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# CELSUS

## FRAGMENTS FROM ORIGEN *AGAINST CELSUS*

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[The text in regular type is from Celsus, in italic type from Origen.]

### **Jesus and the Jewish Critic**

#### Book I

6. It is by the names of certain demons, and by the use of incantations, that the Christians appear to be possessed of (miraculous) power.

It was by means of sorcery that He was able to accomplish the wonders which He performed; and that foreseeing that others would attain the same knowledge, and do the same things, making a boast of doing them by help of the power of God, He excludes such from His kingdom.

If they [sorcerers] are justly excluded, while He Himself is guilty of the same practices, He is a wicked man; but if He is not guilty of wickedness in doing such things, neither are they who do the same as He.

26. A few years ago he began to teach this doctrine, being regarded by Christians as the Son of God.

28. *For he [Celsus] represents the Jew disputing with Jesus, and confuting Him, as he thinks, on many points; and in the first place, he accuses Him of having invented his*

birth from a virgin, *and upbraids Him with being* born in a certain Jewish village, of a poor woman of the country, who gained her subsistence by spinning, and who was turned out of doors by her husband, a carpenter by trade, because she was convicted of adultery; that after being driven away by her husband, and wandering about for a time, she disgracefully gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate child, who having hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having there acquired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God.

32. *But let us now return to where the Jew is introduced, speaking of the mother of Jesus, and saying that* "when she was pregnant she was turned out of doors by the carpenter to whom she had been betrothed, as having been guilty of adultery, and that she bore a child to a certain soldier named Panthera.

39. If the mother of Jesus was beautiful, then the god whose nature is not to love a corruptible body, had intercourse with her because she was beautiful.

It was improbable that the god would entertain a passion for her, because she was neither rich nor of royal rank, seeing no one, even of her neighbours, knew her.

When hated by her husband, and turned out of doors, she was not saved by divine power, nor was her story believed. Such things, *he says*, have no connection with the kingdom of heaven.

41. *And it is a Jew who addresses the following language to Him whom we acknowledge to be our Lord Jesus:* When you were bathing, *says the Jew*, beside John, you say that what had the appearance of a bird from the air alighted upon you. What credible witness beheld this appearance? or who heard a voice from heaven declaring you to be the Son of God? What proof is there of it, save your own assertion, and the statement of another of those individuals who have been punished along with you?

50. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: Why should it be you alone, rather than innumerable others, who existed after the prophecies were published, to whom these predictions are applicable?

[Celsus' Jewish critic]: The prophecies referred to the events of his life may also suit other events as well.

[Celsus' Jewish critic]: If you say that every man, born according to the decree of Divine Providence, is a son of God, in what respect should you differ from another? Countless individuals will convict Jesus of falsehood, alleging that those predictions which were spoken of him were intended of them.

58. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: Chaldeans are spoken of by Jesus as having been induced to come to him at his birth, and to worship him while yet an infant as a God, and to have made this known to Herod the tetrarch; and that the latter sent and slew all the infants that had been born about the same time, thinking that in this way he would ensure his death among the others; and that he was led to do this through fear that, if Jesus lived to a sufficient age, he would obtain the throne.

61. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: But if, then, this was done in order that you might not reign in

his stead when you had grown to man's estate; why, after you did reach that estate, do you not become a king, instead of you, the Son of God, wandering about in so mean a condition, hiding yourself through fear, and leading a miserable life up and down?

62. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: Jesus having gathered around him ten or eleven persons of notorious character, the very wickedest of tax-gatherers and sailors fishermen and tax-gatherers, who had not acquired even the merest elements of learning, fled in company with them from place to place, and obtained his living in a shameful and importunate manner.

66. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: What need, moreover, was there that you, while still an infant, should be conveyed into Egypt? Was it to escape being murdered? But then it was not likely that a God should be afraid of death; and yet an angel came down from heaven, commanding you and your friends to flee, lest ye should be captured and put to death! And was not the great God, who had already sent two angels on your account, able to keep you, His only Son, there in safety?

67. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: The old mythological fables which attributed a divine origin to Perseus, and Amphion, and Aeacus, and Minos were not believed by us. Nevertheless, that they might not appear unworthy of credit, they represented the deeds of these personages as great and wonderful, and truly beyond the power of man; but what hast thou done that is noble or wonderful either in deed or in word? Thou hast made no manifestation to us, although they challenged you in the temple to exhibit some unmistakable sign that you were the Son of God.

68. [Celsus' Jewish critic]; *and he adds*: Well, let us believe that these cures, or the resurrection, or the feeding of a multitude with a few loaves, from which many fragments remained over, or those other stories of a marvelous nature were actually wrought by you. These are nothing more than the tricks of jugglers, who profess to do more wonderful things, and to the feats performed by those who have been taught by Egyptians, who in the middle of the market-place, in return for a few obols, will impart the knowledge of their most venerated arts, and will expel demons from men, and dispel diseases, and invoke the souls of heroes, and exhibit expensive banquets, and tables, and dishes, and dainties having no real existence, and who will put in motion, as if alive, what are not really living animals, but which have only the appearance of life. Since, then, these persons can perform such feats, shall we of necessity conclude that they are 'sons of God,' or must we admit that they are the proceedings of wicked men under the influence of an evil spirit?

69. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: Such a body as yours could not have belonged to God. The body of god would not have been so generated as you, O Jesus, were.

70. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: The body of a god is not nourished with such food....But the body of a god does not make use of such a voice as that of Jesus, nor employ such a method of persuasion as he.

71.[Celsus' Jewish critic]: These tenets of his were those of a wicked and God-hated sorcerer.

## Book II

1. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: The converts from Judaism. have forsaken the law of their

fathers, in consequence of their minds being led captive by Jesus; that they have been most ridiculously deceived, and that they have become deserters to another name and to another mode of life.

4. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: If any one predicted to us that the Son of God was to visit mankind, he was one of our prophets, and the prophet of our God?

John, who baptized Jesus, was a Jew.

5. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: The resurrection of the dead, and the divine judgment, and of the rewards to be bestowed upon the just, and of the fire which is to devour the wicked, are stale doctrines and there is nothing new in your teaching upon these points.

8. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: Many other persons would appear such as Jesus was, to those who were willing to be deceived.

[Celsus' Jewish critic]: The charge is brought against the Jews by the Christian converts that they have not believed in Jesus as in God.

[Celsus' Jewish critic]: How should we who have made known to all men that there is to come from God one who is to punish the wicked, treat him with disregard when he came? Was it that we might be chastised more than others?

9. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: How should we deem him to be a God, who not only in other respects, as was currently reported, performed none of his promises, but who also, after we had convicted him, and condemned him as deserving of punishment, was found attempting to conceal himself, and endeavouring to escape in a most disgraceful manner, and who was betrayed by those whom he called disciples?

[Celsus' Jewish critic]: One who was a God could neither flee nor be led away a prisoner; and least of all could he be deserted and delivered up by those who had been his associates, and had shared all things in common, and had had him for their teacher, who was deemed to be a Saviour, and a son of the greatest God, and an angel.

15. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: The disciples of Jesus, having no undoubted fact on which to rely, devised the fiction that he foreknew everything before it happened

16. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: The disciples of Jesus wrote such accounts regarding him, by way of extenuating the charges that told against him: as if any one were to say that a certain person was a just man, and yet were to show that he was guilty of injustice; or that he was pious, and yet had committed murder; or that he was immortal, and yet was dead; subjoining to all these statements the remark that he had foretold all these things.

[Celsus' Jewish critic]: For ye do not even allege this, that he seemed to wicked men to suffer this punishment, though not undergoing it in reality; but, on the contrary, ye acknowledge that he openly suffered.

[Celsus' Jewish critic]: How is it credible that Jesus could have predicted these things? and how could the dead man be immortal?

17. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: What god, or spirit, or prudent man would not, on foreseeing that such events were to befall him, avoid them if he could; whereas he threw himself headlong into those things which he knew beforehand were to happen?

18. [Celsus' Jewish critic] How is it that, if Jesus pointed out beforehand both the traitor and the perjurer, they did not fear him as a God, and cease, the one from his intended treason, and the other from his perjury?
20. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: These events, *he says*, he predicted as being a God, and the prediction must by all means come to pass. God, therefore, who above all others ought to do good to men, and especially to those of his own household, led on his own disciples and prophets, with whom he was in the habit of eating and drinking, to such a degree of wickedness, that they became impious and unholy men. Now, of a truth, he who shared a man's table would not be guilty of conspiring against him; but after banqueting with God, he became a conspirator. And, what is still more absurd, God himself plotted against the members of his own table, by converting them into traitors and villains!
24. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: Why does he mourn, and lament, and pray to escape the fear of death, expressing himself in terms like these: 'O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me?'
27. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: The Christian believers, like persons who in a fit of drunkenness lay violent hands upon themselves, have corrupted the Gospel from its original integrity, to a threefold, and fourfold, and many-fold degree, and have remodeled it, so that they might be able to answer objections.
32. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: The makers of the genealogies, from a feeling of pride, made Jesus to be descended from the first man, and from the kings of the Jews. and the carpenters wife could not have been ignorant of the fact, had she been of such illustrious descent.
- 33 [Celsus' Jewish critic]: But, what great deeds did Jesus perform as being a God? Did he put his enemies to shame, or bring to a ridiculous conclusion what was designed against him?
- 34 [Celsus' Jewish critic]: But, *he continues*, no calamity happened even to him who condemned him, as there did to Pentheus, viz., madness or deception.
35. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: If not before, yet why now, at least, does he not give some manifestation of his divinity, and free himself from this reproach, and take vengeance upon those who insult both him and his Father?
41. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: He did not show himself to be pure from all evil.
43. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: You will not, I suppose, say of him, that, after failing to gain over those who were in this world, he went to Hades to gain over those who were there.
45. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: In the next place, those who were his associates while alive, and who listened to his voice, and enjoyed his instructions as their teacher, on seeing him subjected to punishment and death, neither died with him, nor for him, nor were even induced to regard punishment with contempt, but denied even that they were his disciples, whereas now ye die along with him.
- 48 [Celsus' Jewish critic]: the Christians deemed Jesus to be the Son of God, because he healed the lame and the blind. and moreover, because, as they assert, he raised the dead.

49. O light and truth! he distinctly declares, with his own voice, as ye yourselves have recorded, that there will come to you even others, employing miracles of a similar kind, who are wicked men, and sorcerers; and he calls him who makes use of such devices, one Satan. So that Jesus himself does not deny that these works at least are not at all divine, but are the acts of wicked men; and being compelled by the force of truth, he at the same time not only laid open the doings of others, but convicted himself of the same acts. Is it not, then, a miserable inference, to conclude from the same works that the one is God and the other sorcerers? Why ought the others, because of these acts, to be accounted wicked rather than this man, seeing they have him as their witness against himself? For he has himself acknowledged that these are not the works of a divine nature, but the inventions of certain deceivers, and of thoroughly wicked men.

53. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: Is it not a wretched inference from the same acts, to conclude that the one is a God, and the others sorcerers?

54. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: By what, then, were you induced (to become his followers)? Was it because he foretold that after his death he would rise again?

54. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: Come now, let us grant to you that the prediction was actually uttered. Yet how many others are there who practise such juggling tricks, in order to deceive their simple hearers, and who make gain by their deception?--as was the case, they say, with Zamolxis in Scythia, the slave of Pythagoras; and with Pythagoras himself in Italy; and with Rhampsinitus in Egypt (the latter of whom, they say, played at dice with Demeter in Hades, and returned to the upper world with a golden napkin which he had received from her as a gift); and also with Orpheus among the Odrysians, and Protesilaus in Thessaly, and Hercules at Cape Taenarus, and Theseus. But the question is, whether any one who was really dead ever rose with a veritable body. Or do you imagine the statements of others not only to be myths, but to have the appearance of such, while you have discovered a becoming and credible termination to your drama in the voice from the cross, when he breathed his last, and in the earthquake and the darkness? That while alive he was of no assistance to himself, but that when dead he rose again, and showed the marks of his punishment, and how his hands were pierced with nails: who beheld this? A half-frantic woman, as you state, and some other one, perhaps, of those who were engaged in the same system of delusion, who had either dreamed so, owing to a peculiar state of mind, or under the influence of a wandering imagination had formed to himself an appearance according to his own wishes, which has been the case with numberless individuals; or, which is most probable, one who desired to impress others with this portent, and by such a falsehood to furnish an occasion to impostors like himself.

58. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: Do you imagine the statements of others not only to be myths, but to have the appearance of such, while you have discovered a becoming and credible termination to your drama in the voice from the cross, when he breathed his last?

61. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: Jesus accordingly exhibited after His death only the appearance of wounds received on the cross, and was not in reality so wounded as He is described to have been.

63. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: if Jesus desired to show that his power was really divine, he ought to have appeared to those who had ill-treated him, and to him who had condemned him, and to all men universally.

70. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: And who that is sent as a messenger ever conceals himself when he ought to make known his message?

[Celsus' Jewish critic]: While he was in the body, and no one believed upon him, he preached to ail without intermission; but when he might have produced a powerful belief in himself after rising from the dead, he showed himself secretly only to one woman, and to his own boon companions.

[Celsus' Jewish critic]: While undergoing his punishment he was seen by all, but after his resurrection only by one.

72. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: If he wished to remain hid, why was there heard a voice from heaven proclaiming him to be the Son of God? And if he did not seek to remain concealed, why was he punished? or why did he die?

73. [Celsus' Jewish critic]: His having wished, by the punishments which He underwent, to teach us also to despise death required that after His resurrection He should openly summon all men to the light, and instruct them in the object of His coming.

*79 The conclusion of all these arguments regarding Jesus is thus stated by the Jew: He was therefore a man, and of such a nature, as the truth itself proves, and reason demonstrates him to be.*

## Book VII

53. Seeing you are so eager for some novelty, how much better it would have been if you had chosen as the object of your zealous homage some one of those who died a glorious death, and whose divinity might have received the support of some myth to perpetuate his memory! Why, if you were not satisfied with Hercules or Aesculapius, and other heroes of antiquity, you had Orpheus, who was confessedly a divinely inspired man, who died a violent death. But perhaps some others have taken him up before you. You may then take Anaxarchus, who, when cast into a mortar, and beaten most barbarously, showed a noble contempt for his suffering, and said, 'Beat, beat the shell of Anaxarchus, for himself you do not beat,'--a speech surely of a spirit truly divine. But others were before you in following his interpretation of the laws of nature. Might you not, then, take Epictetus, who, when his master was twisting his leg, said, smiling and unmoved, 'You will break my leg;' and when it was broken, he added, 'Did I not tell you that you would break it?' What saying equal to these did your god' utter under suffering? If you had said even of the Sibyl, whose authority some of you acknowledge, that she was a child of God, you would have said something more reasonable. But you have had the presumption to include in her writings many impious things, and set up as a god one who ended a most infamous life by a most miserable death. How much more suitable than he would have been Jonah in the whale's belly, or Daniel delivered from the wild beasts, or any of a still more portentous kind!

## **Judaism and Christianity**

### Book I

2. Judaism, upon which Christianity depends, is barbarous in its origin. They deserve credit for their ability in discovering true doctrines but the Greeks are more skillful than any others in judging, establishing, and reducing to practice the discoveries of

barbarous nations.

#### Book IV

2. But that certain Christians and (all) Jews should maintain, the former that there has already descended, the latter that there will descend, upon the earth a certain God, or Son of a God, who will make the inhabitants of the earth righteous, is a most shameless assertion, and one the refutation of which does not need many words.

3. What is the meaning of such a descent upon the part of God? Was it in order to learn what goes on amongst men? Does he not know all things?

Then he does know, but does not make (men) better, nor is it possible for him by means of his divine power to make (men) better.

5. *The illustrious Celsus, taking occasion I know not from what, next raises an additional objection against us, as if we asserted that "God Himself will come down to men." He imagines also that it follows from this, that He has left His own abode.*

If you were to change a single one, even the least, of things on earth, all things would be overturned and disappear.

6. Now God, being unknown amongst men, and deeming himself on that account to have less than his due, would desire to make himself known, and to make trial both of those who believe upon him and of those who do not, like those of mankind who have recently come into the possession of riches, and who make a display of their wealth; and thus they testify to an excessive but very mortal ambition on the part of God.

Nay, not even with the desire to try those who do or who do not believe upon Him, does He, by His unspeakable and divine power, Himself take up His abode in certain individuals, or send His Christ.

God does not desire to make himself known for his own sake, but because he wishes to bestow upon us the knowledge of himself for the sake of our salvation, in order that those who accept it may become virtuous and be saved, while those who do not accept may be shown to be wicked and be punished." *And yet, after making such a statement, he raises a new objection, saying: "After so long a period of time, then, did God now bethink himself of making men live righteous lives, but neglect to do so before?"*

10 it is perfectly manifest that they babble about God in a way that is neither holy nor reverential; *and he imagines that we do these things* to excite the astonishment of the ignorant, *and that we do not speak the truth regarding the necessity of punishments for those who have sinned. And accordingly he likens us to those who* in the Bacchic mysteries introduce phantoms and objects of terror.

11 The belief has spread among them, from a misunderstanding of the accounts of these occurrences, that after lengthened cycles of time, and the returns and conjunctions of planets, conflagrations and floods are wont to happen, and because after the last flood, which took place in the time of Deucalion, the lapse of time, agreeably to the vicissitude of all things, requires a conflagration and this made them give utterance to the erroneous opinion that God will descend, bringing fire like a torturer.



14. And again," *he says*, "let us resume the subject from the beginning, with a larger array of proofs. And I make no new statement, but say what has been long settled. God is good, and beautiful, and blessed, and that in the best and most beautiful degree. But if he come down among men, he must undergo a change, and a change from good to evil, from virtue to vice, from happiness to misery, and from best to worst. Who, then, would make choice of such a change? It is the nature of a mortal, indeed, to undergo change and remoulding, but of an immortal to remain the same and unaltered. God, then, could not admit of such a change.

18. God either really changes himself, as these assert, into a mortal body, and the impossibility of that has been already declared; Or else he does not undergo a change, but only causes the beholders to imagine so, and thus deceives them, and is guilty of falsehood. Now deceit and falsehood are nothing but evils, and would only be employed as a medicine, either in the case of sick and lunatic friends, with a view to their cure, or in that of enemies when one is taking measures to escape danger. But no sick man or lunatic is a friend of God, nor does God fear any one to such a degree as to shun danger by leading him into error.

20. *According to Celsus, the Jews say that* (human) life, being filled with all wickedness, needed one sent from God, that the wicked might be punished, and all things purified in a manner analogous to the first deluge which happened.

21. *But I do not understand how he can imagine* the overturning of the tower (of Babel) to have happened with a similar object to that of the deluge, which effected a purification of the earth, according to the accounts both of Jews and Christians.

The destruction by fire, moreover, of Sodom and Gomorrah on account of their sins, *related by Moses in Genesis, is compared by Celsus to* the story of Phaethon.

22 The Christians, making certain additional statements to those of the Jews, assert that the Son of God has been already sent on account of the sins of the Jews; and that the Jews hating chastised Jesus, and given him gall to drink, have brought upon themselves the divine wrath.

23. *In the next place, ridiculing after his usual style the race of Jews and Christians, he compares them all to* a flight of bats or to a swarm of ants issuing out of their nest, or to frogs holding council in a marsh, or to worms crawling together in the corner of a dunghill, and quarreling with one another as to which of them were the greater sinners, and asserting that God shows and announces to us all things beforehand; and that, abandoning the whole world, and the regions of heaven, and this great earth, he becomes a citizen among us alone, and to us alone makes his intimations, and does not cease sending and inquiring, in what way we may be associated with him for ever. *And in his fictitious representation, he compares us to* worms which assert that there is a God, and that immediately after him, we who are made by him are altogether like unto God, and that all things have been made subject to us,--earth, and water, and air, and stars,--and that all things exist for our sake, and are ordained to be subject to us. *And, according to his representation, the worms--that is, we ourselves--say that* "now, since certain amongst us commit sin, God will come or will send his Son to consume the wicked with fire, that the rest of us may have eternal life with him. *And to all this he subjoins the remark, that such wranglings would be more endurable amongst worms and frogs than betwixt Jews and Christians.*

31. *After this, wishing to prove that there is no difference between Jews and Christians, and those animals previously enumerated by him, he asserts that the Jews were fugitives from Egypt, who never performed anything worthy of note, and never were held in any reputation or account.*

*He states that they were never held in any reputation or account because no remarkable event in their history is found recorded by the Greeks*

33. *Immediately after this, Celsus, assailing the contents of the first book of Moses, which is entitled "Genesis," asserts that the Jews accordingly endeavoured to derive their origin from the first race of jugglers and deceivers, appealing to the testimony of dark and ambiguous words, whose meaning was veiled in obscurity, and which they misinterpreted to the unlearned and ignorant, and that, too, when such a point had never been called in question during the long preceding period.*

*And he hazarded the assertion, in speaking of those names, from which the Jews deduce their genealogies, that never, during the long antecedent period, has there been any dispute about these names, but that at the present time the Jews dispute about them with certain others.*

36. *Celsus in the next place, producing from history other than that of the divine record, those passages which bear upon the claims to great antiquity put forth by many nations, as the Athenians, and Egyptians, and Arcadians, and Phrygians, who assert that certain individuals have existed among them who sprang from the earth, and who each adduce proofs of these assertions, says: "The Jews, then, leading a grovelling life in some comer of Palestine, and being a wholly uneducated people, who had not heard that these matters had been committed to verse long ago by Hesiod and innumerable other inspired men, wove together some most incredible and insipid stories, viz., that a certain man was formed by the hands of God, and had breathed into him the breath of life, and that a woman was taken from his side, and that God issued certain commands, and that a serpent opposed these, and gained a victory over the commandments of God; thus relating certain old wives' fables, and most impiously representing God as weak at the very beginning (of things), and unable to convince even a single human being whom He Himself had formed.*

*He imagines that Hesiod and the innumerable" others, whom he styles inspired men, are older than Moses and his writings--that very Moses who is shown to be much older than the time of the Trojan war!*

37 *He charges us, moreover, with introducing a man formed by the hands of God and given breath.*

41. They speak, in the next place, of a deluge, and of a monstrous ark, having within it all things, and of a dove and a crow as messengers, falsifying and recklessly altering the story of Deucalion; not expecting, I suppose, that these things would come to light, but imagining that they were inventing stories merely for young children.

43. Altogether absurd, and out of season, *he continues*, is the (account of the) begetting of children *where, although he has mentioned no names, it is evident that he is referring to the history of Abraham and Sarah. Cavilling also at the conspiracies of the brothers, he allies either to the story of Cain plotting against Abel, or, in addition, to that of Esau against Jacob; and (speaking) of a father's sorrow, he probably refers to that of Isaac on*

*account of the absence of Jacob, and perhaps also to that of Jacob because of Joseph having been sold into Egypt. And when relating the crafty procedure of mothers, I suppose he means the conduct of Rebecca, who contrived that the blessing of Isaac should descend, not upon Esau, but upon Jacob. Now if we assert that in all these cases God interposed in a very marked degree, what absurdity do we commit?*

*He says that God presented his sons with asses, and sheep, and camels.*

44. *He has characterized the story of Lot and his daughters (without examining either its literal or its figurative meaning) as worse than the crimes of Thyestes.*

46. *Celsus, moreover, sneers at the hatred of Esau.*

Although not clearly stating the story of Simeon and Levi he inveighs against their conduct.

brothers selling (one another), *alluding to the sons of Jacob; and of a brother sold, Joseph to wit; and of a father deceived, viz., Jacob.*

47. *Celsus next, for form's sake, and with great want of precision, speaks of the dreams of the chief butler and chief baker.*

*He adds: He who had been sold behaved kindly to his brethren (who had sold him), when they were suffering from hunger, and had been sent with their asses to purchase (provisions); although he has not related these occurrences (in his treatise).*

*He relates, further, that Joseph, who had been sold as a slave, was restored to liberty, and went up with a solemn procession to his father's funeral, and thinks that the narrative furnishes matter of accusation against us, as he makes the following remark: By whom (Joseph, namely) the illustrious and divine nation of the Jews, after growing up in Egypt to be a multitude of people, was commanded to sojourn somewhere beyond the limits of the kingdom, and to pasture their flocks in districts of no repute.*

48. *In the next place, as if he had devoted himself solely to the manifestation of his hatred and dislike of the Jewish and Christian doctrine, he says: The more modest of Jewish and Christian writers give all these things an allegorical meaning; and, Because they are ashamed of these things, they take refuge in allegory.*

49. *If Celsus had read the Scriptures in an impartial spirit, he would not have said that our writings are incapable of admitting an allegorical meaning.*

50. *The more modest among the Jews and Christians endeavour somehow to give these stories an allegorical signification, although some of them do not admit of this, but on the contrary admit that they are exceedingly silly inventions.*

51. *The allegorical explanations, however, which have been devised are much more shameful and absurd than the fables themselves, inasmuch as they endeavour to unite with marvelous and altogether insensate folly things which cannot at all be made to harmonize.*

Book V

2. *O Jews and Christians, no God or son of a God either came or will come down (to*

earth). But if you mean that certain angels did so, then what do you call them? Are they gods, or some other race of beings? Some other race of beings (doubtless), and in all probability demons.

6. The first point relating to the Jews which is fitted to excite wonder, is that they should worship the heaven and the angels who dwell therein, and yet pass by and neglect its most venerable and powerful parts, as the sun, the moon, and the other heavenly bodies, both fixed stars and planets, as if it were possible that 'the whole' could be God, and yet its parts not divine; or (as if it were reasonable) to treat with the greatest respect those who are said to appear to such as are in darkness somewhere, blinded by some crooked sorcery, or dreaming dreams through the influence of shadowy spectres, while those who prophesy so clearly and strikingly to all men, by means of whom rain, and heat, and clouds, and thunder (to which they offer worship), and lightnings, and fruits, and all kinds of productiveness, are brought about,--by means of whom God is revealed to them,--the most prominent heralds among those beings that are above,--those that are truly heavenly angels,--are to be regarded as of no account!

14. It is folly on their part to suppose that when God, as if He were a cook, introduces the fire (which is to consume the world), all the rest of the human race will be burnt up, while they alone will remain, not only such of them as are then alive, but also those who are long since dead, which latter will arise from the earth clothed with the self-same flesh (as during life); for such a hope is simply one which might be cherished by worms. For what sort of human soul is that which would still long for a body that had been subject to corruption? Whence, also, this opinion of yours is not shared by some of the Christians, and they pronounce it to be exceedingly vile, and loathsome, and impossible; for what kind of body is that which, after being completely corrupted, can return to its original nature, and to that self-same first condition out of which it fell into dissolution? Being unable to return any answer, they betake themselves to a most absurd refuge, viz., that all things are possible to God. And yet God cannot do things that are disgraceful, nor does He wish to do things that are contrary to His nature; nor, if (in accordance with the wickedness of your own heart) you desired anything that was evil, would God accomplish it; nor must you believe at once that it will be done. For God does not rule the world in order to satisfy inordinate desires, or to allow disorder and confusion, but to govern a nature that is upright and just. For the soul, indeed, He might be able to provide an everlasting life; while dead bodies, on the contrary, are, as Heraclitus observes, more worthless than dung. God, however, neither can nor will declare, contrary to all reason, that the flesh, which is full of those things which it is not even honourable to mention, is to exist for ever. For He is the reason of all things that exist, and therefore can do nothing either contrary to reason or contrary to Himself.

25. As the Jews, then, became a peculiar people, and enacted laws in keeping with the customs of their country, and maintain them up to the present time, and observe a mode of worship which, whatever be its nature, is yet derived from their fathers, they act in these respects like other men, because each nation retains its ancestral customs, whatever they are, if they happen to be established among them. And such an arrangement appears to be advantageous, not only because it has occurred to the mind of other nations to decide some things differently, but also because it is a duty to protect what has been established for the public advantage; and also because, in all probability, the various quarters of the earth were from the beginning allotted to different superintending spirits, and were thus distributed among certain governing powers, and in this manner the administration of the world is carried on. And whatever is done

among each nation in this way would be rightly done, wherever it was agreeable to the wishes (of the superintending powers), while it would be an act of impiety to get rid of the institutions established from the beginning in the various places.

33. Let the second party come forward; and I shall ask them whence they come, and whom they regard as the originator of their ancestral customs. They will reply, No one, because they spring from the same source as the Jews themselves, and derive their instruction and superintendence from no other quarter, and notwithstanding they have revolted from the Jews.

34. We might adduce Herodotus as a witness on this point, for he expresses himself as follows: 'For the people of the cities Mares and Apis, who inhabit those parts of Egypt that are adjacent to Libya, and who look upon themselves as Libyans, and not as Egyptians, finding their sacrificial worship oppressive, and wishing not to be excluded from the use of cows' flesh, sent to the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, saying that there was no relationship between them and the Egyptians, that they dwelt outside the Delta, that there was no community of sentiment between them and the Egyptians, and that they wished to be allowed to partake of all kinds of food. But the god would not allow them to do as they desired, saying that that country was a part of Egypt, which was watered by the inundation of the Nile, and that those were Egyptians who dwell to the south of the city of Elephantine, and drink of the river Nile.' Such is the narrative of Herodotus. But," continues Celsus, "Ammon in divine things would not make a worse ambassador than the angels of the Jews, so that there is nothing wrong in each nation observing its established method of worship. Of a truth, we shall find very great differences prevailing among the nations, and yet each seems to deem its own by far the best. Those inhabitants of Ethiopia who dwell in Meroe worship Jupiter and Bacchus alone; the Arabians, Urania and Bacchus only; all the Egyptians, Osiris and Isis; the Saïtes, Minerva; while the Naucratices have recently classed Serapis among their deities, and the rest according to their respective laws. And some abstain from the flesh of sheep, and others from that of crocodiles; others, again, from that of cows, while they regard swine's flesh with loathing. The Scythians, indeed, regard it as a noble act to banquet upon human beings. Among the Indians, too, there are some who deem themselves discharging a holy duty in eating their fathers, and this is mentioned in a certain passage by Herodotus. For the sake of credibility, I shall again quote his very words, for he writes as follows: 'For if any one were to make this proposal to all men, viz., to bid him select out of all existing laws the best, each would choose, after examination, those of his own country. Men each consider their own laws much the best, and therefore it is not likely than any other than a madman would make these things a subject of ridicule. But that such are the conclusions of all men regarding the laws, may be determined by many other evidences, and especially by the following illustration. Darius, during his reign, having summoned before him those Greeks who happened to be present at the time, inquired of them for how much they would be willing to eat their deceased fathers? their answer was, that for no consideration would they do such a thing. After this, Darius summoned those Indians who are called Callatians. who are in the habit of eating their parents, and asked of them in the presence of these Greeks, who learned what passed through an interpreter, for what amount of money they would undertake to burn their deceased fathers with fire? on which they raised a loud shout, and bade the king say no more. Such is the way, then, in which these matters are regarded. And Pindar appears to me to be right in saying that 'law' is the king of all things.

41. If, then, in these respects the Jews were carefully to preserve their own law, they

are not to be blamed for so doing, but those persons rather who have forsaken their own usages, and adopted those of the Jews. And if they pride themselves on it, as being possessed of superior wisdom, and keep aloof from intercourse with others, as not being equally pure with themselves, they have already heard that their doctrine concerning heaven is not peculiar to them, but, to pass by all others, is one which has long ago been received by the Persians, as Herodotus somewhere mentions. 'For they have a custom,' he says, 'of going up to the tops of the mountains, and of offering sacrifices to Jupiter, giving the name of Jupiter to the whole circle of the heavens.'

And I think that it makes no difference whether you call the highest being Zeus, or Zen, or Adonai, or Sabaoth, or Ammoun like the Egyptians, or Pappaeus like the Scythians. Nor would they be deemed at all holier than others in this respect, that they observe the rite of circumcision, for this was done by the Egyptians and Colchians before them; nor because they abstain from swine's flesh, for the Egyptians practised abstinence not only from it, but from the flesh of goats, and sheep, and oxen, and fishes as well; while Pythagoras and his disciples do not eat beans, nor anything that contains life. It is not probable, however, that they enjoy God's favour, or are loved by Him differently from others, or that angels were sent from heaven to them alone, as if they had had allotted to them 'some region of the blessed,' for we see both themselves and the country of which they were deemed worthy. Let this band, then, take its departure, after paying the penalty of its vaunting, not having a knowledge of the great God, but being led away and deceived by the artifices of Moses, having become his pupil to no good end.

52. Let us then pass over the refutations which might be adduced against the claims of their teacher, and let him be regarded as really an angel. But is he the first and only one who came (to men), or were there others before him? If they should say that he is the only one, they would be convicted of telling lies against themselves. For they assert that on many occasions others came, and sixty or seventy of them together, and that these became wicked, and were cast under the earth and punished with chains, and that from this source originate the warm springs, which are their tears; and, moreover, that there came an angel to the tomb of this said being--according to some, indeed, one, but according to others, two--who answered the women that he had arisen. For the Son of God could not himself, as it seems, open the tomb, but needed the help of another to roll away the stone. And again, on account of the pregnancy of Mary, there came an angel to the carpenter, and once more another angel, in order that they might take up the young Child and flee away (into Egypt). But what need is there to particularize everything, or to count up the number of angels said to have been sent to Moses, and others amongst them? If, then, others were sent, it is manifest that he also came from the same God. But he may be supposed to have the appearance of announcing something of greater importance (than those who preceded him), as if the Jews had been committing sin, or corrupting their religion, or doing deeds of impiety; for these things are obscurely hinted at.

54. And so he is not the only one who is recorded to have visited the human race, as even those who, under pretext of teaching in the name of Jesus, have apostatized from the Creator as an inferior being, and have given in their adherence to one who is a superior God and father of him who visited (the world), assert that before him certain beings came from the Creator to visit the human race.

59. The Jews accordingly, and the Christians have the same God.

It is certain, indeed, that the members of the great Church admit this, and adopt as true

the accounts regarding the creation of the world which are current among the Jews, viz., concerning the six days and the seventh.

61. Some of them will concede that their God is the same as that of the Jews, while others will maintain that he is a different one, to whom the latter is in opposition, and that it was from the former that the Son came. There is a third class who call certain persons "carnal," and others "spiritual" and there are some who give themselves out as Gnostics. There are some who accept Jesus, and who boast on that account of being Christians, and yet would regulate their lives, like the Jewish multitude, in accordance with the Jewish law.

62. Certain Simonians exist who worship Helene, or Helenus, as their teacher, and are called Helenians, certain Marcellians, so called from Marcellina, and Harpocratians from Salome, and others who derive their name from Mariamme, and others again from Martha and Marcionites, whose leader was Marcion.

63. There are others who have wickedly invented some being as their teacher and demon, and who wallow about in a great darkness, more unholy and accursed than that of the companions of the Egyptian Antinous.

65. You may hear all those who differ so widely saying, 'The world is crucified to me, and I unto the world'.

Those Christians who have made progress in their studies say that they are possessed of greater knowledge than the Jews.

### **Ignorance, Irrationality and Superstition**

#### Book I

9 *Celsus urges us to follow reason and a rational guide in accepting doctrines because anyone who believes people without so doing is certain to be deceived. He compares those who believe without rational thought to the begging priests of Cybele and soothsayers and to the worshippers of Mithras and Sabazius and whatever else one may meet such as apparitions of Hecate and or some other daimons. For just as among them scoundrels frequently take advantage of the lack of education of gullible people and lead them wherever they wish so also this happens among the Christians. Some Christians do not even wish to give or to receive a reason for what they believe and use such expressions as 'Do not ask questions: just believe', and 'Thy faith will save thee. He writes also that some Christians say: 'The wisdom in the world is evil, and foolishness a good thing'*

#### Book III

10. Christians at first were few in number, and held the same opinions; but when they grew to be a great multitude, they were divided and separated, each wishing to have his own individual party: for this was their object from the beginning."

12. Being thus separated through their numbers, they confute one another, still having, so to speak, one name in common, if indeed they still retain it. And this is the only thing which they are yet ashamed to abandon, while other matters are determined in different ways by the various sects.

14. Their union is the more wonderful, the more it can be shown to be based on no substantial reason. And yet rebellion is a substantial reason, as well as the advantages which accrue from it, and the fear of external enemies. Such are the causes which give stability to their faith.

16. Christians weave together erroneous opinions drawn from ancient sources, and trumpet them aloud, and sound them before men, as the priests of Cybele clash their cymbals in the ears of those who are being initiated in their mysteries.

44 The following are the rules laid down by them. Let no one come to us who has been instructed, or who is wise or prudent (for such qualifications are deemed evil by us); but if there be any ignorant, or unintelligent, or uninstructed, or foolish persons, let them come with confidence. By which words, acknowledging that such individuals are worthy of their God, they manifestly show that they desire and are able to gain over only the silly, and the mean, and the stupid, with women and children.

50 Nay, we see, indeed, that even those individuals, who in the market-places perform the most disgraceful tricks, and who gather crowds around them, would never approach an assembly of wise men, nor dare to exhibit their arts among them; but wherever they see young men, and a mob of slaves, and a gathering of unintelligent persons, thither they thrust themselves in, and show themselves off.

55 We see, indeed, in private houses workers in wool and leather, and fullers, and persons of the most uninstructed and rustic character, not venturing to utter a word in the presence of their elders and wiser masters; but when they get hold of the children privately, and certain women as ignorant as themselves, they pour forth wonderful statements, to the effect that they ought not to give heed to their father and to their teachers, but should obey them; that the former are foolish and stupid, and neither know nor can perform anything that is really good, being preoccupied with empty trifles; that they alone know how men ought to live, and that, if the children obey them, they will both be happy themselves, and will make their home happy also. And while thus speaking, if they see one of the instructors of youth approaching, or one of the more intelligent class, or even the father himself, the more timid among them become afraid, while the more forward incite the children to throw off the yoke, whispering that in the presence of father and teachers they neither will nor can explain to them any good thing, seeing they turn away with aversion from the silliness and stupidity of such persons as being altogether corrupt, and far advanced in wickedness, and such as would inflict punishment upon them; but that if they wish (to avail themselves of their aid,) they must leave their father and their instructors, and go with the women and their playfellows to the women's apartments, or to the leather shop, or to the fuller's shop, that they may attain to perfection;--and by words like these they gain them over.

75 The teacher of Christianity acts like a person who promises to restore patients to bodily health, but who prevents them from consulting skilled physicians, by whom his ignorance would be exposed.

*We do not betake ourselves then to young persons and silly rustics, saying to them, Flee from physicians. Nor do we say, See that none of you lay hold of knowledge; nor do we assert that knowledge is an evil; nor are we mad enough to say that knowledge causes men to lose their soundness of mind. We would not even say that any one ever perished through wisdom; and although we give instruction, we never say, Give heed to me, but "Give heed to the God of all things, and to Jesus, the giver of instruction*



*concerning Him. And none of us is so great a braggart as to say what Celsus put in the mouth of one of our teachers to his acquaintances, I alone will save you. Observe here the lies which he utters against us! Moreover, we do not assert that true physicians destroy those whom they promise to cure."*

76 *And he produces a second illustration to our disadvantage, saying that the Christian teacher acts like a drunken man, who, entering a company of drunkards, should accuse those who are sober of being drunk.*

77 *He next likens our teacher to one suffering from ophthalmia, and his disciples to those suffering from the same disease, and says that such an one amongst a company of those who are afflicted with ophthalmia, accuses those who are sharp-sighted of being blind.*

78 These charges I have to bring against them, and others of a similar nature, not to enumerate them one by one, and I affirm that they are in error, and that they act insolently towards God, in order to lead on wicked men by empty hopes, and to persuade them to despise better things, saying that if they refrain from them it will be better for them.

## Book VI

1. These things are stated much better among the Greeks (than in the Scriptures). and in a manner which is free from all exaggerations and promises on the part of God, or the Son of God.

10. You see how Plato, although maintaining that (the chief good) cannot be described, in words, yet, to avoid the appearance of retreating to an irrefutable position, subjoins a reason in explanation of this difficulty, as even 'nothing' might perhaps be explained in words.

Plato is not guilty of boasting and falsehood, giving out that he has made some new discovery, or that he has come down from heaven to announce it, but acknowledges whence these statements are derived. Accordingly, we do not say to each of our hearers, 'Believe, first of all, that He whom I introduce to thee is the Son of God although he was shamefully bound, and disgracefully punished, and very recently was most contumeliously treated before the eyes of all men. Believe it even the more (on that account)'.

11. If these (meaning the Christians) bring forward this person, and others, again, a different individual (as the Christ), while the common and ready cry of all parties is, 'Believe, if thou wilt be saved, or else begone,' what shall those do who are in earnest about their salvation? Shall they cast the dice, in order to divine whither they may betake themselves, and whom they shall join?

12. Christians declare the wisdom that is among men to be foolishness with God because of their desire to win over by means of this saying the ignorant and foolish alone.

14. Christians are sorcerers who flee away with headlong speed from the more polished class of persons, because they are not suitable subjects for our impositions, while we seek to decoy those who are more rustic.

12. He wished to show that this statement was an invention of ours, and borrowed from the Grecian sages, who declare that human wisdom is of one kind, and divine of another
15. He imagines that [the subject of humility] is borrowed from some words of Plato imperfectly understood.
16. This saying, *"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,"* manifestly proceeded from Plato, and that Jesus perverted the words of the philosopher.
19. Certain Christians, having misunderstood the words of Plato, loudly boast of a 'super-celestial' God thus ascending beyond the heaven of the Jews.
22. These things are obscurely hinted at in the accounts of the Persians, and especially in the mysteries of Mithras, which are celebrated amongst them.
24. He who would investigate the Christian mysteries, along with the aforesaid Persian, will, on comparing the two together, and on unveiling the rites of the Christians, see in this way the difference between them.
29. What could be more foolish or insane than such senseless wisdom? For what blunder has the Jewish lawgiver committed? and why do you accept, by means, as you say, of a certain allegorical and typical method of interpretation, the cosmogony which he gives, and the law of the Jews, while it is with unwillingness, O most impious man, that you give praise to the Creator of the world, who promised to give them all things; who promised to multiply their race to the ends of the earth, and to raise them up from the dead with the same flesh and blood, and who gave inspiration to their prophets; and, again, you slander Him! When you feel the force of such considerations, indeed, you acknowledge that you worship the same God; but when your teacher Jesus and the Jewish Moses give contradictory decisions, you seek another God, instead of Him, and the Father!
34. They continue to heap together one thing after another,--discourses of prophets, and circles upon circles, and effluents from an earthly church, and from circumcision; and a power flowing from one Prunicos, a virgin and a living soul; and a heaven slain in order to live, and an earth slaughtered by the sword, and many put to death that they may live, and death ceasing in the world, when the sin of the world is dead; and, again, a narrow way, and gates that open spontaneously. And in all their writings (is mention made) of the tree of life, and a resurrection of the flesh by means of the 'tree,' because, I imagine, their teacher was nailed to a cross, and was a carpenter by craft; so that if he had chanced to have been cast from a precipice, or thrust into a pit, or suffocated by hanging, or had been a leather-cutter, or stone-cutter, or worker in iron, there would have been (invented) a precipice of life beyond the heavens, or a pit of resurrection, or a cord of immortality, or a blessed stone, or an iron of love, or a sacred leather! Now what old woman would not be ashamed to utter such things in a whisper, even when making stories to lull an infant to sleep?
39. Those who employ the arts of magic and sorcery, and who invoke the barbarous names of demons act like those who, in reference to the same things, perform marvels before those who are ignorant that the names of demons among the Greeks are different from what they are among the Scythians.

What need to number up all those who have taught methods of purification, or expiatory hymns, or spells for averting evil, or (the making of) images, or resemblances of demons, or the various sorts of antidotes against poison (to be found) in clothes, or in numbers, or stones, or plants, or roots, or generally in all kinds of things?

40. I have seen in the hands of certain presbyters belonging to the Christian faith barbarous books which contain the names and marvellous doings of demons; and these presbyters of our faith professed to do no good, but all that was calculated to injure human beings.

42. Certain most impious errors are committed by them, due to their extreme ignorance, in which they have wandered away from the meaning of the divine enigmas, creating an adversary to God, the devil, and naming him in the Hebrew tongue, Satan. Now, of a truth, such statements are altogether of mortal invention, and not even proper to be repeated, viz., that the mighty God, in His desire to confer good upon men, has yet one counterworking Him, and is helpless. The Son of God, it follows, is vanquished by the devil; and being punished by him, teaches us also to despise the punishments which he inflicts, telling us beforehand that Satan, after appearing to men as He Himself had done, will exhibit great and marvellous works, claiming for himself the glory of God, but that those who wish to keep him at a distance ought to pay no attention to these works of Satan, but to place their faith in Him alone. Such statements are manifestly the words of a deluder, planning and manoeuvring against those who are opposed to his views, and who rank themselves against them.

The ancients allude obscurely to a certain war among the gods, Heraclitus speaking thus of it: 'If one must say that there is a general war and discord, and that all things are done and administered in strife.' Pherecydes, again, who is much older than Heraclitus, relates a myth of one army drown up in hostile array against another, and names Kronos as the leader of the one, and Ophioneus of the other, and recounts their challenges and struggles, and mentions that agreements were entered into between them, to the end that whichever party should fall into the Ocean should be held as vanquished, while those who had expelled and conquered them should have possession of heaven. The mysteries relating to the Titans and Giants also had some such (symbolical) meaning, as well as the Egyptian mysteries of Typhon, and Horus, and Osiris."

These are not like the stories which are related of a devil, or demon, or, as he remarks with more truth, of a man who is an impostor, who wishes to establish an opposite doctrine.

Homer refers obscurely to matters similar to those mentioned by Heraclitus, and Pherecydes, and the originators of the mysteries about the Titans and Giants, in those words which Hephaestus addresses to Hera as follows:--"Once in your cause I felt his matchless might,/ Hurl'd headlong downward from the ethereal height." and in those of Zeus to Hera:--"Hast thou forgot, when, bound and fix'd on high,/ From the vast concave of the spangled sky,/ I hung thee trembling in a golden chain,/ And all the raging gods opposed in vain?/ Headlong I hurl'd them from the Olympian hall,/ Stunn'd in the whirl, and breathless with the fall." The words of Zeus addressed to Hera are the words of God addressed to matter; and the words addressed to matter obscurely signify that the matter which at the beginning was in a state of discord (with God), was taken by Him, and bound together and arranged under laws, which may be analogically compared to chains; and that by way of chastising the demons who create disorder in it, he hurls

them down headlong to this lower world." These words of Homer were so understood by Pherecydes, when he said that beneath that region is the region of Tartarus, which is guarded by the Harpies and Tempest, daughters of Boreas, and to which Zeus banishes any one of the gods who becomes disorderly. With the same ideas also are closely connected the peplos of Athena, which is beheld by all in the procession of the Panathenaea. For it is manifest from this that a motherless and unsullied demon has the mastery over the daring of the Giants.

The Son of God is punished by the devil, and teaches us that we also, when punished by him, ought to endure it. Now these statements are altogether ridiculous. For it is the devil, I think, who ought rather to be punished, and those human beings who are calumniated by him ought not to be threatened with chastisement.

47. I can tell how the very thing occurred, viz., that they should call him 'Son of God.' Men of ancient times termed this world, as being born of God, both his child and his son. Both the one and other 'Son of God,' then, greatly resembled each other.

49. Moreover, their cosmogony is extremely silly.

The narrative of the creation of man is exceedingly silly.

Perhaps Moses wrote these words with no serious object in view, but in the spirit of the writers of the old Comedy, who have sportively related that "Proetus slew Bellerophon," and that "Pegasus came from Arcadia.

50. Moses and the prophets, who have left to us our books, not knowing at all what the nature of the world is, and of man, have woven together a web of sheer nonsense.

The Spirit of the universal God mingled itself in things here below as in things alien to itself.

Certain wicked devices directed against His Spirit as if by a different creator from the great God, and which were tolerated by the Supreme Divinity, needed to be completely frustrated.

The great God, after giving his spirit to the creator, demands it back again. What god gives anything with the intention of demanding it back? For it is the mark of a needy person to demand back (what he has given), whereas God stands in need of nothing.

Why, when he lent (his spirit), was he ignorant that he was lending it to an evil being?

Why does he pass without notice a wicked creator who was counter-working his purposes?

53. Why does he send secretly, and destroy the works which he has created? Why does he secretly employ force, and persuasion, and deceit? Why does he allure those who, as ye assert, have been condemned or accused by him, and carry them away like a slave-dealer? Why does he teach them to steal away from their Lord? Why to flee from their father? Why does he claim them for himself against the father's will? Why does he profess to be the father of strange children?

Venerable, indeed, is the god who desires to be the father of those sinners who are condemned by another (god), and of the needy, and, as themselves say, of the very

offscourings (of men), and who is unable to capture and punish his messenger, who escaped from him!

If these are his works, how is it that God created evil? And how is it that he cannot persuade and admonish (men)? And how is it that he repents on account of the ingratitude and wickedness of men? He finds fault, moreover, with his own handwork, and hates, and threatens, and destroys his own off-spring? Whither can he transport them out of this world, which he himself has made?"

54. How is He incapable of persuading and admonishing men?

59. But if he does not destroy his own offspring, whither does he convey them out of this world which he himself created?

60. By far the most silly thing is the distribution of the creation of the world over certain days, before days existed: for, as the heaven was not yet created, nor the foundation of the earth yet laid, nor the sun yet revolving, how could there be days?

Moreover, taking and looking at these things from the beginning, would it not be absurd in the first and greatest God to issue the command, Let this (first thing) come into existence, and this second thing, and this (third); and after accomplishing so much on the first day, to do so much more again on the second, and third, and fourth, and fifth, and sixth?

61. After this, indeed, he is weary, like a very bad workman, who stands in need of rest to refresh himself!

It is not in keeping with the fitness of things that the first God should feel fatigue, or work with His hands, or give forth commands.

### **Christians and Society.**

#### Book I

1 The Christians entered into secret associations with each other contrary to law.

The love-feasts [agapai] of the Christians, have their origin in the common danger, and are more binding than any oaths.

3 Christians teach and practise their favourite doctrines in secret, and they do this to some purpose, seeing they escape the penalty of death which is imminent. The dangers are comparable with those which were encountered by such men as Socrates for the sake of philosophy.

5. The Christians do not consider those to be gods that are made with hands, on the ground that it is not in conformity with right reason (to suppose) that images, fashioned by the most worthless and depraved of workmen, and in many instances also provided by wicked men.

#### Book III

59 That I bring no heavier charge than what the truth compels me, any one may see from the following remarks. Those who invite to participation in other mysteries, make

proclamation as follows: 'Every one who has clean hands, and a prudent tongue;' others again thus: 'He who is pure from all pollution, and whose soul is conscious of no evil, and who has lived well and justly.' Such is the proclamation made by those who promise purification from sins. But let us hear what kind of persons these Christians invite. Every one, they say, who is a sinner, who is devoid of understanding, who is a child, and, to speak generally, whoever is unfortunate, him will the kingdom of God receive. Do you not call him a sinner, then, who is unjust, and a thief, and a housebreaker, and a poisoner, and a committer of sacrilege, and a robber of the dead? What others would a man invite if he were issuing a proclamation for an assembly of robbers?

62 Christians say that it was to sinners that God has been sent. Why was he not sent to those who were without sin? What evil is it not to have committed sin?

God will receive the unrighteousness man if he humble himself on account of his wickedness, but He will not receive the righteous man, although he look up to Him, (adorned) with virtue from the beginning.

63 Those persons who preside properly over a trial make those individuals who bewail before them their evil deeds to cease from their piteous wailings, lest their decisions should be determined rather by compassion than by a regard to truth; whereas God does not decide in accordance with truth, but in accordance with flattery.

All men, then, without distinction, ought to be invited, since all indeed are sinners.

64 What is this preference of sinners over others?

65 The Christians utter these exhortations for the conversion of sinners, because they are able to gain over no one who is really good and righteous, and therefore open their doors to the most unholy and abandoned of men.

And yet, indeed, it is manifest to every one that no one by chastisement, much less by merciful treatment, could effect a complete change in those who are sinners both by nature and custom, for to change nature is an exceedingly difficult thing. But they who are without sin are partaken of a better life.

70 Christians assert that God will be able to do all things but He will not desire to do anything wicked, even if one were to admit that He has the power, but not the will, to commit evil.

71 Their God, like those who are overcome with pity, being Himself overcome, alleviates the sufferings of the wicked through pity for their wailings, and casts off the good, who do nothing of that kind, which is the height of injustice.

73. No wise man believes the Gospel, being driven away by the multitudes who adhere to it.

## Book VII

62. Let us pass on to another point. They cannot tolerate temples, altars, or images. In this they are like the Scythians, the nomadic tribes of Libya, the Seres who worship no god, and some other of the most barbarous and impious nations in the world. That the Persians hold the same notions is shown by Herodotus in these words: 'I know that among the Persians it is considered unlawful to erect images, altars, or temples; but

they charge those with folly who do so, because, as I conjecture, they do not, like the Greeks, suppose the gods to be of the nature of men.' Heraclitus also says in one place: 'Persons who address prayers to these images act like those who speak to the walls, without knowing who the gods or the heroes are.' And what wiser lesson have they to teach us than Heraclitus? He certainly plainly enough implies that it is a foolish thing for a man to offer prayers to images, whilst he knows not who the gods and heroes are. This is the opinion of Heraclitus; but as for them, they go further, and despise without exception all images. If they merely mean that the stone, wood, brass, or gold which has been wrought by this or that workman cannot be a god, they are ridiculous with their wisdom. For who, unless he be utterly childish in his simplicity, can take these for gods, and not for offerings consecrated to the service of the gods, or images representing them? But if we are not to regard these as representing the Divine Being, seeing that God has a different form, as the Persians concur with them in saying, then let them take care that they do not contradict themselves; for they say that God made man His own image, and that He gave him a form like to Himself. However, they will admit that these images, whether they are like or not, are made and dedicated to the honour of certain beings. But they will hold that the beings to whom they are dedicated are not gods, but demons, and that a worshipper of God ought not to worship demons.

68. In the first place, I would ask why we are not to serve demons? Is it not true that all things are ordered according to God's will, and that His providence governs all things? Is not everything which happens in the universe, whether it be the work of God, of angels, of other demons, or of heroes, regulated by the law of the Most High God? Have these not had assigned them various departments of which they were severally deemed worthy? it not just, therefore, that he who worships God should serve those also to whom God has assigned such power? Yet it is impossible, he says, for a man to serve many masters.

70. Is not everything which happens in the universe, whether it be the work of God, of angels, of other demons, or of heroes, regulated by the law of the Most High God? Have these not had assigned to them various departments of which they were severally deemed worthy? Is it not just, therefore, that he who serves God should serve those also to whom God has assigned such power?" To which he adds, "It is impossible, they say, for a man to serve many masters."

## Book VIII

*2. In a passage previously quoted Celsus asks us why we do not worship demons, and he represents us as answering that it is impossible to serve many masters. This, he goes on to say, is the language of sedition, and is only used by those who separate themselves and stand aloof from all human society. Those who speak in this way ascribe, as he supposes, "their own feelings and passions to God. It does hold true among men, that he who is in the service of one master cannot well serve another, because the service which he renders to the one interferes with that which he owes to the other; and no one, therefore, who has already engaged himself to the service of one, must accept that of another. And, in like manner, it is impossible to serve at the same time heroes or demons of different natures. But in regard to God, who is subject to no suffering or loss, it is," he thinks, "absurd to be on our guard against serving more gods, as though we had to do with demi-gods, or other spirits of that sort." He says also, "He who serves many gods does that which is pleasing to the Most High, because he honours that which belongs to Him." And he adds, "It is indeed wrong to give honour to*

any to whom God has not given honour." "Wherefore," *he says*, "in honouring and worshipping all belonging to God, we will not displease Him to whom they all belong.

11. And indeed he who, when speaking of God, asserts that there is only one who may be called Lord, speaks impiously, for he divides the kingdom of God, and raises a sedition therein, implying that there are separate factions in the divine kingdom, and that there exists one who is His enemy.

14. If you should tell them that Jesus is not the Son of God, but that, God is the Father of all, and that He alone: ought to be truly worshipped, they would not consent to discontinue their worship of him who is their leader in the sedition. And they call him Son of God, not out of any extreme reverence for God, but from an extreme desire to extol Jesus Christ.

15. That I may give a true representation of their faith, I will use their own words, as given in what is called A Heavenly Dialogue: 'If the Son is mightier than God and the Son of man is Lord over Him, who else than the Son can be Lord over that God who is the ruler over all things? How comes it, that while so many go about the well, no one goes down into it? Why art thou afraid when thou hast gone so far on the way? Answer: Thou art mistaken, for I lack neither courage nor weapons.' Is it not evident, then, that their views are precisely such as I have described them to be? They suppose that another God, who is above the heavens, is the Father of him whom with one accord they honour, that they may honour this Son of man alone, whom they exalt under the form and name of the great God, and whom they assert to be stronger than God, who rules the world, and that he rules over Him. And hence that maxim of theirs, 'It is impossible to serve two masters,' is maintained for the purpose of keeping up the party who are on the side of this Lord.

17. Christians shrink from raising altars, statues, and temples; and this, *he thinks*, has been agreed upon among us as the badge or distinctive mark of a secret and forbidden society.

21. God is the God of all alike; He is good, He stands in need of nothing, and He is without jealousy. What, then, is there to hinder those who are most devoted to His service from taking part in public feasts.

24. If these idols are nothing, what harm will there be in taking part in the feast? On the other hand, if they are demons, it is certain that they too are God's creatures, and that we must believe in them, sacrifice to them according to the laws, and pray to them that they may be propitious.

28. If in obedience to the traditions of their fathers they abstain from such victims, they must also abstain from all animal food, in accordance with the opinions of Pythagoras, who thus showed his respect for the soul and its bodily organs. But if, as they say, they abstain that they may not eat along with demons, I admire their wisdom, in having at length discovered, that whenever they eat they eat with demons, although they only refuse to do so when they are looking upon a slain victim; for when they eat bread, or drink wine, or taste fruits, do they not receive these things, as well as the water they drink and the air they breathe, from certain demons, to whom have been assigned these different provinces of nature?

33. We must either not live, and indeed not come into this life at all, or we must do so on



condition that we give thanks and first-fruits and prayers to demons, who have been set over the things of this world: and that we must do as long as we live, that they may prove good and kind."

34. The learned Greeks say that the human soul at its birth is placed under the charge of demons.

35. The satrap of a Persian or Roman monarch, or ruler or general or governor, yea, even those who fill lower offices of trust or service in the state, would be able to do great injury to those who despised them; and will the satraps and ministers of earth and air be insulted with impunity?

37. If they who are addressed are called upon by barbarous names, they will have power, but no longer will they have any if they are addressed in Greek or Latin.

38. *He next represents Christians as saying what he never heard from any Christian; Behold, they are made to say, I go up to a statue of Jupiter or Apollo, or some other god: I revile it, and beat it, yet it takes no vengeance on me*

39. Do you not see, good sir, that even your own demon is not only reviled, but banished from every land and sea, and you yourself, who are as it were an image dedicated to him, are bound and led to punishment, and fastened to the stake, whilst your demon--or, as you call him, 'the Son of God'--takes no vengeance on the evil-doer?

41. You mock and revile the statues of our gods; but if you had reviled Bacchus or Hercules in person, you would not perhaps have done so with impunity. But those who crucified your God when present among men, suffered nothing for it, either at the time or during the whole of their lives. And what new thing has there happened since then to make us believe that he was not an impostor, but the Son of God? And forsooth, he who sent his Son with certain instructions for mankind, allowed him to be thus cruelly treated, and his instructions to perish with him, without ever during all this long time showing the slightest concern. What father was ever so inhuman? Perhaps, indeed, you may say that he suffered so much, because it was his wish to bear what came to him. But it is open to those whom you maliciously revile, to adopt the same language, and say that they wish to be reviled, and therefore they bear it with patience; for it is best to deal equally with both sides,--although these (gods) severely punish the scorner, so that he must either flee and hide himself, or be taken and perish.

43. Of those gods whom you load with insults, you may in like manner say that they voluntarily submit to such treatment, and therefore they bear insults with patience; for it is best to deal equally with both sides. Yet these severely punish the scorner, so that he must either flee and hide himself, or be taken and perish.

45. What need is there to collect all the oracular responses, which have been delivered with a divine voice by priests and priestesses, as well as by others, whether men or women, who were under a divine influence?--all the wonderful things that have been heard issuing from the inner sanctuary?--all the revelations that have been made to those who consulted the sacrificial victims?--and all the knowledge that has been conveyed to men by other signs and prodigies? To some the gods have appeared in visible forms. The world is full of such instances. How many cities have been built in obedience to commands received from oracles; how often, in the same way, delivered from disease and famine! Or again, how many cities, from disregard or forgetfulness of

these oracles, have perished miserably! How many colonies have been established and made to flourish by following their orders! How many princes and private persons have, from this cause, had prosperity or adversity! How many who mourned over their childlessness, have obtained the blessing they asked for! How many have turned away from themselves. the anger of demons! How many who were maimed in their limbs, have had them restored! And again, how many have met with summary punishment for showing want of reverence to the temples--some being instantly seized with madness, others openly confessing their crimes, others having put an end to their lives, and others having become the victims of incurable maladies! Yea, some have been slain by a terrible voice issuing from the inner sanctuary.

48. Just as you, good sir, believe in eternal punishments, so also do the priests who interpret and initiate into the sacred mysteries. The same punishments with which you threaten others, they threaten you. Now it is worthy of examination, which of the two is more firmly established as true; for both parties contend with equal assurance that the truth is on their side. But if we require proofs, the priests of the heathen gods produce many that are clear and convincing, partly from wonders performed by demons, and partly from the answers given by oracles, and various other modes of divination.

49. Besides, is it not most absurd and inconsistent in you, on the one hand, to make so much of the body as you do--to expect that the same body will rise again, as though it were the best and most precious part of us; and yet, on the other, to expose it to such tortures as though it were worthless? But men who hold such notions, and are so attached to the body, are not worthy of being reasoned with; for in this and in other respects they show themselves to be gross, impure, and bent upon revolting without any reason from the common belief. But I shall direct my discourse to those who hope for the enjoyment of eternal life with God by means of the soul or mind, whether they choose to call it a spiritual substance, an intelligent spirit, holy and blessed, or a living soul, or the heavenly and indestructible offspring of a divine and incorporeal nature, or by whatever name they designate the spiritual nature of man. And they are rightly persuaded that those who live well shall be blessed, and the unrighteous shall all suffer everlasting punishments. And from this doctrine neither they nor any other should ever swerve.

53. Since men are born united to a body, whether to suit the order of the universe, or that they may in that way suffer the punishment of sin; or because the soul is oppressed by certain passions until it is purged from these at the appointed period of time,--for, according to Empedocles, all mankind must be banished from the abodes of the blessed for 30,000 periods of time,--we must therefore believe that they are entrusted to certain beings as keepers of this prison-house.

55. They must make their choice between two alternatives. If they refuse to render due service to the gods, and to respect those who are set over this service, let them not come to manhood, or marry wives, or have children, or indeed take any share in the affairs of life; but let them depart hence with all speed, and leave no posterity behind them, that such a race may become extinct from the face of the earth. Or, on the other hand, if they will take wives, and bring up children, and taste of the fruits of the earth, and partake of all the blessings of life, and bear its appointed sorrows (for nature herself hath allotted sorrows to all men; for sorrows must exist, and earth is the only place for them), then must they discharge the duties of life until they are released from its bonds, and render due honour to those beings who control the affairs of this life, if they would not show themselves ungrateful to them. For it would be unjust in them, after receiving

the good things which they dispense, to pay them no tribute in return.

58. Let any one inquire of the Egyptians, and he will find that everything, even to the most insignificant, is committed to the care of a certain demon. The body of man is divided into thirty-six parts, and as many demons of the air are appointed to the care of it, each having charge of a different part, although others make the number much larger. All these demons have in the language of that country distinct names; as Chnoumen, Chnachoumen, Cnat, Sicat, Biou, Erou, Erebiou, Ramanor, Reianoor, and other such Egyptian names. Moreover, they call upon them, and are cured of diseases of particular parts of the body. What, then, is there to prevent a man from giving honour to these or to others, if he would rather be in health than be sick, rather have prosperity than adversity, and be freed as much as possible from all plagues and troubles?

60. Care, however, must be taken lest any one, by familiarizing his mind with these matters, should become too much engrossed with them, and lest, through an excessive regard for the body, he should have his mind turned away from higher things, and allow them to pass into oblivion. For perhaps we ought not to despise the opinion of those wise men who say that most of the earth-demons are taken up with carnal indulgence, blood, odours, sweet sounds, and other such sensual things; and therefore they are unable to do more than heal the body, or foretell the fortunes of men and cities, and do other such things as relate to this mortal life.

62. We must offer sacrifices to them, in so far as they are profitable to us, for to offer them indiscriminately is not allowed by reason.

63. The more just opinion is, that demons desire nothing and need nothing, but that they take pleasure in those who discharge towards them offices of piety.

We must never in any way lose our hold of God, whether by day or by night, whether in public or in secret, whether in word or in deed, but in whatever we do, or abstain from doing.

If this is the case, what harm is there in gaining the favour of the rulers of the earth, whether of a nature different from ours, or human princes and kings? For these have gained their dignity through the instrumentality of demons."

65. *We are not so mad as to stir up against us the wrath of kings and princes, which will bring upon us sufferings and tortures, or even death.*

66. But if any one commands you to celebrate the sun, or to sing a joyful triumphal song in praise of Minerva, you will by celebrating their praises seem to render the higher praise to God; for piety, in extending to all things, becomes more perfect.

67. Men seem to do the greater honour to the great God when we sing hymns in honour of the sun and Minerva.

If you are commanded to swear by a human king, there is nothing wrong in that. For to him has been given whatever there is upon earth; and whatever you receive in this life, you receive from him.

68. We must not disobey the ancient writer, who said long ago, 'Let one be king, whom the son of crafty Saturn appointed;. If you set aside this maxim, you will deservedly suffer for it at the hands of the king. For if all were to do the same as you, there would

be nothing to prevent his being left in utter solitude and desertion, and the affairs of the earth would fall into the hands of the wildest and most lawless barbarians; and then there would no longer remain among men any of the glory of your religion or of the true wisdom.

69. You surely do not say that if the Romans were, in compliance with your wish, to neglect their customary duties to gods and men, and were to worship the Most High, or whatever you please to call him, that he will come down and fight for them, so that they shall need no other help than his. For this same God, as yourselves say, promised of old this and much more to those who served him, and see in what way he has helped them and you! They, in place of being masters of the whole world, are left with not so much as a patch of ground or a home; and as for you, if any of you transgresses even in secret, he is sought out and punished with death.

71. Surely it is intolerable for you to say, that if our present rulers, on embracing your opinions, are taken by the enemy, you will still be able to persuade those who rule after them; and after these have been taken you will persuade their successors and so on, until at length, when all who have yielded to your persuasion have been taken some prudent ruler shall arise, with a foresight of what is impending, and he will destroy you all utterly before he himself perishes.

72. If only it were possible that all the inhabitants of Asia, Europe, and Libya, Greeks and Barbarians, all to the uttermost ends of the earth, were to come under one law! but any one who thinks this possible, knows nothing.

73. *Celsus urges us* to help the king with all our might, and to labour with him in the maintenance of justice, to fight for him; and if he requires it, to fight under him, or lead an army along with him.

75. *Celsus also urges us* to take office in the government of the country, if that is required for the maintenance of the laws and the support of religion.

### Prophecy

#### Book VII

3. They set no value on the oracles of the Pythian priestess, of the priests of Dodona, of Clarus, of Branchidae, of Jupiter Ammon, and of a multitude of others; although under their guidance we may say that colonies were sent forth, and the whole world peopled. But those sayings which were uttered or not uttered in Judea, after the manner of that country, as indeed they are still delivered among the people of Phoenicia and Palestine--these they look upon as marvellous sayings, and unchangeably true.

9. There are many who, although of no name, with the greatest facility and on the slightest occasion, whether within or without temples, assume the motions and gestures of inspired persons; while others do it in cities or among armies, for the purpose of attracting attention and exciting surprise. These are accustomed to say, each for himself, 'I am God; I am the Son of God; or, I am the Divine Spirit; I have come because the world is perishing, and you, O men, are perishing for your iniquities. But I wish to save you, and you shall see me returning again with heavenly power. Blessed is he who now does me homage. On all the rest I will send down eternal fire, both on cities and on countries. And those who know not the punishments which await them shall repent and

grieve in vain; while those who are faithful to me I will preserve eternally." Then he goes on to say: "To these promises are added strange, fanatical, and quite unintelligible words, of which no rational person can find the meaning: for so dark are they, as to have no meaning at all; but they give occasion to every fool or impostor to apply them to suit his own purposes.

12. Those who support the cause of Christ by a reference to the writings of the prophets can give no proper answer in regard to statements in them which attribute to God that which is wicked, shameful, or impure.

13. In their books God does the most shameless deeds, or suffers the most shameless sufferings.

For what better was it for God to eat the flesh of sheep, or to drink vinegar and gall, than to feed on filth?

14. But pray, if the prophets foretold that the great God--not to put it more harshly--would become a slave, or become sick or die; would there be therefore any necessity that God should die, or suffer sickness, or become a slave, simply because such things had been foretold? Must he die in order to prove his divinity? But the prophets never would utter predictions so wicked and impious. We need not therefore inquire whether a thing has been predicted or not, but whether the thing is honourable in itself, and worthy of God. In that which is evil and base, although it seemed that all men in the world had foretold it in a fit of madness, we must not believe. How then can the pious mind admit that those things which are said to have happened to him, could have happened to one who is God?

15. If these things were predicted of the Most High God, are we bound to believe them of God simply because they were predicted?

Although the prophets may have foretold truly such things of the Son of God, yet it is impossible for us to believe in those prophecies declaring that He would do or suffer such things.

18. Will they not besides make this reflection? If the prophets of the God of the Jews foretold that he who should come into the world would be the Son of this same God, how could he command them through Moses to gather wealth, to extend their dominion, to fill the earth, to put their enemies of every age to the sword, and to destroy them utterly, which indeed he himself did--as Moses says--threatening them, moreover, that if they did not obey his commands, he would treat them as his avowed enemies; whilst, on the other hand, his Son, the man of Nazareth, promulgated laws quite opposed to these, declaring that no one can come to the Father who loves power, or riches, or glory; that men ought not to be more careful in providing food than the ravens; that they were to be less concerned about their raiment than the lilies; that to him who has given them one blow, they should offer to receive another? Whether is it Moses or Jesus who teaches falsely? Did the Father, when he sent Jesus, forget the commands which he had given to Moses? Or did he change his mind, condemn his own laws, and send forth a messenger?

20. It was foretold to the Jews, that if they did not obey the law, they would be treated in the same way as they treated their enemies

## Philosophical and Theological Criticisms

### Book I

12. If they [the Christians] would be willing to answer my questions, which I do not put as one who is trying to understand their beliefs (for I know them all), all would be well. But if they will not consent but say, as they usually do, 'Do not ask questions', and so on, then it will be necessary to teach them the nature of the doctrines which they affirm, and the source from which they come.

14. There is an authoritative account from the very beginning, respecting which there is a constant agreement among all the most learned nations, and cities, and men.

21 Moses having learned the doctrine which is to be found existing among wise nations and eloquent men, obtained the reputation of divinity.

24. These herdsmen and shepherds concluded that there was but one God, named either the Highest, or Adonai, or the Heavenly, or Sabaoth, or called by some other of those names which they delight to give this world; and they knew nothing beyond that.

It makes no difference whether the God who is over all things be called by the name of Zeus, which is current among the Greeks, or by that, e.g., which is in use among the Indians or Egyptians".

### Book III

3. *In the next place, miracles were performed in all countries, or at least in many of them, as Celsus himself admits, instancing the case of Aesculapius, who conferred benefits on many, and who foretold future events to entire cities, which were dedicated to him, such as Tricca, and Epidaurus, and Cos, and Pergamus; and along with Aesculapius he mentions Aristeas of Proconnesus, and a certain Clazomenian, and Cleomedes of Astypalaea.*

22 The Dioscuri, and Hercules, and Aesculapius, and Dionysus, who are believed by the Greeks to have become gods after being men, but Christians cannot bear to call such beings gods, because they were at first men, and yet they manifested many noble qualities, which were displayed for the benefit of mankind, while they assert that Jesus was seen after His death by His own followers, as if they said that "He was seen indeed, but was only a shadow!

24. A great multitude both of Greeks and Barbarians acknowledge that they have frequently seen, and still see, no mere phantom, but Aesculapius himself, healing and doing good, and foretelling the future.

37 They will not endure his being compared with Apollo or Zeus.

39 Faith, having taken possession of our minds of Christians, makes them yield the assent which they give to the doctrine of Jesus.

42. Well, after he has laid aside these qualities, he will be a God: (and if so), why not rather Aesculapius, and Dionysus, and Hercules?

43 Christians ridicule those who worship Jupiter, because his tomb is pointed out in the

island of Crete; and yet they worship him who rose from the tomb, although ignorant of the grounds on which the Cretans observe such a custom.

#### Book IV

52. Of such a nature do I know the work to be, entitled Controversy between one Papiscus and Jason, which is fitted to excite pity and hatred instead of laughter. It is not my purpose, however, to confute the statements contained in such works; for their fallacy is manifest to all, especially if any one will have the patience to read the books themselves. Rather do I wish to show that Nature teaches this, that God made nothing that is mortal, but that His works, whatever they are, are immortal, and theirs mortal. And the soul is the work of God, while the nature of the body is different. And in this respect there is no difference between the body of a bat, or of a worm, or of a frog, and that of a man; for the matter is the same, and their corruptible part is alike.

57. The multitude affirm at the present time that a snake should be formed out of a dead man, growing out of the marrow of the back, and that a bee should spring from an ox, and a wasp from a horse, and a beetle from an ass, and, generally, worms from the most of bodies of animals.

58. Irrational animals are more beloved by God than we, and have a purer knowledge of divinity.

60. A common nature pervades all the previously mentioned bodies, and one which goes and returns the same amid recurring changes.

It is one nature which goes and returns the same through all bodies amid recurring changes.

61. No product of matter is immortal.

On this point these remarks are sufficient; and if any one is capable of hearing and examining further, he will come to know (the truth).

62. There neither were formerly, nor are there now, nor will there be again, more or fewer evils in the world (than have always been). For the nature of all things is one and the same, and the generation of evils is always the same.

65. It is not easy, indeed, for one who is not a philosopher to ascertain the origin of evils, though it is sufficient for the multitude to say that they do not proceed from God, but cleave to matter, and have their abode among mortal things; while the course of mortal things being the same from beginning to end, the same things must always, agreeably to the appointed cycles, recur in the past, present, and future.

69. Neither have visible things been given to man (by God), but each individual thing comes into existence and perishes for the sake of the safety of the whole passing agreeably to the change, which I have already mentioned, from one thing to another.

There will neither be more nor less good and evil among mortals.

God does not need to amend His work afresh. But it is not as a man who has imperfectly designed some piece of workmanship, and executed it unskillfully, that God administers correction to the world, in purifying it by a flood or by a conflagration.

70. Although a thing may seem to you to be evil, it is by no means certain that it is so; for you do not know what is of advantage to yourself, or to another, or to the whole world.

73. Is it not ridiculous to suppose that, whereas a man, who became angry with the Jews, slew them all from the youth upwards, and burned their city (so powerless were they to resist him), the mighty God, as they say, being angry, and indignant, and uttering threats, should, (instead of punishing them,) send His own Son, who endured the sufferings which He did?

But that I may speak not of the Jews alone (for that is not my object), but of the whole of nature, as I promised, I will bring out more clearly what has been already stated.

74. *He next, in many words, blames us for asserting that God made all things for the sake of man.*

All things came into existence not more for the sake of man than of the irrational animals.

*So in a far greater degree are Celsus and they who think with him guilty of impiety towards the God who makes provision for rational beings, in asserting that His arrangements are made in no greater degree for the sustenance of human beings than for that of plants, and trees, and herbs, and thorns.*

75. Thunders, and lightnings, and rains are not the works of God.

Even if one were to grant that these were the works of God, they are brought into existence not more for the support of us who are human beings, than for that of plants, and trees, and herbs, and thorns.

Although you may say that these things, viz., plants, and trees, and herbs, and thorns, grow for the use of men, why will you maintain that they grow for the use of men rather than for that of the most savage of irrational animals?

76. We indeed by labour and suffering earn a scanty and toilsome subsistence, while all things are produced for them without their sowing and ploughing.

77. But if you will quote the saying of Euripides, that 'The Sun and Night are to mortals slaves,' why should they be so in a greater degree to us than to ants and flies? For the night is created for them in order that they may rest, and the day that they may see and resume their work.

78. If one were to call us the lords of the animal creation because we hunt the other animals and live upon their flesh, we would say, Why were not we rather created on their account, since they hunt and devour us? Nay, we require nets and weapons, and the assistance of many persons, along with dogs, when engaged in the chase; while they are immediately and spontaneously provided by nature with weapons which easily bring us under their power.

79. With respect to your assertion, that God gave you the power to capture wild beasts, and to make your own use of them, we would say that, in all probability, before cities were built, and arts invented, and societies such as now exist were formed, and weapons and nets employed, men were generally caught and devoured by wild beasts,



while wild beasts were very seldom captured by men.

The world was uncreated and incorruptible, and that it was only the things on earth which underwent deluges and conflagrations, and that all these things did not happen at the same time."

80. In this way God rather subjected men to wild beasts.

81. If men appear to be superior to irrational animals on this account, that they have built cities, and make use of a political constitution, and forms of government, and sovereignties, this is to say nothing to the purpose, for ants and bees do the same. Bees, indeed, have a sovereign, who has followers and attendants; and there occur among them wars and victories, and slaughtering of the vanquished, and cities and suburbs, and a succession of labours, and judgments passed upon the idle and the wicked; for the drones are driven away and punished.

83. The ants set apart in a place by themselves those grains which sprout forth, that they may not swell into bud, but may continue throughout the year as their food,

84. When ants die, the survivors set apart a special place (for their interment), and that their ancestral sepulchres such a place is.

And when they [the ants] meet one another they enter into conversation, for which reason they never mistake their way; consequently they possess a full endowment of reason, and some common ideas on certain general subjects, and a voice by which they express themselves regarding accidental things.

85. Come now, if one were to look down from heaven upon earth, in what respect would our actions appear to differ from those of ants and bees?

86. In certain individuals among the irrational creation there exists the power of sorcery.

If, however, men entertain lofty notions because of their possessing the power of sorcery, yet even in that respect are serpents and eagles their superiors in wisdom; for they are acquainted with many prophylactics against persons and diseases, and also with the virtues of certain stones which help to preserve their young. If men, however, fall in with these, they think that they have gained a wonderful possession.

88. If, because man has been able to grasp the idea of God, he is deemed superior to the other animals, let those who hold this opinion know that this capacity will be claimed by many of the other animals; and with good reason: for what would any one maintain to be more divine than the power of foreknowing and predicting future events? Men accordingly acquire the art from the other animals, and especially from birds. And those who listen to the indications furnished by them, become possessed of the gift of prophecy. If, then, birds, and the other prophetic animals, which are enabled by the gift of God to foreknow events, instruct us by means of signs, so much the nearer do they seem to be to the society of God, and to be endowed with greater wisdom, and to be more beloved by Him. The more intelligent of men, moreover, say that the animals hold meetings which are more sacred than our assemblies, and that they know what is said at these meetings, and show that in reality they possess this knowledge, when, having previously stated that the birds have declared their intention of departing to some particular place, and of doing this thing or the other, the truth of their assertions is

established by the departure of the birds to the place in question, and by their doing what was foretold. And no race of animals appears to be more observant of oaths than the elephants are, or to show greater devotion to divine things; and this, I presume, solely because they have some knowledge of God.

*97. How impious, indeed, is the assertion of this man, who charges us with impiety, that not only are the irrational animals wiser than the human race, but that they are more beloved by God (than they)!*

The assemblies of the irrational animals are more sacred than ours.

Intelligent men say that these animals hold assemblies which are more sacred than ours, and that they know what is spoken at them, and actually prove that they are not without such knowledge, when they mention beforehand that the birds have announced their intention of departing to a particular place, or of doing this thing or that, and then show that they have departed to the place in question, and have done the particular thing which was foretold.

99. All things, accordingly, were not made for man, any more than they were made for lions, or eagles, or dolphins, but that this world, as being God's work, might be perfect and entire in all respects. For this reason all things have been adjusted, not with reference to each other, but with regard to their bearing upon the whole. And God takes care of the whole, and (His) providence will never forsake it; and it does not become worse; nor does God after a time bring it back to himself; nor is He angry on account of men any more than on account of apes or flies; nor does He threaten these beings, each one of which has received its appointed lot in its proper place.

## Book VI

62. He has neither mouth nor voice.

God possesses nothing else of which we have any knowledge.

63. Neither did He make man His image; for God is not such an one, nor like any other species of (visible) being.

64. God partakes of form or colour nor does He even partake of "motion".

He is not to be reached by word.

He cannot be expressed by name.

He has undergone no suffering that can be conveyed by words.

Deity is beyond all suffering.

66. How, then, shall I know God? and how shall I learn the way that leads to Him? And how will you show Him to me? Because now, indeed, you throw darkness before my eyes, and I see nothing distinctly.

Those whom one would lead forth out of darkness into the brightness of light, being unable to withstand its splendours, have their power of vision affected and injured, and so imagine that they are smitten with blindness.

68. *Celsus asks us how we think we know God, and how we shall be saved by Him.*

69. *Celsus, however, asserts that the answer which we give is based upon a probable conjecture, admitting that he describes our answer in the following terms: Since God is great and difficult to see, He put His own Spirit into a body that resembled ours, and sent it down to us, that we might be enabled to hear Him and become acquainted with Him.*

71. *He imagines that we, in calling God a Spirit, differ in no respect in this particular from the Stoics among the Greeks, who maintain that "God is a Spirit, diffused through all things, and containing all things within Himself."*

72. *As the Son of God, who existed in a human body, is a Spirit, this very Son of God would not be immortal.*

*He next becomes confused in his statements, as if there were some of us who did not admit that God is a Spirit, but maintain that only with regard to His Son, and he thinks that he can answer us by saying that there is no kind of spirit which lasts for ever.*

*He proceeds, in the next place, to assume what we do not maintain, that God must necessarily have given up the ghost; from which also it follows that Jesus could not have risen again with His body. For God would not have received back the spirit which He had surrendered after it had been stained by contact with the body.*

73. *Had He wished to send down His Spirit from Himself, what need was there to breathe it into the womb of a woman? For as one who knew already how to form men, He could also have fashioned a body for this person, without casting His own Spirit into so much pollution; and in this way He would not have been received with incredulity, if He had derived His existence immediately from above.*

74. *How could he, who was punished in such a manner, be shown to be God's Son, unless these things had been predicted of him?*

75. *Since a divine Spirit inhabited the body (of Jesus), it must certainly have been different from that of other beings, in respect of grandeur, or beauty, or strength, or voice, or impressiveness, or persuasiveness. For it is impossible that He, to whom was imparted some divine quality beyond other beings, should not differ from others; whereas this person did not differ in any respect from another, but was, as they report, little, and ill-favoured, and ignoble.*

77. *Since a divine Spirit inhabited the body (of Jesus), it must certainly have been different from that of other beings in respect of grandeur, or voice, or strength, or impressiveness, or persuasiveness.*

78. *Again, if God, like Jupiter in the comedy, should, on awaking from a lengthened slumber, desire to rescue the human race from evil, why did He send this Spirit of which you speak into one corner (of the earth)? He ought to have breathed it alike into many bodies, and have sent them out into all the world. Now the comic poet, to cause laughter in the theatre, wrote that Jupiter, after awakening, despatched Mercury to the Athenians and Lacedaemonians; but do not you think that you have made the Son of God more ridiculous in sending Him to the Jews?*

81. *Although knowing all things, He was not aware of this, that He was sending His Son*

amongst wicked men, who were both to be guilty of sin, and to inflict punishment upon Him.

## Book VII

32. *Our teaching on the subject of the resurrection is not, as Celsus imagines, derived from anything that we have heard on the doctrine of metempsychosis.*

33. *As Celsus supposes that we uphold the doctrine of the resurrection in order that we may see and know God, he thus follows out his notions on the subject: After they have been utterly refuted and vanquished, they still, as if regardless of all objections, come back again to the same question, 'How then shall we see and know God? how shall we go to Him?'*

35. *Seeking God, then, in this way, we have no need to visit the oracles of Trophonius, of Amphiaraus, and of Mopsus, to which Celsus would send us, assuring us that we would there see the gods in human form, appearing to us with all distinctness, and without illusion.*

The gods who are in human form do not show themselves for once, or at intervals, like him who has deceived men, but they are ever open to intercourse with those who desire it.

36. Again they will ask, 'How can we know God, unless by the perception of the senses? for how otherwise than through the senses are we able to gain any knowledge?' This is not the language of a man; it comes not from the soul, but from the flesh. Let them hearken to us, if such a spiritless and carnal race are able to do so: if, instead of exercising the senses, you look upwards with the soul; if, turning away the eye of the body, you open the eye of the mind thus and thus only will you be able to see God. And if you seek one to be your guide along this way, you must shun all deceivers and jugglers, who will introduce you to phantoms. Otherwise you will be acting the most ridiculous part, if, whilst you pronounce imprecations upon those others that are recognised as gods, treating them as idols, you yet do homage to a more wretched idol than any of these, which indeed is not even an idol or a phantom, but a dead man, and you seek a father like to him.

42. You perceive, then, how divine men seek after the way of truth, and how well Plato knew that it was impossible for all men to walk in it. But as wise men have found it for the express purpose of being able to convey to us some notion of Him who is the first, the unspeakable Being,--a notion, namely; which may represent Him to us through the medium of other objects,--they endeavour either by synthesis, which is the combining of various qualities, or by analysis, which is the separation and setting aside of some qualities, or finally by analogy;--in these ways, I say, they endeavour to set before us that which it is impossible to express in words. I should therefore be surprised if you could follow in that course, since you are so completely wedded to the flesh as to be incapable of seeing ought but what is impure.

45. Things are either intelligible, which we call substance--being; or visible, which we call becoming: with the former is truth; from the latter arises error. Truth is the object of knowledge; truth and error form opinion. Intelligible objects are known by the reason, visible objects by the eyes; the action of the reason is called intelligent perception, that of the eyes vision. As, then, among visible things the sun is neither the eye nor vision,

but that which enables the eye to see, and renders vision possible, and in consequence of it visible things are seen, all sensible things exist and itself is rendered visible; so among things intelligible, that which is neither reason, nor intelligent perception, nor knowledge, is yet the cause which enables the reason to know, which renders intelligent perception possible; and in consequence of it knowledge arises, all things intelligible, truth itself and substance have their existence; and itself, which is above all these things, becomes in some ineffable way intelligible. These things are offered to the consideration of the intelligent; and if even you can understand any of them, it is well. And if you think that a Divine Spirit has descended from God to announce divine things to men, it is doubtless this same Spirit that reveals these truths, and it was under the same influence that men of old made known many important truths. But if you cannot comprehend these things, then keep silence; do not expose your own ignorance, and do not accuse of blindness those who see, or of lameness those who run, while you yourselves are utterly lamed and mutilated in mind, and lead a merely animal life--the life of the body, which is the dead part of our nature.

58. They have also a precept to this effect, that we ought not to avenge ourselves on one who injures us, or, as he expresses it, 'Whosoever shall strike thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also.' This is an ancient saying, which had been admirably expressed long before, and which they have only reported in a coarser way. For Plato introduces Socrates conversing with Crito as follows: 'Must we never do injustice to any?' 'Certainly not.' 'And since we must never do injustice, must we not return injustice for an injustice that has been done to us, as most people think?' 'It seems to me that we should not.' 'But tell me, Crito, may we do evil to any one or not?' 'Certainly not, O Socrates.' 'Well, is it just, as is commonly said, for one who has suffered wrong to do wrong in return, or is it unjust?' 'It is unjust. Yes; for to do harm to a man is the same as to do him injustice.' 'You speak truly. We must then not do injustice in return for injustice, nor must we do evil to any one, whatever evil we may have suffered from him.' Thus Plato speaks; and he adds, 'Consider, then, whether you are at one with me, and whether, starting from this principle, we may not come to the conclusion .that it is never right to do injustice, even in return for an injustice which has been received; or whether, on the other hand, you differ from me, and do not admit the principle from which we started. That has always been my opinion, and is so still. Such are the sentiments of Plato, and indeed they were held by divine men before his time. But let this suffice as one example of the way in which this and other truths have been borrowed and corrupted. Any one who wishes can easily by searching find more of them.

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