who got into a chest and after "shutting himself inside was not to be found in it, but by some "miraculous providence he had vanished fom it when people broke "the chest in pieces to arrest him."

The Christians by worshipping a man, who was arrested and who died, behave like the Getae who revere Xamolxis<sup>9</sup>, the Cilicians who rever Mospus, the Agarmanians who revere Amphilocheus, the Thebans who revere Amphilaraus, or the Lobadians who revere Trophonius/

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1. Contra Celsum II, 37.
  2. Contra Celsum III, 42, VII, 53.
  3. Contra Celsum III, 3, III, 24, III, 42, VII, 53.
  4. Contra Celsum II, 55, VII, 53.
  5. Contra Celsum VII, 53.
  6. Contra Celsum VII, 53.
  7. cf. Hierocles, Porphyry.
  8. Contra Celsum III, 3, III, 33.
  9. Contra Celsum III, 34, II, 55.



Trophonius.<sup>1</sup> Even Antinous, Hadrian's favourite<sup>2</sup> is more worthy of honour than Jesus. The events of the resurrection, no less than the events of the crucifixion, call forth a list of rival Christs from Celsus. Jesus appeared to very few, but Asclepius was seen, "by a great multitude of men both Greeks and Barbarians and they still do see not just a phantom, but Asclepius himself, healing men and doing good, and predicting the future."<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, Julian puts forward Asclepius as his chief rival to Jesus. Likewise Aristaeus the Preconnesian<sup>4</sup> appeared to many men, "who both vanished so miraculously from men and again clearly appeared, and a long time afterwards visited many parts of the world and related amazing tales so that Apollo even commanded the Metapontines to regard Aristaeus as a god; but nobody still thinks him a god!"<sup>4</sup> Neither does anybody still think Abaris the Hyperborean to be a god although he had such power that he was carried along by an arrow.<sup>5</sup> Likewise the soul of the Clasmomenian<sup>6</sup> often left his body and wandered about in a bodiless state. Earlier Celsus had mentioned Rhapsinitus who in Egypt<sup>7</sup> was famed for his spiritual meandering, having played dice with Demeter in Hades. It would appear that Celsus is simply trying to oppose Jesus by comparing him unfavourably with whatever god or hero he happened to think of at the moment. He even says, "if you had put forward the Sibyl<sup>8</sup> whom some of you use, as a child of god, you would have had more to be said in your favour."

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| 1. | Contra Celsum III, 34. |
| 2. | Contra Celsum III, 36. |
| 3. | Contra Celsum III, 24. |
| 4. | Contra Celsum III, 26. |
| 5. | Contra Celsum III, 31. |
| 6. | Contra Celsum III, 32. |
| 7. | Contra Celsum II, 55.  |
| 8. | Contra Celsum VII, 53. |



A most unusual comparison is then made. Celsus actually claims that some of the Old Testament characters were more worthy to be worshipped as a god than was Jesus. "A far more suitable person for you than Jesus would have been Jonah with his gourd, or Daniel who escaped from wild beasts, or those of whom stories still more credible than these are told."<sup>1</sup>

Porphyry as far as we can tell put forward only one rival to Jesus, namely Apollonius of Tyana.<sup>2</sup> Apollonius occupies a curious place in anti-Christian propaganda. A contemporary of Jesus, his life-story was written by Philostratus, who intended thereby to deliver this Pythagorean philosopher from the charge of wizardry. There seems to be no conscious comparison with Jesus in the writing of Philostratus. Yet as we read his biography of Apollonius, certain similarities with the story of Jesus stand out. For example, there are the following - a miraculous birth, growth in wisdom, approval by the gods, visits to temples, multitudes flocked to see him, a public ministry with disciples, a similar understanding of the human heart accompanied by foreknowledge; miracles, one of which has a curious resemblance to the raising of Jarius's daughter; exorcism, a claim to divinity. From so many similarities it is not surprising that sooner or later the life of Apollonius, the provincial governor of Bithynia, who became a bitter pamphleteer in the Diocletian persecution followed first Porphyry in using the work of Philostratus in the pagan attack against Christianity. Eusebius wrote a reply against Hierocles. Lactantius tells us that/

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1. Contra Celsum VII, 53.

2. Apocriticus of Macarius Magnes III, 1. R.W. Inge (The Philosophy of Plotinus (Gifford Lectures 1917-8) p.58) writes, "Apollonius is turned into a pagan Christ because 'the age craved for a historical object of reverence.'"



that Hierocles also wrote a pamphlet criticising the New Testament. It is generally agreed that the opponent of Macarius Magnes in the Apocriticus is Hierocles,<sup>1</sup> who in his criticisms of the New Testament has closely followed Porphyry. It is from the Apocriticus that we deduce that Porphyry also compares Apollonius with Jesus.

In Book III, Chapter 1 we read, "How did Jesus allow himself to be crucified with insult? Why did not Christ utter anything worthy of one who was wise and divine, when brought either before the High Priest or before the governor? He might have given instructions to His judge, and those who stood by and made them better men. But He endured to be smitten with a reed and spat on and crowned with thorns, unlike Apollonius, who after speaking boldly to the Emperor Domitian, disappeared from the royal court, and after not many hours was plainly seen in the city then called Dicenearchia, but now Puteoli. But even if Christ had to suffer according to God's commands, yet at least He should have uttered words of force and wisdom to Pilate, His judge instead of being mocked like any gutter-snipe."

Julian does not mention Apollonius of Tyana as a rival to Jesus. Instead he favours Asclepius whose healing cult had gained immense popularity in the second and third centuries A.D. The human need for redemption and forgiveness, the healing of one's soul and body, accelerated the expansion of healing and redemptive cults. As early as the year 250 B.C. Aesculapius of Epidaurus had been summoned to Rome on the advice of the Sibylline books, after which his sanctuary had been established on an island in the Tiber, along with a sanatorium as was the custom in the numerous shrines of Asclepius in Greece. In the Imperial/

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1. See T.W. Crafer, A Neglected Apologist, J.T.S. (1907) VIII p. 401 ff. Lactantius, Div. Institutes V, IV, 2 ff. clearly states that Hierocles had opposed the miracles of Apollonius to those of Jesus also Eusebius, Contra Hierocles.



Imperial Age, the spread was more rapid in the West being associated with the cult of Serapis or some other deity. Asclepius therefore became a veritable saviour and was addressed in prayer as <sup>ΘΕΟΣ</sup> ΣΩΤΗΡ, God the Saviour. So we find that Julian too was a devotee of Asclepius. In his book Against the Galileans, he writes "I had almost forgotten the greatest of the gifts of Helios and Zeus, but naturally I kept it to the last. The Romans and the Hellenes both share it. Zeus engendered Asclepius from himself among the engendered gods."<sup>1</sup> One cannot help noticing certain phrases which we are accustomed to apply to Christ being used by Julian in the following passage. "Asclepius having made visitation to the earth from heaven appeared at Epidaurus in the form of a man. He stretched out over the whole earth his saving right hand. He came to Pergamum, to Ionia to Terentum, and lately he came to Rome. He travelled to Cos and thence to Aegea. Next he is present everywhere on land and sea. He visits no one of us separately, and yet he raises up souls that are sinful, and bodies that are sick." Later in this attack he gives this personal testimony to the healing power of Asclepius. "When I have been sick Asclepius has often cured me, by prescribing remedies. Of this Zeus is my witness."<sup>2</sup> The Hebrews were given no such gifts by their God.

Although we have been surveying only those pagan rivals specifically set alongside Jesus by the writers of our period, it would be wrong to pass over in silence the chief historical rival to Jesus, namely Mithras.<sup>3</sup> Julian's real allegiance lay toward the cult of Mithras, of which he early became an initiate through/

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1. Against the Galileans 200A.

2. Against the Galileans 235 D. For a full treatment of the Asclepius Cult, see E.J. and L. Edelstein, Asclepius (2 volumes, U.S.A. 1945).

3<sup>1</sup> No direct comparison in Julian's writings. For a short treatment of the spread of Mithraism see A. Harnack. Expansion I, Chapter 2, pp. 121-151. cf. J.M. Robertson Pagan Christs, Part III, Mithraism (London 1911), also S. Dill, Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius Chapter VI, p. 585 ff.



through the influence of Maximus. This cult was redemptive in character and herein lay its immense popular appeal. It had emerged from the ancient cultures of Persia, India and Mesopotamia finally permeating into the Graeco-Roman world, and it became closely associated with other deities and cults such as the Attis and Magna Mater cults. The spread was facilitated by the advance of the Roman Army and numerous evidences are to be found in the Mediterranean countries extending even to France, Germany and also to Roman Britain! Certainly in the struggle for the soul of Julian, Mithras triumphed over Jesus, although the ultimate victory was secured by the Galilean.

The striking points of resemblance between Mithraism and Christianity perplexed the early Apologists so much that they were forced to explain them as the work of demons which sought to do harm by thus anticipating the coming faith of Christ. The pagans, on the other hand, thought that they possessed a ready made proof of the theft by the Christians of pagan ideas.

Both religions preached redemption through a slain sacrifice, the expiatory efficacy of which lay in the blood; both proclaimed the necessity of the new birth; both worshipped a god dead and risen: both revered the symbol of the sign of the cross; both celebrated a life-giving supper of bread and water and both baptised in sacramental water; both set up an altar, consecrated a special day for worship - the Sunday, held feasts at Easter and Christmas, the vernal equinox and the winter solstice. The new faith flourished and triumphed on the very soil of the old!



THE ASS'S HEAD

One of the most curious accusations against the Christians was that they worshipped a god which had the head of an ass.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to trace the origin of this slander, but it appears to have been in the first place directed against the Jews. In the third century B.C. we find the beginnings of anti-Semitism in Egypt. Writing around 200 B.C. Mnaseas of Patera, in his *Periplois*, relates a tale concerning someone called Zabidos, which Josephus later accuses Apion of also relating. We shall quote from Josephus.<sup>2</sup> "He adds the following pretended facts to his former fable. This man related how 'while the Jews were 'once in a long war with the Idumeans there came a man out of 'one of the cities of the Idumeans, who had worshipped Apollo 'there. This man whose name is said to have been Zabidus came 'to the Jews, and promised to deliver Apollo the god of Dora 'into their hands, and that he would come to our temple if they 'would all come up with him and bring the whole multitude of 'the Jews with them. Then Zabidus made for himself a kind of 'wooden instrument, and put it round about him, and set three 'rows of lamps thereon, and walked after such a manner that he 'appeared to those that stood a great way from him to be a 'kind of star walking upon the earth; the Jews were terribly 'frightened and stood very quiet at a distance. And this 'Zabidus went into the holy house and carried off the golden 'head of an ass, continuing on his way to Dora in great haste.'" Josephus ridicules this story for three reasons. Firstly it is full of geographical errors; secondly it seems unlikely that the/

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1. The main documentary evidence is as follows:  
     Josephus, *Contra Apionem* (*Antiquities*) II, 7. re Mnaseas II, 9, 10.  
     Democritus - quoted by Suidas (*Lexicon*) IN Muller, *Fragmenta historicorum Graecorum* IV, 377.  
     Diodorus of Sicily, *Histories* XXXIV,  
     Florus, *Histories*, 3.5.30; Tacitus, *Histories* V4, V5, ff.  
     Petronius, fragment 37; Tertullian, *Apology* 16,  
     M. Felix, *Octavius*, 9.
  2. Josephus, *Antiquities* (*Contra Apionem*) II, 10.



the Jews would be so easily persuaded to entertain Apollo; finally how could one man open the temple door so easily when twenty men were required to shut them every day.

We can trace, then, the spread of this anti-Jewish propaganda because within a century after Mnaseas wrote, other writers had followed suit, such as Democritus, Apollonius, Molon, Posidonius of Apamea, and as we have seen the Alexandrian grammarian Apion, whom Tacitus appears to have utilised in Book V of his Histories.<sup>1</sup> There seems to have been quite a collection of stories against the Jews, one of which Josephus narrates in Book II, Chapter 7 of his Antiquities of the Jews. He distinctly states the source of this story to have been not Apion himself, but Posidonius and Apollonius. The substance of this story consisted in the fact "That the Jews placed an ass's head in their holy place and that this was discovered when Antiochus Epiphanes spoiled our temple and found an ass's head there made of gold." Again Josephus denies this absurd tale since the Jews have always observed the strictest piety. Furthermore, an Egyptian ought not to have thrown this fable in the teeth of the Jews, since they worship animals such as mice and goats.

Somehow this same accusation was levelled against the Christians also, although with less serious effect, as it is completely ignored by the Greek Apologists, and only Tertullian<sup>2</sup> and Minucius Felix<sup>3</sup> among the Latin Apologists attempt to refute the charge. In his Apology, Chapter 16, Tertullian relates the following story. "For you have dreamed, as have certain/

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1. Josephus, Contra Apionem, II, 7.
  2. Tertullian, Apology 16.
  3. Minucius Felix, Octavius 9.



"certain others, that our Gdd is an Ass's Head. Cornelius Tacitus introduced this idea. For in Book V of his Histories having begun his account of the Jewish war ... he relates that "when the Jews were liberated and were tortured with thirst in "the deserts of Arabia they availed themselves of wild asses to "guide them to a spring. For this service they consecrated as "a Deity the head of a similar animal. Thence I take it that we "Christians being allied to the Jewish religion were devotees "of the same effigy. But yet this same Tacitus - really a most "loquacious man in falsehoods - relates in the same history that "C N Pompeius after his capture of Jerusalem, gained an entrance "into the temple for the purpose of investigating the secret "mysteries of the Jewish religion but found there no image. "Yet all kinds of beasts are worshipped by you." Minucius

Felix has only a brief reference to this accusation in his Octavius. "I am told that under some foolish belief they "worship as sacred the head of the lowest of animals @ the ass."

However, the two strongest pieces of evidence must now be considered. Tertullian in two places relates the following story. "But now a new representation of our god has been "published in the very next city since a certain wretch who hired "himself out to trick wild beasts in the arena, exhibited a "placard with an inscription of this sort 'the God of the "'Christians ONOKOITES' it had an ass's ear, was hooved on one "foot, carried a book, and wore a toga." What renders even more obscure this already obscure story is the word ONOKOITES or ONOCHOETES. It has been variously translated as "an ass of "a priest" from the two Greek words *óves*, an ass and *κοιτης*, to be a priest;<sup>1</sup> another rendering is "he who sleeps with the asses" which has been conjectured as a reference to the birth of our Lord in a stable; the most widely favoured rendering however is "conceived from an ass", from the Greek word *κοιτη*, meaning conception.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Rauscher interprets it thus, "assinatus sacerdos", Floril patrisum, Bonn, 1906, t. VI, p.57 cf. Ochler, Opera Tertulliani I, 181.
  2. See P. de Labriolle, La Reaction païenne, p. 198 ff. R. Garucci, Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne (Paris 1942) t. Liv. 1857.



The second piece of evidence came to light only a hundred years ago, when Raphael Garucci discovered a Graffito written on the wall of the Palatine, near the Church of St. Athanasius. It is now preserved in the Museum of Thermes. The drawing was of a human body with an animal's head and outstretched hands, <sup>below</sup> ~~above~~ which were some letters in Greek. On one side there was a purely human figure. The significant part of this drawing is that the man with the ass's head is attached to a cross in the shape of the Greek letter Tau, while the figure by his side is in an attitude of worship. The letters read *Ἀλεξάμενος σεβεται* *Θεόν*, "Alexamenos worships God". Garucci was convinced that this monument belonged to the Imperial Age, and was yet another confirmation of this type of anti-Christian propaganda. Wunsch<sup>1</sup> opposed this interpretation preferring to consider the Graffito as the work of a loyal follower of the Egyptian god Seth-Typhon. Labriolle<sup>2</sup> points out that this does not explain the presence of a crucifix in the monument.

Visser<sup>3</sup> points out the fairly widespread worship of an ass in Persian religion, also showing that the God of the Jews became confused in many cases with other Eastern divinities. He further indicates that, in different passages of the Gnostic writers, there appears an Archonte with the head of an ass. He also describes an amulet discovered in Italy at Montagnana, which showed a man with an ass's head on a cross at the foot of which/

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1. Richard Wunsch, *Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln aus Rom*, Leipzig, 1898.
  2. Pierre de Labriolle, *La Reaction païenne* p. 199.
  3. Lukas Vischer, *Le prétendu 'Culte de l'âne' dans l'église primitive*. R.H.R. (1951), 39 pp.14-35.



which sat a monkey. It is his opinion that "neither the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem on an ass, nor the symbolisation of the Messiah by an ass such as one finds in the Talmud, suffice to explain this phenomenon." Vischer does put forward an interesting suggestion concerning the passing of this accusation from the Jews to the Christians. After noting that it may have been due to the fact that the pagans did not distinguish between Jews and Christians, he suggests that the Jews themselves had intentionally carried over the accusation on to the Christians. After all the bearer of Tertullian's placard<sup>1</sup> was a Jew.

1. There is a curious resemblance between Tertullian's Jew placarding *ONACHOETES* before the eyes of men, and St. Paul declaring that *IESUS CHRISTOS* was placarded before the eyes of men. (Galatians 3, 1.).

C H A P T E R    I V  
T H E       C H U R C H  
CELSUS

One of the most interesting and most important aspects of the pagan reaction is that of pagans toward the Christian Church.<sup>1</sup> This hostile attitude to the church testifies to the rapid expansion of the Christian community in the early centuries.<sup>2</sup> This type of accusation varies with the changing centuries and with the corresponding changes in the status of the church.

For example, in the polemic of Celsus, the earlier common charges of barbarism and lust are deliberately omitted. That there is still something underhand and secret about these Christian gatherings, Celsus stresses in no uncertain voice. Christians "perform their rites and teach their doctrines in secret".<sup>3</sup> The reason Celsus gives is important - to escape the /

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1. I am confining this study to the reaction towards the orthodox church. Celsus devotes some space to the Gnostic sects of the Great Church (V. 59, 61-65; VI. 19-41) but his arguments here hold little relevance to the Catholic faith. Only two accusations appear in the wide context. The first is found in V. 63, where Celsus as earlier (III-12) ridicules the disunity of the Church. He claims that Christians "slander one another with dreadful and unspeakable words of abuse. And they would not make even the least concession to reach agreement; for they utterly detest each other." The second charge against the Gnostics which we discover also against the Church as a whole, is that the Christian mystery has been copied from the mystery of Mithras. We shall look at this accusation later. (VI. 24.)
  2. Tertullian, (Apology. 37), writing shortly after Celsus (c197 AD), claims that Christians are so numerous that they could disrupt the whole Empire, simply by withdrawing from its activities. It is, of course, against the tendency to withdraw that Celsus makes his plea "Help the Emperor" (VIII. 73)
  3. c. Celsus I. 3.



the death penalty that hangs over them!" Thus bound together by danger, mystery shrouds their proceedings. They participate in a Love-feast, "more powerful than any oath". The church then is a secret society which "violates the common law".<sup>1</sup> The church does not open wide its doors to strangers, but its propaganda is carried out in secrecy also. "If all men wanted to become Christians, the Christians would no longer want them."<sup>2</sup>

Celsus is also alarmed at the size of the church. He tries to minimise this by pointing out the disunity which exists among Christians. "When they were beginning they were few and were of one mind, but since they have spread to become a multitude, they are divided and rent asunder and each wants to have his

own party ..... They are divided again by becoming too numerous, and condemn one another. They have only one thing in common - the Name. This alone they are ashamed to desert. In other respects they are at sixes and sevens."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this allegiance to the Name explains why it was on this basis alone that Christians appear to have been tried and persecuted, a fact which never failed to arouse indignation in the Christian apologists. The three unities of the Church then, according to Celsus are a) unity in danger, b) unity in Name, c) unity in revolt. Indeed it is this latter unity which causes Celsus most alarm of all. Already the church is assuming such proportions, and displaying so strong a separatist spirit as to make /

1. I. 1.

παρὰ τὰ νομιζόμενα contrary to what is lawful.

2. III. 9

3. Contra Celsum 111 12 τέμνονται καὶ σχίζονται  
= divided and rent asunder. cf. V. 63

make it appear to be a threat to the Empire. It has become an "imperium in imperio". The only way to avert political disaster lies in the co-operation of the church. "Help the emperor ., and co-operate with him in what is right, and fight for him, and be fellow-soldiers if he presses for this, and fellow-generals with him."<sup>1</sup>

What provokes the greatest ridicule, however, in his attack on Christianity is the Church's methods of evangelism. In Book III of the Contra Celsum we find the arguments amassed against Christian propaganda.

Christians are ruthless in the variety of ideas they use to persuade men to follow them. In fact, it is the policy of the Church to "invent terrors",<sup>2</sup> misunderstanding the ancient doctrine of punishments. Likewise the shock-tactics of the Christians drew this gibe from Celsus, "You overwhelm men like the priests of Cybele who beforehand play flutes and music and with their clamour stupefy the people whom they want to excite into a frenzy."<sup>3</sup> The content of the Christian message is trivial /

1. c. C. VIII. 73. It is on the basis of this plea that so many critics have concluded that the motive behind Celsus's polemic is a political one. The attitude of the Christian Church of the early centuries to military service is not always constant. *See later footnote*

2. c. Celsum III. 16

συνηλόμεν δειμάτα = The terrors we invent.

3. III. 16. See H. Chadwick Contra Celsum. f-n, p. 138 for the appeal to Egyptian worship as a literary commonplace. A like use of the phrase "the begging priests of Cybele" is found in Clement of Alexandria. The Exhortation to the Heathen VII.



trivial in the extreme, and the fuss they make, while proclaiming it, is reminiscent of the temples of Egyptian worship, the exteriors of which are imposing, the interiors of which reveal mere animals, "a cat, monkey, crocodile or a goat."

The stupidity of the message is matched only by the stupidity of the audience. Obviously, the Christians simply do not want to attract the more intelligent men, as "they drive away every intelligent man from arguing about their faith, and invite only the stupid and low-class folk."<sup>1</sup> This charge against the Christians of shunning the educated and appealing to the illiterate is made repeatedly by Celsus. The most impressive passages are the following, fully quoted because of the important light they shed on primitive modes of evangelism.

"Their injunction is this, 'Let no one sensible draw near, no one educated, no one wise; for these abilities are thought by us to be evils. But as for anyone ignorant, anyone uneducated..., anyone who is a child, let him come boldly.'<sup>2</sup>

"Moreover, we see that those who display their secret lore in the market places and go about begging would never enter a gathering of intelligent men, nor would they dare to reveal their noble beliefs in their presence; but whenever they /

1. c Celsus III 18. ἀνόητους καὶ τοὺς ἀνὸςπανοδῶντας  
= stupid and low-class folk.

c.f. I 9, 26, 27; III 18, 44, 50, 55, 72, 75; IV 10; VI 1, 41, etc. Platinus makes the same charge II 9, 18 (Enneads), "They are willing to address the lowest of men as brothers."

2. c. Celsus. III. 44 cf. III. 65 Julian's invitation by Jesus to Constantine in 'The Caesars' appears to be a combination of these two extracts from Celsus. Julian The Caesars 336A "He that is a seducer, he that is a murderer, he that is sacrilegious and infamous let him approach without fear."

they see adolescents and a crowd of slaves and a company of fools they push themselves in and show off."<sup>1</sup>

"In private houses also we see wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers and the most illiterate and rustic yokels, who would not dare to say anything at all in front of their elders and more intelligent masters. But whenever they get hold of children in private and some stupid women with them, they let out some astonishing statements as, for example, that they must not pay attention to their masters and fathers, but must obey them; they say that they talk nonsense and have no understanding and that in reality they neither know nor are able to do anything good, but are taken up with mere empty chatter. But they alone, they say, know the right way to live and if the children would believe them, they would become happy, and make their home happy as well. And if, as they are speaking, they see one of the school-teachers coming or some intelligent person, or even the father himself, the more cautious of them flee in all directions; but the more reckless urge the children on to rebel. They whisper to them that in the presence of their masters, they do not feel able to explain anything to the children, since they do not want to have anything to do with those silly and obtuse teachers who are totally corrupted and far-gone in wickedness and who inflict /

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1. c. Celsus 111. 50. Celsus constantly uses adjectives to depict the degradation of Christian believers.  
 ἄμαθής = ignorant, ἀνοήτος = unintelligent  
 ἀναίδευτος = childish, uninstructed (Porphyry charges the Apostles as being ἀνθρώποι ἀναίδευτοι  
 Mac. Mag. 1 11. 34 cf. IV. 6)  
 ὠήπιος = foolish, etc.



inflict punishment on the children. But, if they like, they should leave their father and their schoolmasters and go along with the women and little children who are their playfellows to the wool-dresser's shop, or to the cobbler's or to the washerwoman's shop, that they may learn perfection. And, by saying this, they persuade them."<sup>1</sup> The interesting historical fact which emerges from this passage is that much of the evangelism and expansion of the second century Church was accomplished by uneducated, manual-working laymen, whose success resulted largely among those of the same mental age and intelligence - "Young children and some silly women."

Celsus returns to the low type of person to which the Christian Gospel is addressed. Not only does he feel that this degrades Christianity, but he feels anger at the implications of such an appeal. Here is a fanatical sect gathering together criminals and sinners. No other religion makes it a prerequisite of allegiance first that the worshippers be evil. Others rather exclaim, "Whosoever has pure hands and a wise tongue..... or is pure of all defilement and whose soul knows nothing of evil and who has lived well and righteously." such are /

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1. c. Celsum 111 55. Although Julian at times ridicules the ignorance and simplicity of Christians, we can detect in his writings anxiety that so many better class and more highly educated people are being won to Christianity. In 'Against the Galileans' 206 A B, he writes, "Nowhere did Jesus hand down to you such commands. The reason for that is that they never even hoped that you would one day attain to such power as you have; for they were content if they could delude maidservants and slaves and through them the women, and men like Cornelius and Sergius."

are invited by other religions. But the Christians exclaim, "Whosoever is a sinner, whosoever is unwise, whosoever is a child, in a word, whosoever is a wretch, the Kingdom of God will receive him!"<sup>1</sup> Only a robber would call robbers. What evil is it not to have sinned? Or is it that no good man will follow them anyway? That must be the reason why "they open their doors to the most impious and abominable men."<sup>2</sup> The Church is mistaken if it thinks that these people who are evil by nature and who remain evil even after punishment, will be changed by mercy.<sup>3</sup>

The teachers and preachers of the church next come in for criticism. "The man who teaches the doctrines of Christianity is like a man who promises to restore bodies to health, but turns his patients away from attending expert physicians, because his lack of training will be shown up by them."<sup>4</sup> Or else he resembles a drunkard who "enters a party of drunkards and accuses sober people of being drunk."<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, he is like a man suffering from ophthalmia, accusing those with sharp eyes of having defective eyesight."<sup>6</sup>

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1.	C. Celsum	111	59.	ἁμαρτωλός = a sinner, ἀσύνετος = unwise, καίκοδεμων = a wretch.
2.	c. Celsum	111	65	
3.	"	111	69, 71	
4.	c. Celsum	111	75	
5.	"	111	76	
6.	"	111	77	



The church then is successful only with the gullible and the unreasonable, the "vulgar and the illiterate".<sup>1</sup> Those few educated people in the church, and Celsus admits there are some, are satisfied with Christianity only because they interpret the Bible allegorically.<sup>2</sup>

Celsus notes that the Church abstains from "particular sacrificial victims".<sup>3</sup> Moreover, at this stage there are no separate Church buildings. "They avoid setting up temples - a sure token of an obscure and secret society."<sup>4</sup> Celsus also has certain references to the persecution of the Church. The Christians are 'crucified', and 'sought out' and 'condemned to death'.<sup>5</sup> Even the first disciples "did not die with Him, or for His sake, nor were they persuaded to despise punishments. But they even denied that they were His disciples. Yet now you die with Him".<sup>6</sup> One cannot help feeling that Celsus realises that herein lies the secret of the triumph of this despised sect.

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| 1. | c | Celsus. | I. 27 cf. IV. 10 |
| 2. | " | "       | " "              |
| 3. | " | "       | VIII. 28         |
| 4. | " | "       | VIII. 18, 19     |
| 5. | " | "       | VIII. 69         |
| 6. | " | "       | II. 45           |

P O R P H Y R Y

Particular interest centres in the attitude of Porphyry to the Church. According to Socrates, the most bitter antagonist of Christianity had early connections with the Church.<sup>1</sup> However, it must be noticed that in the fragments of Porphyry that remain there is no mention of any direct alliance with the Christian Church, rather the tone is that of a hostile observer from without. Certainly, he displays a detailed knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the Christians, as we shall discover.

Like Celsus a century before, Porphyry shows alarm at the numerical size of the Church, doubtless with even more cause than had Celsus. Commenting on the words of St. Matthew, that the gospel should be preached in all the world before the end came, he writes, "For lo, every quarter of the inhabited world has experience of the gospel, and all the bounds and ends of the earth possess it complete... and nowhere is there an end, nor will it ever come".<sup>2</sup>

The magnitude of the Church had by the time of Porphyry brought /

1. Socrates E.H. 1

2. Apocriticus cf. Mac. Magnes IV. 3.

We have noticed the alarm of Celsus at the spread of the Church. Caecilius in the Octavius of Minicius Felix reveals the same alarm.

"Per universam orbem sacraria ista taeterrima  
impiae coitionis adulescunt" (IX)



brought position and wealth, so much so that Christians had begun building larger places of worship. Porphyry criticises them as being no different from the pagan Temples which these same Christians despise. "Moreover the Christians also, imitating the erection of the temples, build very large houses." Cannot they pray in their own houses, since the Lord certainly hears from every place?<sup>1</sup>

In other respects the Christians avoid the practices of the temple-worship in their Churches. "The Christians find fault with sacred rites and sacrifices and incense in which the worship in temples consists."<sup>2</sup> So too the Church's attitude to idols and temples appears due to a misunderstanding of the true meaning of these externals of worship.<sup>3</sup>

The /

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1. Mac. Magnes Bk. IV. 21 μεγίστους οίκους  
= very large houses
  2. Third Augustine Question.
  3. Mac. Magnes IV. 21

The attitude of the early Church to idol-worship was based on Exodus XX, v. 4.  
cf. Epistle to Barnabas XX. 1. "the first snare of the soul is idolatry".  
The Epistle to Diognetus III praises the cult of the Jews because of its hostility to the idolatry of the Greeks. The author of the Didache (111. 4) writes "My child, keep yourself pure from the science of the augurs, because it leads to idolatry: Tertullian De Idolatria; Cyprian, etc. Justin Martyr. Apol 1: shows that Greek philosophers also condemned idols, as soulless (ἀψυχὰς) and as corpses (νεκρὰ) e.s. Xenophanes; Plato; Plutarch; Herodotus 2, 172; Horace, Sat. 1.8; Zeno the Stoic emphasised that idols are the work of base and depraved craftsmen. (cf. c. Celsum I 5)

Porphyry, with other pagans, seeks to assert the true meaning of idols, which consists in their power to lead men's thoughts to God by impressing the image of that God on the mind, to impart spiritual energy.

See A. Harnack. 'Idolatry: Hibbert Journal, October, 1911.

The two central rites of the Christian Church are freely attacked by Porphyry.<sup>1</sup> The Lord's Supper is founded on a Saying ascribed to Jesus, which is beast-like, absurd, and "introduces an excess of savagery into life". An echo of the earlier accusations of a lustful and licentious form akin to the banquet of Thyestes can be detected in Porphyry's comparison of the Eucharist with the banquet of Thyestes and other unnatural orgies. John alone of the evangelists includes this warrant for the Lord's Supper. Of course, although he ridicules the literal rendering of the saying of Jesus, Porphyry realises that it possesses a mystical significance "hidden in it". This is no excuse for using barbaric speech and "placing man lower than the beasts" by inciting him to cannibalism!!!

The sacrament of Baptism is criticised with equal vehemence.<sup>2</sup> Commenting on the text from 1 Cor. VI. 11 "But ye were washed and ye were sanctified", he admits he is perplexed by such words. Can a man be washed from so many defilements and become pure? It seems too automatic to Porphyry and much too easy. He himself found the path to purity difficult and strenuous to ascend,<sup>3</sup> and yet the Christians /

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1. Mac. Magnes III 15. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in yourselves." (John VI. 54)

2. Macarius Magnes. Book IV 19

3. Porphyry, like his master, Platinus, was an ascetic, and believed in a strict course of discipline as the prerequisite of the true knowledge of God. This purification was called the Katharsis.



Christians claim that water can wash away all pollution and can make a man pure. He cannot "simply by being baptised and calling on the name of Christ wipe away the stains of so much weakness, fornication, adultery, drunkenness, theft, unnatural vice, poisoning and countless base and disgusting things". By this act a man can "put off the whole of his guilt, just as a snake puts off his old slough".<sup>1</sup> The consequences of this easy cleaning are dangerous to society. "Who is there who would not, on the strength of this, venture on evil deeds .... in the knowledge that he will receive remission from so many criminal actions only by believing and by being baptised." Baptism is therefore unlawful as it inclines man to sin, "introducing into the world a form of society which is without law, and teaches man to have no fear of ungodliness".<sup>2</sup>

The /

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1. IV. 19 cf. Julian. The Caesars 335C, 336 AB.  
     Against the Galilaeans 245 AB  
     C. Celsus 111, 44 and 59
  2. Mac. Magnes IV. 19

The place of women<sup>1</sup> in the Church receives comment from Porphyry. Jerome in his commentary on Isaiah, at Ch. 3 v 12 has this to say, "Let us take care therefore that we be not oppressors among the people, lest (as according to the impious Porphyry) matrons and women compose our senate, and they rule in our Churches, and the priestly order is disposed of according to the good pleasure of women". We have seen that Celsus was also impressed by the fact that the new converts were made chiefly among the women, and the children. But a more sinister complaint comes from the pen of Porphyry. Rich women have been coerced into surrendering their fortunes to begging preachers. Jerome, again, commenting on Psalm 82 v 8, extols the success of Peter and Paul and the early apostles, then adds, "Someone may say - 'All this was done for the sake of gain'. So says Porphyry, 'That they might enrich themselves with /

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1. cf. Jerome Ep. XXII. From the very beginning, women had played a conspicuous part in the Christian Church. In the New Testament they are referred to often by name, eg., 1 Cor. XVI 19, Romans XVI 1 ff. Col. IV 15, Philipp. IV 2, passim in Acts, Hebrews XI. Indeed the event of a wife witnessing to an unbelieving husband, so graphically described by Tertullian later (Apology 3) is envisaged also in the New Testament - 1 Cor. VII, 12 f, 1 Peter 3 1. Ignatius (Letter to Smyrna) praises one Alke. Pliny's letter to Trajan speaks of "ministrae and virgines" cf. Mac. Mag. lll 36 Eusebius (H V. 17) speaks of a prophetess, Ammia. cf. Julian Against the Galilaeans 206A So too, many prominent aristocratic ladies espoused the cause of Christ, such as DOMITILLA, Marcia, Julia Mamaea, the wife and daughter of Diocletian, Crispina, etc. (Origen c. Celsus lll 9 speaks of 'titled ladies' ) Justin Apol 2 ll recalls the situation of a Christian wife and a pagan husband. For a useful short treatment of the place of women in the Church see A. Harnack Expansion II p. 217 ff also J. Foster 'After the Apostles' 38-45 (S C M 1951)



with the treasures of rich women whom they perverted'. In the Apocriticus of Macarius Magnes an objection is recorded against the saying about the camel going through the eye of a needle.<sup>1</sup> "These are the words, not of Christ but of some poor men, who wished as the result of such vain talking to deprive the rich of their substance. At any rate, no longer ago than yesterday reading these words to women of noble substance, 'Sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven', they persuaded them to distribute to poor men all the substance and possessions which they had, and themselves entering into a state of want, to gather by begging, turning from a position of freedom to unseemly asking ..... thus to lose their own belongings under the pretext of godliness, and to covet those of others under the force of want."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, there are incidental references to the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of the day. In his sarcastic remarks on the texts concerning faith<sup>4</sup> removing mountains, and drinking poison without harm, Porphyry accuses the Church of infidelity to the words of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> If they were truly faithful those "selected for th<sup>e</sup> priesthood, and particularly those who lay claim to the episcopate or presidency ought to make use of this form of test" in order to distinguish between good and bad men. (i.e. drinking poison). Also "Anyone who cannot /

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1. Mac. Mag. 111 5  
 2. Mac. Mag. 111 16  
 3. Mac. Mag. 111 17

cannot remove a mountain ... is not worthy to be reckoned one of the family of the faithful. So you are plainly refuted for not only are the rest of the Christians not reckoned among the faithful, but not even are any of your bishops or priests worthy of this saying."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Mac. Mag. 111 17



JULIAN

Julian is the only writer in our period who witnessed the greatest triumph of the early Church, that of becoming officially the approved form of worship within the Roman Empire. Julian was himself a member of the house of Constantine and it was largely his hatred of Constantine, and Constantius, which incited him to hate the religion which they embraced. This, combined with a well-nigh fanatic devotion to antiquity, dictated the short course of his attempted revival of paganism.

Julian, as Celsus and Porphyry before him, sneers at the low standard of the members of the Christian Church. Jesus has "won over the least worthy of you".<sup>1</sup> The converts of the Church are described by him as vulgar, of the baser sort — "shop-keepers, tax-gatherers, dancers, and libertines",<sup>2</sup> "Not only the Galilaeans of our day, but also the first to receive Paul's teaching were men of this sort, as is clear from the testimony of Paul."<sup>2</sup> Julian also makes the point which Porphyry made that in the beginning it was never dreamt that the Church would attain to such power. Neither Jesus nor Paul "hoped that you would one day attain to such power as you have."<sup>3</sup>

His /

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1. Against the Galilaeans 191 E. τὸ χεῖριστον τῶν παρ' ὑμῶν  
= the least worthy of you.
  2. Against the Galilaeans 238 E and 245 AB. Julian is referring of course to 1 Cor. 1 26 "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called" One would have thought that Julian had lived to see the reversal of this statement. Or is Julian merely following the lead of Celsus? Or is the major part of the Christian Church still recruited from the lowest classes?
  3. Against the Galilaeans 206 A.

His attack on the Baptism of the Church<sup>1</sup> echoes the earlier attack of Porphyry. He even bases it on the same verse used by Porphyry for this purpose -- "Ye were washed and ye were sanctified". He shows the same surprise that water should be able to cleanse "when it shall go down to the soul". Again, Julian's reasoning reflects that of Porphyry. "Yet Baptism does not take away the leprosy from the leper, or scars, pimples, warts, gout, or dysentery, dropsy, a whitlow, in fact no disorder of the body. Then shall it do away with adultery and theft, and in short all the transgressions of the soul?" In a further jeer at Baptism Julian imagines Jesus summoning sinners in the after-world - "He that is a seducer, he that is a murderer, he that is sacrilegious and infamous, let him approach without fear. For with this water will I wash him and straightway make him clean. And though he be guilty a second time ... I will make him clean again!"<sup>2</sup>

There is one aspect of the Church which Julian admires so much that he wishes the pagans to copy it, namely the splendid charity work. He challenges a priest, "Who, I ask, ever became poor by giving to his neighbours? We ought then to share our money with all men".<sup>3</sup> Good and bad alike should benefit. /

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1. Against the Galilaeans 245 AB

2. The Caesars 335 C.D. 336 AB cf. C. Celsum lll, 44, 59

3. Letter to a Priest 290 C 290 D



benefit. Pagans call Zeus the 'god of strangers'<sup>1</sup> and the 'god of comrades' and yet have neglected the poor. "For when it came about that the poor were neglected and overlooked by the priests, then I think the impious Galilaeans observed the fact, and devoted themselves to philanthropy. And they have gained ascendancy in the worst of their deeds through the credit they win by such practices."<sup>2</sup> Julian sees this as one of the church's weapons of evangelism. He states, "For just as those who would entice children with a cake, and by throwing it to them two or three times, induce them to follow them, and when they are far away from their friends cast them on board a ship, and sell them as slaves, and that which for the moment seemed sweet /

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1. Letter to a Priest 291 B

The Christian practice of charity and hospitality sprung from various exhortations in the New Testament, as well as from the inner spirit of love which characterised Christianity itself. E.g., Romans 12, v 13; Hebrews 13, v 2 1 Peter 4 v 9; Titus 1 v 8; 1 Tim. 5 v 10; Later literature reflects the generosity of Christians, e.g., 1 Clement 1 2 extols the hospitality of Corinthian Christians.

JUSTIN Apol. 1 14 witnesses to the fact that non-Christians have been impressed by the generosity of Christians. Justin links Christian hospitality with the relief of those under arrest.

Lucian De Morte Peregrini 11-13 shows how Peregrinus took advantage of such hospitality.

cf. Donald W. Riddle "Early Christian Hospitality - a Factor in the Gospel Tradition".

Journal of Biblical Literature 57 1938 pp. 141-154

2. Letter to a Priest 305 B.

sweet proves to be bitter for all the rest of their lives".<sup>1</sup> This bribe to discipleship is one reason why Julian wants to copy Christian charity, in order to strengthen his own ranks. He claims too that the Church uses its Love-feast or Hospitality or Service of tables with the same purpose, and in fact have thereby "led very many into atheism". Even the wives of the pagans "carry everything to the Galilaeans".<sup>2</sup>

One of the consequences of Julian's dismay at the weak condition of the pagan religion, all the more clearly seen in the light of the robust state of the Church, was his attempted reformation of paganism. He explicitly states in one of his letters, "we are in a state of apathy about religion",<sup>3</sup> and again he remarks, "The true Hellenic religion does not yet prosper as I desire".<sup>1</sup> These statements were made in the year 362 AD and it was in the summer of that year that his reformation commenced. He took for his model Maximin Daza, who had sought to reform the dying pagan worship by imitating the Christian /

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1. Letter to a Priest 305 C.

2. Letter to a Priest 305 D We have in the section on Porphyry's attitude to the Church noted the prominent place of women in the Christian Church. Julian sees the danger of Christianity spreading by means of the women. You leave to your wives the education of the children" (Misopagan 356 B.C.) suggests that pagan women were susceptible to the ideas of Christianity.

Here we detect one of the weaknesses in the pagan Church of Julian - his neglect of women. Certainly the Mysteries were excluded from women, except the cult of the Mother of the gods. (F. CUMONT Les Mysteres de Mithra - 3rd Ed. p. 183).

3. To the High Priest Theodorus 453 D Also to Arsacius H Priest of Galatia 429 C.



Christian Church.<sup>1</sup> Therefore Julian conceived of a complete re-organising of the pagan church. It is this imitation that Gregory Nazianzen sarcastically describes as 'the mimicry of apes' and 'parodying as if on the stage.'<sup>2</sup> In his first Invective Gregory writes "He, Julian ..... was intending to establish in every town schools with pulpits and higher and lower levels of benches ... also a form of prayer alternately pronounced, and penance for those that sinned, initiations and other things that evidently belong to our constitution."<sup>3</sup>

We shall examine in more detail the new organisation set up by Julian. First of all he appointed himself Pontifex Maximus over his church, and under him he appointed various provincial priests with much the same function as the Christian bishops. It was the task of these provincial priests to supervise the pagan temples in their districts and to oversee the /

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1. Maximin Daza circulated apocryphal Acts of Pilate to be lectured on throughout the schools, in order to misrepresent Jesus. Moreover, he attempted to revive and re-establish the old pagan cults, thereby to oppose the virile organisation of the Church.

That Julian consciously imitates the Church is beyond dispute.

See W. Koch. "Comment l'Empereur Julien Tacha de Fonder une Eglise païenne".

Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire t VI 1927

p. 123-146 and

t VII 1928 p.1363-1385

2. Gregory Nazianzen First Invective 113
3. " " " " 111

the work of the local priests. Concerning the appointment of priests Julian counsels that there must be no toadying to the rich, and above all the candidate for the priesthood must be selected from the most upright men in every city, "Even if he be poor and a man of the people, if he possess love of god and love of his fellows let him be appointed priest".<sup>1</sup> This was a departure from the corrupt procedure of the pagan cults in which the priesthood was at times even hereditary. One of the reasons that Julian's reform failed was that he could not inspire enthusiasm into the new leaders, most of whom were theurgic neo-Platonists and adherents of the Eastern mystery religions.<sup>2</sup>

The organisation of the local pagan church is also of interest to us. One of the first steps that Julian took after his accession to power was the re-opening and re-constructing of closed or destroyed temples, many of which had been destroyed by the Christians who were accordingly made to pay for their rebuilding. In these local services there were certain new features. /

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1. Letter to a Priest 305 AB.

Φιλοθεον = love of God  
 Φιλανθρωπον = love of man

This, of course, is reminiscent of the two great commandments of the law. St. Matthew XXII, 37, 39; Mark XII, 30, 31; Luke X, 27; Deut. VI. 5 etc.

2. See J. Bidez, 'Vie de l'Empereur Julien', (Paris 1930) p. 73  
 G. Bardy lists some of Julian's Church leaders - Chrysanthios, Maximus, Theodorus, Hierœx, the turncoat Pegasus, etc. (Fliche et Martin. Histoire de l'Eglise. Vol. III ch. IV. p. 187)



features. For example there was the introduction of pagan hymn singing. Julian seems to have been concerned lest the science of music be altogether neglected as we find in a letter to Ecdicius, Prefect of Egypt, "If there is anything that deserves our fostering care it is the sacred art of music. Do you therefore select from the citizens of Alexandria boys of good birth, and give orders that two measures of corn are to be furnished every month to each of them with olive oil also and wine".<sup>1</sup> It is significant to find Julian offering state-aid in order to advance the progress of "sacred" music. He further stipulates in his letter that the boys are to be chosen firstly for their voices, but if any of them should prove capable to the higher study of the science of music - "let them be informed that very considerable amounts have been set aside at my court". As well as hymn singing there was the reading of the scriptures which must be carefully selected by the priests. Presumably these scriptures were selections from Hesiod, Homer and the philosophers. Gregory once again scorns this parodying of the reading of the Holy Scriptures at worship. "But what books? A fine thing for the books of Hesiod to be chanted with their wars and rebellions. Let these things be brought on to the stage for the benefit of the wonderful audience of this theology!"<sup>2</sup> Julian, in his letter to a priest, warns his reader that all fictions must be avoided in the public worship and /

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1. Letter to ECDICIUS Prefect of Egypt.  
Ammianus Marcellinus XX 16, 17.
  2. Gregory Nazianzen. First Invective 114.

and he mentions the Galilaeans who read aloud Jewish tales. Likewise the priest is advised to recite his offices thrice daily.<sup>1</sup> Another innovation was the attempt to introduce a sermon<sup>2</sup> into the services of the temple. This proved a failure. All this reflected a sincere desire on the part of Julian to infuse new life and devotion into the dying cause of pagan worship, and as such it is worthy of our admiration.<sup>3</sup> He even sought to build hostels for pilgrims, monasteries for men, convents for women, places of meditation and hospitals.<sup>4</sup> As we shall see he also attempted a system of poor relief, which hitherto had been left largely to the Christians. One more aspect of this religious revival was the attempt by Julian to sever the religious and civil authorities. On the one hand he commands his priests not to flatter the civil magistrates, while on the other hand he strongly forbids civil officials to strike a priest. "A man who strikes a priest has committed sacrilege"./

1. Letter to a Priest 300 C 302
2. Although it appears certain in this context that Julian is imitating the sermon in Christian worship, it must be noted that Stoics and Cynics also preached from ancient texts. (See c. Celsus III 50) Gregory (Or. IV. 110) speaks of the sermon as *δμιλῶ*, later as *διδάχῃ*
3. In other details too, Julian copies Christian practice. For example *βήματα* pulpits, and *ἱερεῖς* for High Priests.  
W. Koch sees in Gregory Nazianzen Funeral Oration IV. 110 f and Sozomen V. 16. 2 f the remnants of a pagan Encyclical. He finds evidence in Sozomen for the introduction by Julian into pagan worship of prayers with responses  
(*εὐχαὶ ἐν μετρίῃ*)
4. Gregory Nazianzen First Invective 112.



sacrilege".<sup>1</sup> This is a new spiritual conception of the priesthood, which exalts the office even above the man who holds it. It is for this reason that priests must be disciplined to honour one another. Theodorus the High Priest is advised, "Any priest who behaves unworthily towards his fellows and unjustly towards the gods ... must be either admonished or chastened with great severity". Regulations concerning Church discipline are to be forwarded.<sup>2</sup>

There are three great emphases in Julian's scheme. The first is on the worship of the gods. Julian makes this his first point also in his letter to a priest. The priest must practise what he preaches, and therefore he must be a sincere worshipper of the gods.<sup>3</sup> In his letter to the High Priest Julian complains of disrespect by the priest towards the gods, and he insists that it is the duty of the High Priest to "shame them or persuade them together with their wives and children into worshipping the gods".<sup>4</sup> He also warns them against mere externalism in worship, lest they look only on the outward manifestation of statues without seeing beyond. The /

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1. Letter to an Official (18-Loeb)

2. Soz. V. 16, 2, 3. "He took care also to prescribe according to the Christian tradition a suitable correction for sins voluntary and involuntary, followed by repentance.

If Julian actually used the phrase ἐκ μεταμέλεις then the pattern is Christian, so too will the term

Pagan punishment for sins had existed for centuries.

3. Letter to a Priest 299 BC

4. Letter to Ausacius, the High Priest of Galatia (22 Loeb)  
ἱερόσυλος = sacrilege

The second emphasis is placed on morals, both for priest and worshipper alike. Julian realised, as Gregory was quick to point out, that here lay the weakness of the pagan priests. Therefore Julian reminds his priest that "personal chastity is the proof of piety".<sup>1</sup> What sort of a man ought a priest to be? He must be good, virtuous, a figure demanding respect, "neither saying nor listening to anything base, keeping himself pure from impure and shameful acts. He must reject all offensive jests". Again Julian charges, "no priest must anywhere be present at the licentious theatrical shows of the present day or introduce one into his own house. Let no priest enter a theatre nor have an actor or a chariot driver for his friend and let no dancer or mime even approach his door."<sup>2</sup> Both the priest and his sons are told to shun hunting /

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1. Letter to a Priest. An interesting comparison can be made between Julian's Letter to a Priest and the letter of Jerome to Nepotianus on the duties of the clergy. Much the same advice is given in both letters. Jerome counsels,

- 1) Under Christ's banner, seek no worldly gain!
- 2) Welcome poor men and strangers.
- 3) A clergyman shouldn't engage in business.
- 4) A woman's foot should seldom cross your threshold!
- 5) Avoid scandal!
- 6) Read the divine scriptures constantly!
- 7) Don't entertain civil authorities or magistrates!
- 8) Let your breath not smell of wine.
- 9) Beware of a blabbing tongue and itching ears.

So too Tertullian. On Idolatry. 8. stresses that contacts with certain occupations are not befitting for the clergy. Likewise in certain parts of the Church, converts who had been actors or clowns in pantomime had to leave their jobs before accepted by the Church. (Canons of C. Elvira)

2. Letter to a Priest 304 B.



hunting shows with dogs. Julian confirms this advice in his epistle to Arsacius High Priest of Galatia. "In the second place, admonish them that no priest may enter a theatre or drink in a tavern, or have anything to do with any craft or trade that is corrupt."<sup>1</sup>

The third emphasis is placed on philanthropy, possibly the aspect Julian most admired of the Christian religion. "You must above all exercise philanthropy. We ought, then, to share our money with all men, but more generally with the good and with the helpless and poor. And I would assert that it is a pious act even to share our clothes and food with the wicked. Even those who are shut up in prison have a right to the same sort of care."<sup>2</sup> In the Misopogon, Julian reveals his admiration mingled with envy at the Christian care of poor people. "But as it is, every one of you allows his wife to carry everything out of his house to the Galilaeans. Your wives feed the poor at your expense thereby attracting others to Christianity."<sup>3</sup> Julian has realised that paganism can only advance by excelling in the very virtues which have proved to be the strength of the Christian Church. Commenting on the apathetic state of his own religion he writes in his letter to Arsacius, /

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1. Letter to Arsacius.
  2. Letter to a Priest 289, 290 AB C. The main difference between Julian's suggested use of Pagan Philanthropia and Christian Agape, is that philanthropy should be carefully applied only to the needy, whereas the charity of Christians is wantonly used and abused.
  3. Misopogon 305 C.

Arsacius, "Why then do we think that this is enough? Why do we not observe that it is their benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead and the pretended holiness of their lives that have done most to increase theism."(atheism!) It is in this letter that we have an example of the practical steps taken by Julian in this direction. Provisions are to be set apart in the province of Galatia for the poor. These are quite considerable, thirty thousand measures of corn, and sixty thousand pints of wine are to be used for relief work.<sup>1</sup>

Why did Julian's pagan church not succeed? Perhaps it was due to a combination of the following reasons. Firstly Julian's untimely death did not afford a proper testing period for his reforms. Secondly, his was the voice of one crying in the wilderness and he constantly faced complete lack of interest in leaders and people alike, Thirdly, his church did not have the advantage of a proper historical beginning or the historical process of an organism, both of which the Christian Church possessed. Fourthly, the nature of the gospel which he would have his church proclaim consisted of no more than a syncretistic blending of myths and cults already outworn. Perhaps one final reason may be suggested here, the fact that Julian despised the important place of women in the Christian Church and therefore ignored them in his own organisation.

Libanius in his "Funeral Oration"<sup>2</sup> remarks on the disappointment /

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1. Letter to Arsacius (Written c 262 A.D.)  
 ἡ περὶ λαομένη σεμνότης κατὰ τὸν βίον  
 = the pretended holiness of their lives.
  2. Libanius - Funeral Oration.



disappointment of the Christians that Julian did not persecute the church. "There was an expectation among them that they would have their eyes put out, their heads cut off, and that rivers of blood would flow in massacres. (The Christians said) 'For the new sovereign will invent novel modes of compulsion, compared to which fire and sword will seem trifling, and throwing in the sea, and burning alive and mutilation and cutting in pieces.' But a false belief in matters of religion you cannot eradicate by cutting and burning up." Julian's avowed policy was to try to lead the erring toward the truth by gentleness rather than by force. He did not cease to exclaim, 'Whither are you rushing, you fellows? And are you not ashamed of considering darkness brighter than light?'. Even the hostile Gregory admits that Julian grudged them the glory of martyrdom! All the same, he was not unduly distressed when one or other of his provincial governors treated the Christian Church with cruelty and contempt.

A recent expression of church life irked Julian constantly. The increasing number of Christian solitaries or monks alarmed and disgusted him. It is somewhat surprising that the ascetic style of the solitary way of life failed to meet with Julian's approval since he himself practised a rigid asceticism. Apart from this common link, one might feel with Gregory Nazianzen, that on purely humanitarian grounds the self-imposed deprivations of the monks would have inspired admiration in Julian. Gregory appeals: "But thou must admire at least what is here before thee. Dost thou see these persons here /

here without livelihood and without a home, all but without a body or blood in their veins? Above men and above human things!! Through mortification of self they are become immortal! How comes it that they do not inspire thee with respect?"<sup>1</sup>

For Julian the monks and the would-be martyrs are infected with the same disease.<sup>3</sup> "Many atheists are induced to court death in the belief that they will fly up to heaven when they have brought their lives to a violent end. Some men there are also, although man is naturally a social and civilised being, who seek out desert places instead of cities, since they have been given over to evil demons, and are led by them into hatred of this kind. And many of them have even devised fetters and stocks to wear."<sup>2</sup> Gregory in his Second Inveective appears to quote the very words of Julian: "These are the tales of the Galilaeans, of us 'the vile and the abject, the disciples of the uneducated fishermen' as ye call us, who sit together and sing psalms with the old women; of us, wasted away and half-dead /

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1. Gregory Naz. 1st Inveective 71, 72

2. Fragment of a Letter to a Priest 288, 288 B.

3. Christianity is often called a DISEASE by Julian.

Letter 41 (Loeb), 52 Hertlein), 114 Bidez-Cumont,  
To the Citizens of Bustrā (438 C. D.)

τῇ νόσῳ with this disease

cf. Letter to Libanius, Against the Galilaeans  
327 B, Oration VII 229 D.



half-dead with the long fasts of us, who keep awake to no purpose, and through standing vigils grow silly' --- but yet overthrow you!!"<sup>1</sup>

However, from a reference to Christian monks in his Oration to the Uneducated Cynics, Julian suggests that what annoys him is the abuse of the ascetic life. Certain Cynics copy only the shamelessness of manners and not the true discipline of the genuine Cynic. This assumption of only the outward signs is akin to the hypocrisy and greed of certain Christian monks. He tries to shame these Cynics out of their slovenly habits: "Long ago I gave you a nick-name, and now I think I will write it down again - 'MONKS', a name applied to certain persons of the impious Galilaeans. They are for the most part men who by making small sacrifices gain much more, or rather everything from all sources and in addition secure honour, crowds of attendants and flattery. Something like that is your method, except perhaps for uttering divine revelations ... we are wiser than those insensate men, and perhaps there is this difference too that you have no excuse for levying tribute on specious pretexts as they do which they call alms, whatever that may mean." In other respects Julian claims they are the same. "Like them, you have abandoned your country, you wander about all over the world."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Gregory Nazianzen 2nd Invective ch. 25.

2. Oration VI "To the Uneducated Cynics".

APPENDIX ATHE CHURCHA THIRD RACE

We have already noticed the alarm with which the pagans viewed the increase of the number of Christians. Celsus is alarmed by another aspect of the Christian Church - its exclusiveness. He gives a double reason for their separatism (a) they are united through a common fear of persecution (b) they are united in a common revolt.<sup>2</sup> According to Celsus the Church has achieved undreamed of proportions, the vastness of which constituted a separate race.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Church came to be known as the Third Race, contrasted in turn with Greeks and Barbarians or Greeks and Jews. Aristides in his Apology Chp. 2 calls the Church a Fourth Race, "This is plain to you O king that there are four races of men in this world; Barbarians and Greeks, Jews and Christians."<sup>4</sup> We find both Celsus and Julian

constantly /

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1. c Celsus lll 5
  2. c Celsus lll 14 cf. VIII 14  
United by the Common Name also.
  3. c Celsus lll 10
  4. Aristides Apol. 2 (cf. 16. 4) Compare this with the charge made against the Christians in the other work, the Oration of Aristides. "They have severed themselves deliberately from the Greeks, or rather from all that is good in the world. They occupy no seats on civil councils; they never reconcile those who are at variance; they do nothing for the advancement of the young, or indeed for anybody. They take no thought for style, but creep into a corner and talk stupidly. (XLVI ). Aristides, the rhetor, friend of the Asiatic proconsul, Quadratus, wrote in the 2nd century; Aristides, the Apologist addressed his work to the Emperor Pius.  
Cf. Letter to Diognetus 1. You wonder why this new race has appeared on the earth now and not before. cf. 4.5 - 6.10  
Scriptural Sources of this conception include 1. Peter 2. 9f; 1 Cor. 1, 22-24; 10.32; Phil. 3.20; Hebrews 11.9.  
cf. Clement of Rome: Letter to Corinthians Arnobius Adversus Gentes II. 69  
See also Harnack. Expansion I p. 247 ff.



constantly contrasting Jews, Greeks and Christians always to the advantage of the Greeks over the Jews and the Jews over the Christians.

For Celsus the Greeks have a monopoly of truth in their ancient doctrines and laws and it is for this reason that Celsus stresses the importance of historical tradition. Ancient and wise men of old have laid down the true doctrine to be followed by succeeding generations. Any truths conserved in the customs of other nations have been borrowed from the Greeks. Julian follows Celsus in his conception of the Greek supremacy over all other nations. However Celsus also bases his conception of national traditions and the differences between them on his theory of divine overseers, who in the beginning of the world were allotted different regions of the earth. In this way although he considers Greek traditions to be the best he also considers every national tradition to be valid and to be binding upon the various peoples concerned. The greatest crime against God, Nature and man is to abandon one's traditions.<sup>1</sup>

It is in this light that we understand the treatment by both Celsus and Julian of the Jewish race. In Book V Chp. 25 we read, "Now the Jews became an individual nation and made laws according to the custom of their country; and they maintain these laws among themselves at the present day and observe a worship which may be very peculiar, but which is at least traditional. In this respect they behave like the rest of mankind, because each /

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1. c. Celsum V. 25.

each nation follows its own traditional customs. It is impious to abandon the customs which have existed in each locality from the beginning."<sup>1</sup> It is this very thing that the Christians have done. Celsus realises that if the Christians are to claim any historical tradition it must be Judaism, yet they have rebelled against the Jews.<sup>2</sup> He (i.e. the Jew) blames Jesus as the author of this sedition who deceived humble Jewish men and women into deserting "to another name and another life".<sup>3</sup> He appeals to the Christians, "What was wrong with you, citizens, that you left the law of our fathers?" In Book V Chp. 34 ff. he expands his theory of national traditions, quoting Herodotus in order to exemplify the validity and bindingness of local traditions. We find the kernel of this argument in the statement "Pindar is right when he says 'Custom is king of all'".<sup>4</sup> Again he acknowledges the validity of Jewish traditions, "In accordance with the principles, the Jews maintained their own law and we should not find fault with them, but rather with those who have abandoned their own traditions and professed those of the Jews."<sup>5</sup> This last part of the sentence seems to refer to Greeks who had become converts either to Christianity or Judaism.

Thus/

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1. c. Celsum V. 25
  2. c. Celsum V. 33
  3. c. Celsum ll. 1, 4
  4. Later (VIII. 72) Celsus asserts that no one law would be possible for the world, reaffirming his belief in the validity of the law of each nation.
  5. c. Celsum V. 41.



Thus we see that the Christians are regarded as a company of people who have cut themselves loose from all historical tradition and therefore from the Divine heritage contained in belonging to a historical race. They have become a people of their own without law and without tradition. Julian declares the Christians "have abandoned the Jewish beliefs also and followed a way of their own".<sup>1</sup> Naturally, even more painful to pagans was the fact that many of the Christians of their day had abandoned Hellenism in order to follow the Christian way. This was even more blameworthy when we consider that to men such as Celsus and Julian the Greek religion possessed the truth. The Church is therefore made up of malcontents, people of low intelligence who could discern neither the validity of Jewish tradition nor the supremacy of Greek truth. "They have not taken a single admirable doctrine from either Hellenes or Hebrews, but from both religions have gathered what has been engrafted like powers of evil as it were, on these nations. They have taken atheism from the Jewish levity, and a sordid and slovenly way of living from our indolence and vulgarity."<sup>2</sup> Julian further calls Christians leeches who have sucked the worst blood leaving the purer. Celsus points to other proofs that the Christians seek to establish a separate race of men. They avoid setting up temples which is a sure token of an obscure and secret society.<sup>3</sup>

We have seen that both Celsus and Julian show respect for Jewish national traditions. However the Jews fall under the same /

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1. Julian. Against the Galilaeans 43A
  2. Julian. Against the Galilaeans 43 A.B.
  3. c. Celsus VIII. 18, 19.

same charge as the Christians when they lay claim to be holier than other people, and to possess a special revelation from God. Celsus asks the question, "Why is it likely that they are in favour with God and are loved any more than other folk and why should angels descend to them alone?"<sup>1</sup> When Celsus and Julian are opposing this opinion it is interesting to note that they equate both Jews and Christians as we discover in Julian's Treatise "Against the Galilaeans" 209C.<sup>2</sup> "Why were you so ungrateful to our gods as to desert them for the Jews?" Here it is obvious that Julian is referring to Greeks who had been converted to Christianity thereby abandoning the many gods of paganism for the one God of the Jews and Christians. It is in the development of this debate that we find all three races, Greeks, Jews, and Christians being compared at the same time. The Jews and the Christians by claiming a special revelation and a special interest by God have laid themselves open to criticism. Both Celsus and Julian are quick to point out the absurdity of this claim from the point of view of history. Celsus claims that the Jews were always an obscure race, ignorant of poets and wise men, who were ready to believe the crude story of creation told them by Moses.<sup>3</sup> Of Egyptian origin they<sup>4</sup> had been slaves before Moses delivered them. Moses himself learned sorcery from the magicians of Egypt in the power of which he set himself up as a prophet of God.<sup>5</sup> Celsus cannot help ridiculing the Jews by asserting that they deserve the treatment which the Christians had given them. "The Jews were /

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1. Celsus in c. Celsum V. 41
  2. cf. c. Celsum V. 59 lll 1 etc.
  3. c. Celsum IV, 35, 36
  4. c. " I, 68
  5. c. " I, 22, 26, 28



were Egyptians by race, and left Egypt after revolting against the Egyptian community, despising the religious customs of Egypt. What they did to the Egyptians they suffered in turn through those who followed Jesus. In both cases a revolt against the community led to the introduction of new ideas."<sup>1</sup> The similarity of Jesus and Moses prompted Julian to emphasise that Jesus also learned sorcery in Egypt. In this comparison between the races historically, the Greeks receive highest honours for the wisdom of their doctrines, the origin of the crafts and sciences, the development of music and drama, their military skill and the renown of their kings. The Jews come next in that they also possess a history, but this history is altogether shameful. Celsus for example describes the history of the Jews in the following words "The Jews were run away slaves from Egypt, they never did anything important, nor have they ever been of any significance or prominence whatever. Nothing about their history is to be found among the Greeks."<sup>2</sup> Julian also indicates the unworthy character of Jewish history<sup>3</sup> scorning their writings, their wise men, such as Solomon and their complete lack of success both in the art of learning and in the art of war. The Christians come out worst in this three-fold comparison because they have no history at all, either good or bad. Firstly because they have cut themselves off from the rest of their fellows and secondly because they appeared "but yesterday".

The final verdict of Celsus and Julian appears to be that /

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1. c. Celsus III, 5

2. c. Celsus IV. 31

3. Julian. Against the Galilaeans 191 E, 209 C ff.

that Jews should remain Jews and Greeks should remain Greeks. Neither of them can understand why a Jew should become a Christian and even less so why a Greek should. Jesus himself was a slave as all the Jews were before him, and the only legacy that Christianity has received from Judaism is that of bondage.<sup>1</sup> The Greeks on the other hand are masters of the world, a further proof of the superiority of their traditions and of the favour that God has granted to them. "Is it better to be free continually during two thousand years, to rule over the greater part of the earth and sea, or to be enslaved and live in obedience to the will of others? No man is so lacking in self-respect as to choose the latter."<sup>2</sup> Both Julian and Celsus knew very well that the reason why Christian converts did choose the latter was because they believed that Christianity possessed an unique revelation from God. Hence the added significance to this comparison which results in the favour of the Greeks in order to show that if any of the three races are favoured by God, it is not the Jews nor the Christians, but the Greeks.

So much for the conception of the Church as a Third Race in its historical and religious aspects. Celsus is also very much concerned with the conception of the Church as a Third Race in its political aspect. He is afraid of the power of the Christians becoming so great, that one day the new religion would overthrow the old and the new empire supersede the old. History proved that his fears were well grounded. It is out of this apprehension over the safety of the Roman Empire /

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1. 209 C, 218 B.

2. Julian Against the Galilaeans 218 B.

3. c Celsus VIII 73.



Empire that Celsus makes his political appeal to the Christian Church. "Help the Emperor with all your power, and co-operate with him in what is right, and fight for him, and be fellow soldiers<sup>1</sup> if he presses for this and fellow generals with him. Accept public office in our country if it is necessary to do this."

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1. One wonders if Celsus is suggesting here that Christians demonstrated yet another mark of exclusivism, namely their avoidance of military service.

Certainly, the stricter school of Christian thought frowned on Christian participation in military affairs. Tertullian exclaims: "On disarming Peter, Christ stripped every Christian of his sword". (On Idolatry 19) So too Lactantius states that Christianity is not in concord with force. "Militare iusta non licebit .... occisio ipsa prohibetur" (Divine Institutes VI. 20. 16.)

Yet generally Christians appeared in various branches of the Army, although Christianity never became a religion of the camp. The New Testament used military language to express the faith. (2. Timothy 11. 3 f. cf. Luke 3, 14, etc.) In times of persecution numerous martyrs appear to have been soldiers, perhaps because they were the more easily detected as such. Eusebius (H.E.V.5, VI. 5, VIII. 1. etc.) bears witness to Christians in the Army as early as the second century, of particular significance being the Christian legion, Melitene XII.

Christian soldiers increased in numbers as the Church itself so increased. By the beginning of the Fourth Century it seemed worthwhile to the Emperor Diocletian to direct his persecution in the first instance against Christian soldiers (Eusebius H E. VIII. 1, 7; Lactantius De morte persec. X.)

For a full treatment of the subject see Harnack, Expansion II. p. 204 ff.

CHAPTER V  
THE SCRIPTURES  
CELSUS

The attitude of Celsus to the Christian's scriptures is obviously one of scorn and ridicule. He finds it impossible to interpret the Old Testament literally, and suggests that even an allegorical interpretation is out of the question. "The more reasonable Jews and Christians allegorise these things, because they are ashamed of them. But they are incapable of being interpreted allegorically".<sup>1</sup> They are manifestly very stupid fables "far more shameful and preposterous than the myths."<sup>2</sup> This comparison between the Holy Scriptures and the pagan myths is the key to this whole problem. The Christians were quick to place their finger on the weak spot in the pagan armoury, namely, the utter folly and degradation of the mythical stories concerning the pagan gods. The more enlightened pagans also had pointed out the stupidity of these tales; therefore they allegorised them in order not to dispose of classical mythology altogether. The philosophers tended to interpret them in terms of their own particular philosophy, as we shall see in the case of the neo-Platonists. Enlightened Christians felt that the Mosaic /

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1. c. Celsum IV. 40 Porphyry later accuses Origen of interpreting the Old Testament allegorically (Eusebius H.E. I. 13; VI. 19) Julian, in his turn, appears to admit that the Old Testament stories may possess some allegorical worth. (Against the Galilaeans 94 A.)
  2. c. Celsum IV. 51



Mosaic stories were crude and incapable of literal meaning. Therefore they followed the pagans in allegorising the more obscure passages of Scripture, seeking to impose some deep hidden mystical meaning on those stories. It is this Christian allegorising of the Old Testament which Celsus rejects.

Celsus even denies that the Mosaic Cosmogony contains anything worthy of a philosopher. No man of reason would write or accept such doctrines. He gives this advice to the Christians, "Follow reason and a rational guide in accepting doctrines."<sup>1</sup> Actually, his attitude towards the Christian scriptures very much reflects the Christian attitude towards the pagan scriptures. That is why he accuses the Christians so often of illiteracy, because in their despising of the pagan writings the Christians were turning their back on the recognised classics of contemporary education. "In any case, why is it bad to have been educated, and to have studied the best /

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1. c. Celsum 1. 9

best doctrines and both to be and appear intelligent."<sup>1</sup>

Celsus/

1. c. Celsus 111. 49 This raises the whole problem of the attitude of Christians toward pagan philosophy and education. Concerning the Christians' lack of education compare c Celsus I 9, 27, 62. III 18, 44 etc.; Octavius cf. Minicius Felix V 4, VIII 4. Apocriticus of Macarius Magnes IV 9

A division of opinion appears among the early Apologists and Fathers. Justin Martyr admits truth in Greek philosophy, if only borrowed truth. Thus philosophy can be a preparation for Christianity. (1 Apology)

Clement of Alexandria states, "there are some who do not wish to touch philosophy at all or learn natural science; they demand bare faith alone. (Stromata Miscellanies 1 9.) This is not his attitude towards philosophy, which for him is the handmaid of theology. (Stromata 1. 6 ), and which "by purging the soul prepares it for the reception of faith" (Stromata V.9) But the majority of Christians at Alexandria did not share Clement's tolerance, "Only fear the Greek philosophy as children fear goblins". (Stromata 1 11-14)

Origen is of course the most tolerant of all, but even he fears to go too far.

Jerome stands halfway, having been influenced by a dream against secular literature, he goes on to use Greek and Latin quotations only "in the interest and honour of the faith" (Apology contra Rufinum 1. 30) A dream is only a dream.

On the other side, Cyprian and Tertullian most strictly avoid Greek philosophy. Tertullian's famous passage is from De Praescrptionibus VII. "What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem, between the Academy and the Church? I have no use for a Stoic or Platonic or a dialectic Christianity."

Augustine (Confessions I. 8) points out the unsuitability of certain parts of Virgil for young children, e.g., the love story of Dido illustrating the maxim, "amare et amari".

Lactantius shows that if Christians shrank from the pagan writings, many pagans shrank from the Christian Scriptures, as the simple style of the Scriptures was distasteful to the cultured, and were "despised by those willing to hear or read only what is polished and eloquent".

(DIVINE INSTITUTES V. 1 ).



Celsus also feels that Christianity is successful only amongst the uneducated because of its vulgarity and utter illiteracy. Empty myths<sup>1</sup> are suitable only for empty heads.

By referring to some of the Old Testament stories Celsus seeks to illustrate that the Bible is on a level with pagan mythology. For example he cites the conspiracies of brothers, defiling of sisters, treacheries of mothers, fathers deceived, etc. What difference is there between the lust of the pagan heroes, and the intercourse of righteous men with strange women, brides and maidservants" or "Lot and his daughters", whose deeds were "more iniquitous than Thyestian sins". Equally puerile is the tale of "a flood and a prodigious ark holding everything in it and that a dove and a crow were messengers."<sup>2</sup> Celsus even criticises the New Testament for being myth-like.<sup>3</sup> "Do you think the story of these others really are the legends which they appear to be, and yet the ending of your tragedy is to be regarded as noble and convincing?"<sup>4</sup>

Celsus also thinks the Christian admiration of Scripture prophecy is absurd, and that such prophecy is certainly no more reliable than the Greek Oracles. "The predictions of the Pythian priestess or one of the priestesses of Dodona or of the clarion Apollo, or at Branchidae or at the shrines of Zeus Ammon, and of countless other prophets are reckoned of no account, although it is probable that by them the whole world became inhabited. But the predictions made by the people in Judea... /

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1.	c.	Celsum	I	20
2.	c.	Celsum	IV	41
3.	c.	Celsum	IV	21
4.	c.	Celsum	II	55

Judea.... are thought to be wonderful and unalterable".<sup>1</sup> As we have seen in the chapter on Jesus, Celsus denies that our Lord is the subject of Old Testament prophecy. He is opposed to the Christian attitude that it was inevitable for events to happen as they did simply because "these things were foretold long ago".<sup>2</sup> This attitude is no more than an excuse for unworthy events, and thereby the Christians accept as true the New Testament because they claim that the events in the New Testament were foretold in the Old. Not only this, but within the New Testament they excuse the shameful happenings in the life of Jesus on the basis of this same tenet,<sup>3</sup> that they were predicted beforehand. In this case however the prophecy was made not so much in the Old Testament but by Jesus Himself.<sup>4</sup>

We have seen that Celsus attacks the Scriptures firstly as being no better than the myths, and secondly from the standpoint of prophecy. Another criticism that he makes of the Scriptures is that the Hebrew and Christian writers are not original but have borrowed from the Greeks and other ancient sources. Thus he accuses Moses of learning magic and sorcery from the Egyptians and of having heard true doctrines, but misunderstanding them and compiling the Hebrew Scriptures. The charge is repeatedly made that Moses borrowed from the Greeks /

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|----|----|--------|------|------|
| 1. | c  | Celsus | VII. | 2, 3 |
| 2. | c. | Celsus | VII. | 2    |
| 3. | "  | "      | VII. | 12   |
| 4. | "  | "      | 11.  | 13   |



Greeks without fully comprehending what he read.<sup>1</sup> He likewise makes various attacks on the New Testament on this score. For example the virgin birth is not original as the old myths attributed divine birth to Perseus and Amphion, Aecus/

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1.

Celsus appears to reply to the Christian claim that Plato borrowed from Moses. The old Jewish Alexandrian thesis put forward the opinion that Moses and all the prophetic writings are older than all the writings of the Hellenes. Justin Martyr restates this hypothesis in his First Apology 54. 5, also claiming that the Greek writings were dependent on the Logos since they were dependent on the prophets and Moses. Thus the idea of a Stoic world conflagration sprang from a misreading of Deuteronomy 32, 22. (Justin 1 Apol. 59 and 60. 10). "They have all copied our thought." Plato's theory of evil also comes from Moses. (1 Apol. 44. 8.) The Timaeus 28 C. likewise depends on Genesis (1. Apol. 59. 1), as does Plato. Epistle II 312 D E.

Carl Andresen (Logos und Nomos, p. 4,5.) sees here proof for his thesis that Celsus's Alethes Logos is a direct reply to Justin's Logos - theology.

Aecus and Minos.<sup>1</sup> He also attacks some of the sayings of Jesus. /

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1. cf Justin. 1 Apol. 54.

"The myths were uttered by the influence of wicked demons who heard it proclaimed through the prophets that Christ was to come - they imitated what was said of our Christ."

The Greek poets composed myths influenced by devils, e.g., the myth of Bacchus reflects Genesis, XLIX, 10., Perseus, the Isaiahan passage on the Virgin Birth. (1 Apol. 54).

Thus poets and philosophers alike have imitated the inspired writings of the Hebrews. Plato Timaeus 28 C, 53 D Republic 330 D etc. is indebted to the prophets. (1 Apol. 76) Homer received enlightenment in Egypt! Odyssey VI. 576, IV. 221 etc.

"It is not then that we hold the same opinions as others, but that all speak in imitation of us."

In his Address to the Greeks, Justin adds to his thesis, accusing Plato of copying Moses in his Doctrine of Form (Exod. 25, 9, 40) and in his teaching on the Judgment. (To the Greeks 37, 39) cf. Lactantius, DIV. INST. II. 11, 14, 17; Hippolytus Refutation. Clement Stromata I. 22; Numenius "What is Plato but Moses speaking Greek? (X. 26)



Jesus. "They have also a precept to this effect that you must not resist a man who insults you, 'even He says if someone strikes you on the cheek, yet you should offer the other as well' this too is old stuff, and was better said before him. But they expressed it in more vulgar terms. For Plato makes Socrates speak the following conversation in the Crito (49 B.E.) 'then we ought never to do wrong ...' This was the opinion of Plato, but these views were set forth still earlier by divinely inspired men."<sup>1</sup> Although Celsus adds that this is a sufficient example for all the doctrines which they corrupt he gives other examples. The argument of Jesus against the rich man when he said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" was manifestly borrowed from Plato "Jesus corrupts the Platonic saying where Plato says 'it is impossible for an outstandingly good man to be exceptionally rich'".<sup>2</sup> For Celsus then, Plato, in his epistles and the Phædrus, is inspired in his utterances.<sup>3</sup> Paul also borrowed from the ancient philosophers when he wrote that the wisdom possessed by men is foolishness with God. Celsus exclaims, "This was invented by us."<sup>4</sup> It was taken over by Greek wise men who said that human wisdom is one thing, and divine wisdom another." Both Heraclitus and Plato had said precisely the same thing.

#### Celsus /

1. c. Celsum VII. 58

2. " " VI. 16

3. c. Celsum VI. 17 cf. VI. 8. "But Plato never boasted he was a Son of God." Celsus then prefers Plato to Moses, the prophets, Jesus, or Paul; indeed, all of these have borrowed from Plato without fully understanding him. c.C. VI. 16-19, 47 and c.C. VII. 28, cf. IV. 54.

T.R. Glover believes that for Celsus the teaching of Jesus was no other than a "medley of garbled quotations from Greek literature". (The Conflict of Religions - ch. VIII p. 252. London (1909) ).

4. c. Celsum VI. 12

Celsus makes the curious charge that the Gnostics were led astray because they misinterpreted the sayings of Plato concerning a heaven above the heavens.<sup>1</sup>

Finally Celsus accuses the Scriptures of inconsistency and untruth. He specifically states, "Your Scriptures are inconsistent"<sup>2</sup> when dealing with the resurrection narrative. Another phrase that he uses to describe the Scriptures is "utter trash"<sup>3</sup>

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1. c. Celsum VI. 19

2. c. Celsum III. 12 cf. II. 74 "You provide your own refutation."

3. c. Celsum VI. 50 "Moses and the prophets who left our books had no idea what the nature of the world and of mankind really was, and put together utter trash."



PORPHYRY

It is from Porphyry's pen that the most formidable attack on the Christian scriptures appears to have come.<sup>1</sup> This is largely due to the fact that he used to the full his keen critical faculty in detecting mistakes and inconsistencies in the scriptures, added to which, his wide learning<sup>2</sup> made it possible for him to examine critically the Christian interpretation of Old Testament prophecies. The most valuable examples of his historical criticism which we possess are to be found in his treatment of the Book of Daniel.<sup>3</sup>

The precise subject matter of each of Porphyry's fifteen books cannot be accurately stated, but we have certain direct references, which ascribe specific topics to specific books. The First Book contained references to the controversy between Peter and Paul concluding that their disagreement invalidated their doctrine. The Third Book contained an attack on Christian allegorising of the scriptures, especially as illustrated in the writings of Origen.<sup>4</sup> The Fourth Book rejected the Mosaic Cosmogony, and the Mosaic early Jewish history,<sup>5</sup> preferring the history/

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1. Fundamentally, Porphyry's Fifteen Books, seems to have been an attack on the Bible, thus rendering his polemic so much more dangerous than that of the other Pagan writers. The Christian reaction to Porphyry bears clear witness to this, especially the final destruction of all Porphyry's writings.
  2. Augustine, City of God, XIX, 22. "doctissimus philosophorum".
  3. Preserved in Jerome, Commentary on Daniel.
  4. Eusb. H.E. I, 13 and VI, 19.

history of the Phoenician<sup>1</sup> Sanchuniathon. The Twelfth Book contained a critical attack on the Prophecy of Daniel.<sup>2</sup> The Thirteenth Book appears to have continued this attack, making some comparison between the Old Testament and the New.<sup>3</sup> The Fourteenth Book likewise compared the New Testament with the Old, concluding that the New Testament writers misunderstood the prophets.<sup>4</sup> Thus from the scanty evidence in our possession we can glimpse something of the width of Porphyry's attack on the scriptures.<sup>5</sup>

All the evidence indicates that Porphyry compiled a systematic chapter-by-chapter attack on the books of the Bible! The alleged writings of Moses came in for their share of his criticism. Here too we discover his mode of historical criticising. "Nothing which Moses wrote has been preserved. For all his writings are said to have been burnt along with the temple. All that bears the name of Moses was written 1180 years afterwards by Ezra and those of his time."<sup>6</sup> Eusebius<sup>7</sup> discerns in Porphyry a confirmation of the antiquity of Moses, yet it is in this quotation that Porphyry shows preference to the non-biblical history of the early Jewish race by the Phoenician Sanchuniathon, translated by Philo Biblius. Eusebius adds that in this book by Porphyry, the fourth, Porphyry/

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1. Eusb. Praep. Evang. I, 9, 20. also Theod. Serm. II, Therap.
  2. Jerome, Praef. Comm.
  3. Jerome, Commentary on Matthew Chapter 26.
  4. Jerome, Commentary on Matthew Chp. 3, 3.
  5. A.B. Hulén thinks that Book Two attacked the Jewish records from which Christianity came and Book Thirteen included an attack on Christian eschatology. Porphyry's Works Against the Christians, p. 48 (Mennonite Press 1933).
  6. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 3.
  7. Praep. Evang. I, 1, 9.



Porphyry "reviles not us only but also the Jews and Moses, and "the prophets after him".<sup>1</sup> We also possess what appears to be an extract from a detailed criticism of the Book of Genesis, where Porphyry criticises Genesis 3, 5 - "Why did God forbid the "knowledge of good and evil? He might forbid evil, but why should "He forbid good?"<sup>2</sup>

Our most detailed criticism by Porphyry is found in Jerome's Commentary on the Book of Daniel, which also bears out our conclusion that Porphyry compiled a detailed criticism of the Bible. This, as we have noted, occupied Porphyry in his Twelfth and possibly in his Thirteenth Book. The formidable nature of this criticism is admitted by Jerome, who after referring to Christian replies by Methodius, Eusebius and Apollinarius comments, "I "cannot say whether they have satisfied the curious reader or not."

The underlying hypothesis of Porphyry is that the prophecy was "not written by him whose name it bears, but another who "lived in Judea, in the time of Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, "and that the book of Daniel does not foretell things to come, "but relates what had already taken place. Whatever it contains "to the time of Antiochus is true history. If there is anything "relating to after times it is all falsehood."<sup>3</sup>

Porphyry seeks to prove that the author was acquainted with the true historical writings of Suetonius, Callinicus, Diodorus, Hieronymus, Polybius, Posidonius, Claudius, Theon and Andronicus, all of whom Porphyry himself had read.<sup>4</sup> The systematic nature of the attack is clearly seen as Jerome quotes Porphyry's criticisms/

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1. Also in Theoderet, Against the Gentiles.
  2. Severian, Sixth Homily on the Creation.
  3. Jerome - Commentary on Daniel, Harnack's fragment 43A.
  4. Harnack, Fragment 43C.

criticisms of Daniel 2, 40, 46, 47, 48; 4, 1-3, 5-10; 7, 7, 9, 14; 9, 1, in which various details of the prophecy are ridiculed.<sup>1</sup> It is concerning Chapter 11 of Daniel that Jerome records the most detailed account of Porphyry's criticism. Verse 11-24 contain true history, the remainder he interpreted concerning Antiochus Epiphanes.<sup>2</sup> The "little help" of VV 34,35 refers to Mattathias, of the town of Modin, who rebelled against the generals of Antiochus, but was killed and his rebellion was therefore only a little help! So too, V, 36 which claims that "the king shall speak marvellous things" refers to Antiochus who set up his statue in the temple of Seus.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, V. 44, 45 all refer to incidents under Antiochus and are not concerned with future prophecy. Chapter Twelve refers not to the Christian theory of the Great Tribulation, but to the Jewish persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, as related by Josephus. So too, the prophecies concerning the resurrection of the just refer to the survival of those who keep the law of God. In Verse 7 of the chapter 12, the 1335 days is a direct allusion to the three and a half years in which the temple was closed while the statue of Antiochus stood there! Harnack sums up the accuracy of Porphyry's criticism in the following words. "Even at this time/

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1. e.g. The Kingdom of Stone refers not to Christ, but to Israel; King Nebuchadnezzar would not worship a slave; Daniel would not accept gifts were he a true prophet; the letter of Nebuchadnezzar is a forgery included to lend confirmation to the larger forgery, the prophecy itself; the "mouth speaking great lies" is not Antichrist, but Antiochus, the prophecy concerning Seleucis actually refers to Ptolemy Epiphanes etc.
  2. Jerome, Harnack fr. 43P.
  3. Jerome, Harnack Fragment 36.



"time of day, Porphyry remains unanswered. Really, he is "unanswerable, unless one is prepared first of all to agree with him, and proceed accordingly to reduce Christianity to its "quintessence."<sup>1</sup> In like manner an English commentator<sup>2</sup> on Daniel maintains that Porphyry's criticisms would flatter any modern critic!!

One further quotation from Porphyry attacks the method of Christians, particularly of Origen, of allegorising the Old Testament. He calls it an "absurd method", learned from Plato, Numerius and Chronius regarding the Greek myths. "When he had "learned from them the allegorical method of explaining Greek "mysteries, he applied it to the Jewish scriptures."<sup>3</sup>

In precisely the same way Porphyry attacked systematically the New Testament<sup>4</sup> books, one by one. Lardner's<sup>5</sup> collections of/

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1. A. Harnack, Expansion, II, p.137.
  2. Montgomery, I.C.C. Daniel.
  3. Eusb, H.E. VI, 19, 2 f. Harnack, Fragment, number 39.
  4. We appear, however, to possess one more extract from Porphyry's attack on the Old Testament in the Pseudo-Augustine Questions, 15, 22, 32, 34, 39. Here Porphyry attacks Solomon, particularly the Book of Ecclesiastes.  
 Q.15 "How can Solomon say, 'Be not righteous overmuch'". (7.16).  
 Q.39 "How can Solomon say, 'A living dog is better than 'a dead lion'". (9.14).  
 Q.32 Re Proverbs 22.2. "The Lord makes rich and poor", Is that not of persons?  
 Q.34 Wisdom (1.3) God made not death, cf. Deut. 30.15 "Life and death come from God."  
 Q.22 Solomon says, "Justify thy life before thy death." and in Psalm (143, 2) we read "In thy sight no man "living is justified."
  5. Nathaniel Lardner, A Large Collection of Ancient Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, Vol. VII, London 1838, p.390 ff.



of Porphyry's objections to the New Testament has illustrated this admirably by listing them in their New Testament sequence. At a glance we see that Porphyry has attacked the New Testament in detail, dealing with St. Matthew 1, 11, 12; 3, 3; 8, 29; 9, 9; 13, 35; 14, 25; 21, 21; 24, 25; 27, 15; St. John, Prologue 7-8; Acts 2, 16-20; 5, 1-4; Galatians 1, 15-16; 2, 11-14.

So too the Apocriticus of Macarius Magnes contains attacks on St. Matthew 8, 31-32; 12, 35; 16, 23; 17, 22; 19, 24; 24, 14, 35; St. Mark 5, 1; 10, 18; St. John, 5, 31, 36-47; 6, 54; 8, 12-13; 12, 31; 19, 33-35; Acts 5, 1-4; 12, 5-10; 16, 3; 22, 3, 27; Romans, 5 20; 7, 12-14; 1st Corinthians, 7, 23, 31; 8, 4, 8; 9, 7; 9, 5; 10, 25-26, 2nd Corinthians 11, 13; Galatians 5, 3; 11, 12; 1st Thessalonians 4, 15-17; 1st Timothy, 4, 1. etc.

Concerning the attacks on the Gospels Macarius Magnes sets forth the motive of his pagan opponent, "The philosopher declared 'to us more savagely that the Evangelists were inventors not 'historians, of the events concerning Jesus.'"<sup>1</sup>

Porphyry's chief method of demonstrating the fraudulence of the gospels consists in drawing attention to the inaccuracies and inconsistencies<sup>2</sup> of the records. Thus Matthew is guilty of inaccuracy in the genealogy<sup>3</sup>, as well as being "very silly" in following Jesus at his call, and in relating that others did likewise<sup>4</sup>. Matthew and Mark are inaccurate in their quotations from/

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1. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes II, 12.

2. It is for this reason that Harnack believed that the Philosopher of the Apocriticus was none other than Porphyry. Crafer however finds Hierocles a more likely candidate. Hierocles popularised the arguments of Porphyry, maintaining the same method of ridiculing the inconsistencies of the New Testament, "Tanquam sibi esset tota contraria", Lactantius, Div. Institutus V, 2 cf. T.W. Crafer J.T.S. XV 1914, p. 360 ff.

3. Jerome on Matthew, 1, 11, 12 "a generation missing" as 1

4. Jerome on Matthew 9, 9 also states that Julian made this same criticism of Matthew.



from the prophets, contradicting one another.<sup>1</sup> St. John also contradicts himself in the alleged sayings of Jesus, as in 5, 31 and 8, 12, 13. St. John's Prologue is likewise criticised by Porphyry.<sup>2</sup> The Evangelists deliberately invent myths to gull the simple and the ignorant. This is illustrated in St. Matthew, 14, 25, Mark, 6, 48, John 6, 19, in the story of Jesus walking "on the sea", where in order to accentuate the miracle a small lake is called a sea.<sup>3</sup> Another conclusive illustration of the cunning of the Evangelists is the tale of the demoniacs,<sup>4</sup> related by St. Matthew 8, 29, Mark 5, 1, Luke 8, 28 cf. Luke 4, 33, 34. Moreover, the accounts of the passion and resurrection of Jesus are riddled with contradictions, a "discordant invention".<sup>5</sup> The story of Our Lord's death is "all a matter of guess work."<sup>6</sup> All these are "mere fairy tales, a thousand obscure stories containing not one word worth finding."<sup>7</sup>

Most significant in Porphyry's attack on the New Testament is his bitter criticisms of Peter and Paul, the leaders of the early church. Porphyry emphasises the controversy between the two apostles, concluding that "the whole doctrine is false, since the heads of the churches disagreed."<sup>8</sup> The cause of the strife appeared/

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1. Matthew 13, 5; 3, 3; cf. Mark 1, 2.
  2. Theophylact, Commentary in Job.
  3. Jerome, Quæst. in Genesis 1, 10. "Frustra Porphyrius evangelistas --- pro lacu Genesareth mare appellasse calumniatur" cf. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 6. "a cunningly woven curtain."
  4. Jerome, To Vigilantes, Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 4. "a piece of knavish nonsense". Porphyry regards this story as a laughable fiction, full of contradictions and mockeries!
  5. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes II, 12.
  6. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes II, 13 re John's witness to the piercing of Christ's body with a spear. John 19, 33-35.
  7. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes II, 15, III, 1 etc.
  8. Jerome, On Galatians 2, 11-14.



appeared to be envy, resulting in this "childish quarrel" at Antioch.<sup>1</sup> Both Peter and Paul are accused by Porphyry. In this incident Peter is blamed for seeking to "please men",<sup>2</sup> but this is only part of a thorough condemnation of St. Peter, who was entirely unsuited to be the leader of the church. Jesus rebukes him, calling him Satan.<sup>3</sup> Jesus has to rebuke him again in Matthew, 18, 22, thus Peter is "condemned of many falls"<sup>4</sup> Likewise, Peter's treatment of Ananias and Sapphira condemns him, for he put to death those who did him no wrong, forgetting his own denials of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> So too, Peter's preaching at Pentecost (Acts 2, 16-20) and his subtle use of Joel's prophecy condemns him, as he sought "to abuse the simplicity and ignorance of his hearers."<sup>6</sup> Peter's escape from prison had the dastardly effect of bringing the death penalty upon his guards (Acts 12, 5-11). "How to such an agitator and disturber did Jesus say, 'Feed my Lambs'?"<sup>7</sup> The words of St. Paul re "taking a wife" (in 1st Corinthians, 9, 5 cf. 11, 13) condemn Peter as a "false apostle". So Porphyry sums up his attack on St. Peter. "It is enough to make one shudder, that he holds the keys of heaven and looses and binds, though he is himself fast bound in countless inconsistencies."<sup>8</sup>

Equally harsh are Porphyry's attacks on St. Paul. Paul is accused/

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1. Jerome, Epistle 74 To Augustine.
  2. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes, III, 12.
  3. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 19.
  4. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 20.
  5. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes (III, 21. Ad Demeterianum
  6. Jerome on Acts 2, 16-20. ("imprecates death to them Ep. 97.
  7. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 22.
  8. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 22. *μυρίους... ἀποημάσιν*



accused of despising and avoiding Peter, James and John after his conversion.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, Paul's teaching that annoys Porphyry - calling forth this sarcastic taunt. "These things cannot be the teachings of a sound mind nor the exposition of a reasoning that is free."<sup>2</sup> St. Paul plays the hypocrite, donning a mask of deceit and displaying the juggler's art. His inconsistency is most conspicuous in his attitude to the Jews and to the Romans, claiming in Acts 22, 3 to be a Jew, and in Acts 22, 7, a Roman. The man is a liar, even although he declared, "I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not" (Romans 9, 1).<sup>3</sup> Nor is his attitude to the Law of Moses beyond reproach. He uses it to further his own ends (1st Corinthians 9, 7 etc.) "He dissembles the gospel for the sake of vain-glory, and the Law for the sake of covetousness." Such a man in "an imposter"<sup>4</sup> In Galatians he condemns the Law (5, 3); in Romans he approves it (7, 12, 14), "like a man starting in his sleep, or a drunkard soaked in wine."<sup>5</sup> As you listen to Paul you grow dizzy and stumble in the dark. He cuts the Law to pieces, contradicting himself all the time.<sup>6</sup> No less enthusiastic was the pupil of Plotinus over the eschatology of St. Paul. This would eternally generated would never "pass away", therefore Paul spoke rubbish about an end of the world!<sup>7</sup> Christ also is condemned for prophesying an end of the world (Matthew, 24, 35). In this condemnation also falls the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh!<sup>8</sup> "We will now cease our attack on Paul", concludes Porphyry, "Knowing what a battle of giants he arms against himself by his language."<sup>9</sup>

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1. Jerome on Galatians I, 15, 16.
  2. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 30.
  3. The Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 31.
  4. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 32. *φ ε ν α κ α*
  5. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 33. *ε ν ο ι ν η ... δ ι α β ρ α χ ε ι ς*
  6. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 34, 35, 36.
  7. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes IV, 1, 2, 7.
  8. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes IV, 24.
  9. Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes III, 36.

J U L I A N

The reaction of Julian to the Christian Scriptures reflects much of the earlier pagan attack. To Julian "the fabrication of the Galilaeans is a fiction of men composed by wickedness".<sup>1</sup> Possessing nothing divine, it "appeals to that part of the soul which loves fables and is childish and foolish". How could any sensible man think the scriptures to be the truth?

Having asserted that the Bible consists of fables or myths, Julian goes on to develop this charge in much the same way as Celsus had done. He examines the books of Moses critically, scorning the creation narratives, the planting of a garden, the conversation between a serpent and Eve and concludes, "In what do such legends as these differ from the myths that were invented by the Hellenes?"<sup>2</sup> Like them they are "incredible and monstrous stories", and no better than the tales of Kronos, Zeus and Dionysius.<sup>3</sup>

Julian, however, deals more particularly with myths and their interpretation. First of all, myths are not to be literally understood, but allegorically. If taken literally the myths would contain much blasphemy. Likewise if the scriptures be interpreted literally they too fall under the same /

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1. Julian. Against the Galilaeans, 39 A.

2. " " " " 86 A. Like Celsus too  
Julian compares Moses with Plato.

3. Julian. Against the Galilaeans, 44 A.



same accusation. "Unless every one of these legends is a myth, that involves some secret interpretation, as I indeed believe, they are filled with many blasphemous sayings about God."<sup>1</sup> So, too, the anthropomorphism of the Old Testament precludes any literal interpretation. Commenting on the story of Phinehas in the Book of Numbers he accuses Moses of being guilty of a "terrible libel" in making God capable of "fierce jealousy", the sort of thing that Moses utters frequently about God.<sup>2</sup>

We have a valuable example of Julian's way of interpreting the pagan myths<sup>3</sup> in his Oration Five, "Hymn to the Mother of the Gods". Originally, this myth symbolised the seasons giving place to one another. The disappearance of Attis, the Sun God is the coming of winter; his mutilation is the barrenness of nature when the sun has been cut off from the earth; his restoration to Cybele is the coming of spring. Julian however, interprets this myth in the light of his own syncretistic philosophy, a mixture of neo-Platonism and Mithraism. He interprets the myth in terms of the three worlds (Oration 4). Cybele becomes the principle of the highest - the Intelligible-World; Attis becomes a principle of the second world, the principle of fruitfulness which descends to the visible order. The mutilation of Attis is /

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1. Against the Galilaeans 94 A
  2. " " " 160 D, 171 D.
  3. Julian follows Plotinus in regarding the pagan myths as allegories. Ennead's V. 1-7; III 6-9, VII. 6-8.

is interpreted as the triumph of mind over matter, and the restoration to Cybele is the return of the soul to the highest world.

Both Plotinus before him and Sallustius<sup>1</sup> his contemporary, agree with Julian's allegorical treatment of the myths. Mythology has become the servant of philosophy. Sallustius and Julian try to trace the origin of this vehicle of truth. Julian thinks that in the beginning myths were invented, "by men given to pastoral pursuits" who wrote them "for childish souls.... for the feeble souls whose wings are just beginning to sprout."<sup>2</sup> Poets later adapted from these Pastoral tales the fable with a moral. Such Poets as Hesiod and Aesop perfected the art, transforming the myths from stories for children into sacred writings for adults. The Scriptures of the Jews and Christians however, are still in the childish stage, and not worthy to be read by grown men!!

The lustful events in the pagan myths are also given an explanation by Julian and Sallustius. In his fifth Oration Julian writes "Our ancestors in every case tried to trace the original meanings of things - then when they had discovered their meanings, they clothed them in paradoxical myths in order that the fiction might be detected and we might be induced to search for the truth"<sup>3</sup> Sallustius deals with the same problem. "We may well inquire, then, why the ancients forsook /

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1. Plotinus. Enneads .

Sallustius. In the Gods and the World.

2. Julian. Oration VII. 206 C.D.

3. " Oration V. 170.



forsook doctrines, and made use of myths. There is this first benefit from myths, that we have to search and not have our minds idle."<sup>1</sup> It is the task of the philosophers to find out the truth contained in myths. Then Sallustius asks the question, that so many before him had asked. "But why have they put in the myths stories of adultery, robbery, father-binding and all the other absurdities? Because of this, that the soul may immediately feel that the words are veils, and believe the truth to be a mystery."<sup>2</sup>

Sallustius interprets certain of the myths in the same way as Julian, e.g. Hesiod's story of Kronos swallowing his children, the judgment of Paris, the myths of Attis and the mother of the gods.<sup>3</sup>

For the rest, Julian attacks the scriptures from the same angle as Celsus. He attacks them as being inferior to Plato and the ancient philosophers. The cosmogony of Plato in the *Timaeus* is far superior to Moses' account of creation. Julian feels that the weakness of the scriptures is its non-philosophic teaching, and he challenges the Christians to a contest! "Choose out children. Train them in your scriptures. If, when they come to manhood they prove to have nobler qualities than slaves, then you may believe that I am talking nonsense and suffer from spleen."<sup>4</sup> Results alone/

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1. Sallustius. On the Gods and the World. 3

2. Ibid. 3 " " " " 4

4. Julian. Against the Galilaeans, 230 A.

alone matter. "From your writings no man could attain to excellence or even ordinary goodness; through ours every man would become better than before".<sup>1</sup> A new note in the attack is struck by Julian when he laughs at Christians for claiming divine inspiration for their scriptures. Even more ridiculous than the inspiration of the scriptures is the allegation that the pagan writings are inspired by Satan.<sup>2</sup> Julian expresses anger at the Christian attitude to pagan literature. "If reading of the scriptures suffices, why do you nibble at the learning of the Hellenes? You ought to keep away from that learning. Yet this learning of ours has caused every noble being that nature has produced among you to abandon impiety."<sup>3</sup> The real fear seems to have been different, as Julian appears to have been afraid lest by possessing pagan education the Christians might turn it back on the pagan world as a powerful weapon. That was why he published his famous rescript compelling Christian teachers to resign from schools of pagan learning.

Like Celsus, too, Julian deals with the question of the prophecy. "How did the Galilaeans chiefly agree with the prophets?"<sup>4</sup> They certainly find no trace of a rival god in /

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1. Julian. Against the Gals. 229 D.

2. " Against the Gals. 230 We have already seen that Justin Martyr made this charge against the pagan writings. (1 Apol. 54.)

3. Julian. Against the Gals. 229C

4. " " " 253A.



in the writings of Moses. Nor is there a god prophesied as Messiah in the Old Testament; a prophet, yes but not a god. Nor is the virgin birth prophesied by Isaiah.<sup>1</sup> Indeed the Hebrew and Christian claim to special prophetic insight is spurious. "Why did this God send the blessed gift of prophecy to the Jews in abundance, and give them Moses and the oil of anointing, and the prophets and the law? But unto us no prophet!"<sup>2</sup>

Also in the same manner as Celsus and Porphyry, Julian accuses the Bible of inconsistency. An example of this is that both Moses and Paul state that God chose Israel yet "when Paul is trying to persuade the Hellenes to take sides with him he says, 'for God is not the God of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles'".<sup>3</sup> The Christians also are inconsistent in that they have not remained faithful to the teachings of the Old Testament. If they had, they would be in better case than at present. "If you had at any rate paid heed to their teachings, you would not have fared altogether ill; your condition would have been bearable and supportable." The Christians according to Julian have not even remained faithful to the teachings of the apostles."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ag. the Gals. 253. Julian deals more fully than Celsus with the Christian claims that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. cf. Justin. Dialogue with Trypho 67.
  2. Ag. the Gals. 106A.
  3. Against the Gals. 106 B. cf. 319 D, 320. Julian pointed out that Paul rejects the finality of Moses' law. cf. Porphyry in Apoc. 111 31. Another example of what Porphyry calls "the juggler's art" of St. Paul! Julian in his comparison between Paul and Moses reflects much of Porphyry's treatment of the subject.
  4. As. the Gals. 327A.

POSTSCRIPT

We have seen something of the scope of the pagan attack on the Christian faith. What emerges most clearly is that the arguments against Christianity did not arise independently, but were at times a reaction to existing arguments, and at times a resumption of existing arguments. We have taken note of the latter tendency in the use made by Celsus of the Jewish criticisms of Jesus Christ, as well as the taking over by Celsus of certain arguments found in the Stoa-Academy debates.

This double movement of reaction and resumption, or of repulsion and attraction, is demonstrated most clearly in the attitude of Celsus to Christian literature. At times he uses Christian weapons to attack Christianity. The indebtedness of Celsus to the writings of Justin Martyr is of great significance in this respect, even if we cannot agree with Carl Andresen that the *Alethes Logos* of Celsus was written as a reply to the *Logos Theology* of Justin.<sup>1</sup> At times it does appear that Celsus puts forward counter-theses to the original theses of Justin. For example, Celsus asserts the historical importance of a carefully preserved literary tradition,<sup>2</sup> just as Justin had done before him.<sup>3</sup> So too Justin's use of the Jewish Alexandrian thesis that Moses is older than Homer is countered by Celsus.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Celsus asserts that certain aspects of Christian ritual derive from a misunderstanding of pagan writings of/

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1. Carl Andresen, *Logos Und Nomos*, Part IV, p.345 ff.
  2. *Contra Celsum* I, 16.
  3. Justin, *Apology* I, 30-53; *Dialogue with Trypho* 7, 2.
  4. Justin *Apology* I, 44 ff. cf. *Contra Celsum* I, 21.



Justin<sup>1</sup> had already made the reverse claim that pagan ritual derived from a misunderstanding of the Christian scriptures. These are a few examples of the indebtedness of Celsus to Justin, but one can detect in Celsus particularly, an indebtedness to so many sources,<sup>2</sup> since Celsus is above all a compiler.

However, at the back of all the detailed criticisms and accumulated arguments of Celsus, Porphyry and Julian, there lies a deeper hostility, which can be understood only in the fact that to a Greek philosopher the tenets of the Christian Creed were utterly unacceptable. To begin with the visible world is eternal and uncreated intime.<sup>3</sup> In like manner this eternal world can have no end, certainly not of the type suggested by Christians. The eschatological statements of the Christian Church were repeatedly attacked by Celsus, Plotinus and Porphyry.<sup>4</sup>

Plotinus the Neoplatonist philosopher reveals to us the opposition/

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1. Contra Celsum VI, 15 cf. Justin Aplogy I, 64.
  2. e.g. J. Rendel Harris sought to show that the Alethes Logos was written in reply to the Apology Aristides (Ryland's Bulletin, 1921, pp.163-175) Celsus and Aristides.
  3. Celsus in Contra Celsum IV, 52, IV, 79; Plotinus - Enneads II, 76; Porphyry in Mac. Magnes IV, 1 etc., Julian Against the Galileans 143C.
  4. Celsus I, 19, IV, 10, IV, 21, IV, 69, V, 14, VI, 52, VI, 72, VII, 9, VII, 28, VII, 32, VIII, 48, 49 etc. Plotinus, Enneads II, 9 cf. V, 8, 12. "Hence it is false "to put an end to the visible sphere so long as the "Intellectual endures or to found it upon a decision "taken by its Maker at some given moment." Porphyry - Apocriticus of Mac. Magnes, IV, 6, 7, IV, 24, In IV, 24 we find the pagan argument against the Resurrection of the Flesh, a parallel argument being found in Celsus, Contra Celsum V, 14.



opposition between Platonism and Christianity. Man is not a fallen creature, by nature evil, nor is the universe evil. There is no absolute evil at all in the Christian sense,<sup>1</sup> and such evil as does exist inheres in matter and is invariable in quantity.<sup>2</sup> Nor did the Christian doctrine of Salvation by a Mediator harmonise with the Platonism of the first four centuries.— Salvation was to be found in the divine order of the eternal world, rather than by a mediated expedient over against the world.<sup>3</sup>

And so Christianity is only a myth and entirely false, and Jesus Christ is an Imposter. The Bible is full of errors; the Church is full of fools. Yet in the end it was the Christian Church which triumphed, proclaiming Jesus Christ who was crucified and rose again according to the Scriptures. Our final comment on the pagan attack must come from Origen, who has given us such a full account of that same attack.

"God forbid that there should be found any one who, after receiving such love of God as that which is in Christ Jesus, has been shaken in his purpose by the words of Celsus or one of his sort. For when Paul gave a list of the countless things which usually tend to separate men from the love of Christ and the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, to all of which the love/

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1. Plotinus, *Enneads* II, 9, 2 ff. cf. III, 2, 8, V, 9, 10. Celsus in *Contra Celsum* VI, 42, "Especially God has no adversary." Porphyry in *Apocriticus* of Mac. Magnes II, 16
  2. *Contra Celsum* IV, 64, 65, 70, 79, VIII, 53.
  3. Plotinus *Enneads*, VI, 7, 1. J. Rheal Laurin notes that Plotinus opposes all forms of religion depending on salvation which operate "par voie de mediation entre Dieu et L'homme Orientations maitresses des Apologistes Chretiens." Rome 1954.  
A.B. Hulén, Porphyry's work *Against the Christians* (Yale Studies in Religion, Mennonite Press 1933) p. 39 "valid against all Christians who place a mediation between God and the world."  
Paul Henry writes of Plotinus, "Finally, salvation is not to be achieved, it is achieved."  
Introduction to second edition of Stephen Mackenna's translation of the *Enneads* (Fraser & Fraser 1957).



"love that is in his is superior, he did not include  
 "argument in the number. Notice what he says first: 'Who  
 "'shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation  
 "'or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril,  
 "'or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all  
 "'the day long; we were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.  
 "'But in all these things we are more than conquerors through  
 "'him that loved us.'" 1

1. Origen, Contra Celsum Praef. 3.

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