

ORIGEN AGAINST CELSUS, v1

ORIGEN

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BOOK I.

PREFACE.

1. WHEN false witnesses testified against our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, He remained silent; and when unfounded charges were brought against Him, He returned no answer, believing that His whole life and conduct among the Jews were a better refutation than any answer to the false testimony, or than any formal defence against the accusations. And I know not, my pious Ambrosius,[1] why you wished me to write a reply to the false charges brought by Celsus against the Christians, and to his accusations directed against the faith of the Churches in his treatise; as if the facts themselves did not furnish a manifest refutation, and the doctrine a better answer than any writing, seeing it both disposes of the false statements, and does not leave to the accusations any credibility or validity. Now, with respect to our Lord's silence when false witness was borne against Him, it is sufficient at present to quote the words of Matthew, for the testimony of Mark is to the same effect. And the words of Matthew are as follow: "And the high priest and the council sought false witness against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none, although many false witnesses came forward. At last two false witnesses came and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and after three days to build it up. And the high priest arose, and said to Him, Answerest thou nothing to what these witness against thee? But Jesus held His peace." [2] And that He

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returned no answer when falsely accused, the following is the statement: "And Jesus stood before the governor; and he asked Him, saying, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said to him, Thou sayest. And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto Him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against Thee? And He answered him to never a word, insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly."[3]

2. It was, indeed, matter of surprise to men even of Ordinary intelligence, that one who was accused and assailed by false testimony, but who was able to defend Himself, and to show that He was guilty of none of the charges (alleged), and who might have enumerated the praiseworthy deeds of His own life, and His miracles wrought by divine power, so as to give the judge an opportunity of delivering a more honourable judgment regarding Him, should not have done this, but should have disdained such a procedure, and in the nobleness of His nature have contemned His accusers.[4] That the judge would, without any hesitation, have set Him at liberty if He had offered a defence, is clear from what is related of him when he said, "Which of the two do ye wish that I should release unto you, Barabbas or Jesus, who is called Christ?"[5] and from what the Scripture adds, "For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him."[6] Jesus, however, is at all times assailed by false witnesses, and, while wickedness remains in the world, is ever exposed to accusation. And yet even now He continues silent before these things, and makes no audible answer, but places His defence in the lives of His genuine disciples, which are a pre-eminent testimony, and one that rises superior to all false witness, and refutes and overthrows all unfounded accusations and charges.

3. I venture, then, to say that this "apology" which you require me to compose will somewhat weaken that defence (of Christianity) which rests on facts, and that power of Jesus which is manifest to those who are not altogether devoid of perception. Notwithstanding, that we may not have the appearance of being reluctant to undertake the task which you have enjoined, we have endeavoured, to the best of our ability, to suggest, by way of answer to each of the statements advanced by Celsus, what seemed to us adapted to refute them, although his arguments have no power to shake the faith of any (true) believer. And forbid, indeed, that any one should be found who, after having been a partaker in such a love of God as was (displayed) in Christ Jesus, could be shaken in his purpose by the arguments of Celsus, or of any such as he. For Paul, when enumerating the innumerable causes which generally separate men from the love of Christ and from the love of God in Christ Jesus (to all of which, the love that was in himself rose superior), did not set down argument among the grounds of separation. For observe that he says, firstly: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (as it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."[1] And secondly, when laying down another series of causes which naturally tend to separate those who are not firmly grounded in their religion, he says: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[2]

4. Now, truly, it is proper that we should feel elated because afflictions, or those other causes enumerated by Paul, do not separate us (from Christ); but not that Paul and the other apostles, and any other resembling them, (should entertain that feeling), because they were far exalted above such things when they said, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us,"[3] which is a stronger statement than that they are simply "conquerors." But if it be proper for apostles to entertain a feeling of elation in not being separated from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, that feeling will be entertained by them, because neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor any of the things that follow, can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And therefore I do not congratulate that believer in Christ whose faith can be shaken by Celsus who no longer shares the common life of men, but has long since departed or by any apparent plausibility of argument.[4] For I do not know in what rank to place him who has need of arguments

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written in books in answer to the charges of Celsus against the Christians, in order to prevent him from being shaken in his faith, and confirm him in it. But nevertheless, since in the multitude of those who are considered believers some such persons might be found as would have their faith shaken and overthrown by the writings of Celsus, but who might be preserved by a reply to them of such a nature as to refute his statements and to exhibit the truth, we have deemed it right to yield to your injunction, and to furnish an answer to the treatise which you sent us, but which I do not think that any one, although only a short way advanced in philosophy, will allow to be a "True Discourse," as Celsus has entitled it.

5. Paul, indeed, observing that there are in Greek philosophy certain things not to be lightly esteemed, which are plausible in the eyes of the many, but which represent falsehood as truth, says with regard to such: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." [5] And seeing that there was a kind of greatness manifest in the words of the world's wisdom, he said that the words of the philosophers were "according to the rudiments of the world." No man of sense, however, would say that those of Celsus were "according to the rudiments of the world." Now those words, which contained some element of deceitfulness, the apostle named "vain deceit," probably by way of distinction from a deceit that was not "vain;" and the prophet Jeremiah observing this, ventured to say to God, "O LORD, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed." [6] But in the language of Celsus there seems to me to be no deceitfulness at all, not even that which is "vain;" such deceitfulness, viz., as is found in the language of those who have founded philosophical sects, and who have been endowed with no ordinary talent for such pursuits. And as no one would say that any ordinary error in geometrical demonstrations was intended to deceive, or would describe it for the sake of exercise in such matters; [7] so those opinions which are to be styled "vain deceit," and the "tradition of men," and "according to the rudiments of the world," must have some resemblance to the views of those who have been the founders of philosophical sects, (if such titles are to be appropriately applied to them). 6. After proceeding with this work as far as the place where Celsus introduces the Jew disputing with Jesus, I resolved to prefix this preface to the beginning (of the treatise), in order that the reader of our reply to Celsus might fall in with it first, and see that this book has been composed not for those who are thorough believers, but for such as are either wholly unacquainted with the Christian faith, or for those who, as the apostle terms them, are "weak in the faith;" regarding whom he says, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye." [1] And this preface must be my apology for beginning my answer to Celsus on one plan, and carrying it on on another. For my first intention was to indicate his principal objections, and then briefly the answers that were returned to them, and subsequently to make a systematic treatise of the whole discourse. [2] But afterwards, circumstances themselves suggested to me that I should be economical of my time, and that, satisfied with what I had already stated at the commencement, I should in the following part grapple closely, to the best of my ability, with the charges of Celsus. I have therefore to ask indulgence for those portions which follow the preface towards the beginning of the book. And if you are not impressed by the powerful arguments which succeed, then, asking similar indulgence also with respect to them, I refer you, if you still desire an argumentative solution of the objections of Celsus, to those men who are wiser than myself, and who are able by words and treatises to overthrow the charges which he brings against us. But better is the man who, although meeting with the work of Celsus, needs no answer to it at all, but who despises all its contents, since they are contemned, and with good reason, by every believer in Christ, through the Spirit that is in him.

CHAP. I.

The first point which Celsus brings forward, in his desire to throw discredit upon Christianity, is, that the Christians entered into secret associations with each other contrary to law, saying, that "of associations some are public, and that these are in accordance with the laws; others, again, secret, and maintained in violation of the laws." And his wish is to bring into disrepute what are termed the "love-feasts" [3] of the Christians, as if they had their origin in the common danger, and were more binding than any oaths. Since, then, he babbles about the

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public law, alleging that the associations of the Christians are in violation of it, we have to reply, that if a man were placed among Scythians, whose laws were unholy,[4] and having no opportunity of escape, were compelled to live among them, such an one would with good reason, for the sake of the law of truth, which the Scythians would regard as wickedness,[5] enter into associations contrary to their laws, with those like-minded with himself; so, if truth is to decide, the laws of the heathens which relate to images, and an atheistical polytheism, are "Scythian" laws, or more impious even than these, if there be any such. It is not irrational, then, to form associations in opposition to existing laws, if done for the sake of the truth. For as those persons would do well who should enter into a secret association in order to put to death a tyrant who had seized upon the liberties of a state, so Christians also, when tyrannized over by him who is called the devil, and by falsehood, form leagues contrary to the laws of the devil, against his power, and for the safety of those others whom they may succeed in persuading to revolt from a government which is, as it were, "Scythian," and despotic.

CHAP. II.

Celsus next proceeds to say, that the system of doctrine, viz., Judaism, upon which Christianity depends, was barbarous in its origin. And with an appearance of fairness, he does not reproach Christianity[6] because of its origin among barbarians, but gives the latter credit for their ability in discovering (such) doctrines. To this, however, he adds the statement, that the Greeks are more skilful than any others in judging, establishing, and reducing to practice the discoveries of barbarous nations. Now this is our answer to his allegations, and our defence of the truths contained in Christianity, that if any one were to come from the study of Grecian opinions and usages to the Gospel, he would not only decide that its doctrines were true, but would by practice establish their truth, and supply whatever seemed wanting, from a Grecian point of view, to their demonstration, and thus confirm the truth of Christianity. We have to say, moreover, that the Gospel has a demonstration of its own, more divine than any established by Grecian dialectics. And this diviner method is called by the apostle the "manifestation of the Spirit and of power:" of "the Spirit," on account of the prophecies, which are sufficient to produce faith in any one who reads them, especially in those things which relate to Christ; and of "power," because of the signs and wonders which we must believe to have been performed, both on many other grounds, and on this, that traces of them are still preserved among those who regulate their lives by the precepts of the Gospel.

CHAP. III.

After this, Celsus proceeding to speak of the Christians teaching and practising their favourite doctrines in secret, and saying that they do this to some purpose, seeing they escape the penalty of death which is imminent, he compares their dangers with those which were encountered by such men as Socrates for the sake of philosophy; and here he might have mentioned Pythagoras as well, and other philosophers. But our answer to this is, that in the case of Socrates the Athenians immediately afterwards repented; and no feeling of bitterness remained in their minds regarding him, as also happened in the history, of Pythagoras. The followers of the latter, indeed, for a considerable time established their schools in that part of Italy called Magna Graecia; but in the case of the Christians, the Roman Senate, and the princes of the time, and the soldiery, and the people, and the relatives of those who had become converts to the faith, made war upon their doctrine, and would have prevented (its progress), overcoming it by a confederacy of so powerful a nature, had it not, by the help of God, escaped the danger, and risen above it, so as (finally) to defeat the whole world in its conspiracy against it.

CHAP. IV.

Let us notice also how he thinks to cast discredit upon our system of morals,[1] alleging that it is only common to

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us with other philosophers, and no venerable or new branch of instruction. In reply to which we have to say, that unless all men had naturally impressed upon their minds sound ideas of morality, the doctrine of the punishment of sinners would have been excluded by those who bring upon themselves the righteous judgments of God. It is not therefore matter of surprise that the same God should have sown in the hearts of all men those truths which He taught by the prophets and the Saviour, in order that at the divine judgment every man may be without excuse, having the "requirements[2] of the law written upon his heart," a truth obscurely alluded to by the Bible[3] in what the Greeks regard as a myth, where it represents God as having with His own finger written down the commandments, and given them to Moses, and which the wickedness of the worshippers of the calf made him break in pieces, as if the flood of wickedness, so to speak, had swept them away. But Moses having again hewn tables of stone, i God wrote the commandments a second time, and gave them to him; the prophetic word preparing the soul, as it were, after the first transgression, for the writing of God a second time.

CHAP. V.

Treating of the regulations respecting idolatry as being peculiar to Christianity, Celsus establishes their correctness, saying that 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, can be (regarded as) gods. In what follows, however, wishing to show that this is a common opinion, and one not first discovered by Christianity, he quotes a saying of Heraclitus to this effect: "That those who draw near to lifeless images, as if they were gods, act in a similar manner to those who would enter into conversation with houses." Respecting this, then, we have to say, that ideas were implanted in the minds of men like the principles of morality, from which not only Heraclitus, but any other Greek or barbarian, might by reflection have deduced the same conclusion; for he states that the Persians also were of the same opinion, quoting Herodotus as his authority. We also can add to these Zeno of Citium, who in his Polity, says: "And there will be no need to build temples, for nothing ought to be regarded as sacred, or of much value, or holy, which is the work of builders and of mean men." It is evident, then, with respect to this opinion (as well as others), that there has been en-graven upon the hearts of men by the finger of God a sense of the duty that is required.

CHAP. VI.

After this, through the influence of some motive which is unknown to me, Celsus asserts that it is by the names of certain demons, and by the use of incantations, that the Christians appear to be possessed of (miraculous) power; hinting, I suppose, at the practices of those who expel evil spirits by incantations. And here he manifestly appears to malign the Gospel. For it is not by incantations that Christians seem to prevail (over evil spirits), but by the name of Jesus, accompanied by the announcement of the narratives which relate to Him; for the repetition of these has frequently been the means of driving demons out of men, especially when those who repeated them did so in a sound and genuinely believing spirit. Such power, indeed, does the name of Jesus possess over evil spirits, that there have been instances where it was effectual, when it was pronounced even by bad men, which Jesus Himself taught (would be the case), when He said: "Many shall say to Me in that day, In Thy name we have cast out devils, and done many wonderful works." [1] Whether Celsus omitted this from intentional malignity, or from ignorance, I do not know. And he next proceeds to bring a charge against the Saviour Himself, alleging that 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. And his accusation is, that if they 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. But even if it be impossible to show by what power Jesus wrought these miracles, it is clear that Christians employ no spells or incantations, but the simple, name of Jesus,

and certain other words in which they repose faith, according to the holy Scriptures.

CHAP. VII.

Moreover, since he frequently calls the Christian doctrine a secret system (of belief), we must confute him on this point also, since almost the entire world is better acquainted with what Christians preach than with the favourite opinions of philosophers. For who is ignorant of the statement that Jesus was born of a virgin, and that He was crucified, and that His resurrection is an article of faith among many, and that a general judgment is announced to come, in which the wicked are to be punished according to their deserts, and the righteous to be duly rewarded? And yet the mystery of the resurrection, not being understood,[2] is made a subject of ridicule among unbelievers. In these circumstances, to speak of the Christian doctrine as a secret system, is altogether absurd. But that there should be certain doctrines, not made known to the multitude, which are (revealed) after the exoteric ones have been taught, is not a peculiarity of Christianity alone, but also of philosophic systems, in which certain truths are exoteric and others esoteric. Some of the hearers of Pythagoras were content with his ipse dixit; while others were taught in secret those doctrines which were not deemed fit to be communicated to profane and insufficiently prepared ears. Moreover, all the mysteries that are celebrated everywhere throughout Greece and barbarous countries, although held in secret, have no discredit thrown upon them, so that it is in vain that he endeavours to calumniate the secret doctrines of Christianity, seeing he does not correctly understand its nature.

CHAP. VIII.

It is with a certain eloquence,[3] indeed, that he appears to advocate the cause of those who bear witness to the truth of Christianity by their death, in the following words: "And I do not maintain that if a man, who has adopted a system of good doctrine, is to incur danger from men on that account, he should either apostatize, or feign apostasy, or openly deny his opinions." And he condemns those who, while holding the Christian views, either pretend that they do not, or deny them, saying that "he who holds a certain opinion ought not to feign recantation, or publicly disown it." And here Celsus must be convicted of self-contradiction. For from other treatises of his it is ascertained that he was an Epicurean; but here, because he thought that he could assail Christianity with better effect by not professing the opinions of Epicurus, he pretends that there is a something better in man than the earthly part of his nature, which is akin to God, and says that "they in whom this element, viz., the soul, is in a healthy condition, are ever seeking after their kindred nature, meaning God, and are ever desiring to hear something about Him, and to call it to remembrance." Observe now the insincerity of his character! Having said a little before, that "the man who had embraced a system of good doctrine ought not, even if exposed to danger on that account from men, to disavow it, or pretend that he had done so, nor yet openly disown it," he now involves himself in all manner of contradictions. For he knew that if he acknowledged himself an Epicurean, he would not obtain any credit when accusing those who, in any degree, introduce the doctrine of Providence, and who place a God over the world. And we have heard that there were two individuals of the name of Celsus, both of whom were Epicureans; the earlier of the two having lived in the time of Nero, but this one in that of Adrian, and later.

CHAP. IX.

He next proceeds to recommend, that in adopting opinions we should follow reason and a rational guide,[4] since he who assents to opinions without following this course is very liable to be deceived. And he compares inconsiderate believers to Metragyrtae, and soothsayers, and Mithrae, and Sabbadians, and to anything else that one may fall in with, and to the phantoms of Hecate, or any other demon or demons. For as amongst such persons are frequently to be found wicked men, who, taking advantage of the ignorance of those who are easily deceived, lead them away whither they will, so also, he says, is the case among Christians. And he asserts that certain

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persons who do not wish either to give or receive a reason for their belief, keep repeating, "Do not examine, but believe!" and, "Your faith will save you!" And he alleges that such also say, "The wisdom of this life is bad, but that foolishness is a good thing!" To which we have to answer, that if it were possible for all to leave the business of life, and devote themselves to philosophy, no other method ought to be adopted by any one, but this alone. For in the Christian system also it will be found that there is, not to speak at all arrogantly, at least as much of investigation into articles of belief, and of explanation of dark sayings, occurring in the prophetic writings, and of the parables in the Gospels, and of countless other things, which either were narrated or enacted with a symbolical signification,[1] (as is the case with other systems). But since the course alluded to is impossible, partly on account of the necessities of life, partly on account of the weakness of men, as only a very few individuals devote themselves earnestly to study,[2] what better method could be devised with a view of assisting the multitude, than that which was delivered by Jesus to the heathen? And let us inquire, with respect to the great multitude of believers, who have washed away the mire of wickedness in which they formerly wallowed, whether it were better for them to believe without a reason, and (so) to have become reformed and improved in their habits, through the belief that men are chastised for sins, and honoured for good works or not to have allowed themselves to be converted on the strength of mere faith, but have waited) until they could give themselves to a thorough examination of the (necessary) reasons. For it is manifest that, (on such a plan), all men, with very few exceptions, would not obtain this (amelioration of conduct) which they have obtained through a simple faith, but would continue to remain in the practice of a wicked life. Now, whatever other evidence can be furnished of the fact, that it was not without divine intervention that the philanthropic scheme of Christianity was introduced among men, this also must be added. For a pious man will not believe that even a physician of the body, who restores the sick to better health, could take up his abode in any city or country without divine permission, since no good happens to men without the help of God. And if he who has cured the bodies of many, or restored them to better health, does not effect his cures without the help of God, how much more He who has healed the souls of many, and has turned them (to virtue), and improved their nature, and attached them to God who is over all things, and taught them to refer every action to His good pleasure, and to shun all that is displeasing to Him, even to the least of their words or deeds, or even of the thoughts of their hearts ?

CHAP. X.

In the next place, since our opponents keep repeating those statements about faith, we must say that, considering it as a useful thing for the multitude, we admit that we teach those men to believe without reasons, who are unable to abandon all other employments, and give themselves to an examination of arguments; and our opponents, although they do not acknowledge it, yet practically do the same. For who is there that, on betaking himself to the study of philosophy, and throwing himself into the ranks of some sect, either by chance,[3] or because he is provided with a teacher of that school, adopts such a course for any other reason, except that he believes his particular sect to be superior to any other? For, not waiting to hear the arguments of all the other philosophers, and of all the different sects, and the reasons for condemning one system and for supporting another, he in this way elects to become a Stoic, e.g., or a Platonist, or a Peripatetic, or an Epicurean, or a follower of some other school, and is thus borne, although they will not admit it, by a kind of irrational impulse to the practice, say of Stoicism, to the disregard of the others; despising either Platonism, as being marked by greater humility than the others; or Peripateticism, as more human, and as admitting with more fairness[4] than other systems the blessings of human life. And some also, alarmed at first sight[5] about the doctrine of providence, from seeing what happens in the world to the vicious and to the virtuous, have rashly concluded that there is no divine providence at all, and have adopted the views of Epicurus and Celsus.

CHAP. XI.

Since, then, as reason teaches, we must repose faith in some one of those who have been the introducers of sects

among the Greeks or Barbarians, why should we not rather believe in God who is over all things, and in Him who teaches that worship is due to God alone, and that other things are to be passed by, either as non-existent, or as existing indeed, and worthy of honour, but not of worship and reverence? And respecting these things, he who not only believes, but who contemplates things with the eye of reason, will state the demonstrations that occur to him, and which are the result of careful investigation. And why should it not be more reasonable, seeing all human things are dependent upon faith, to believe God rather than them? For who enters on a voyage, or contracts a marriage, or becomes the father of children, or casts seed into the ground, without believing that better things will result from so doing, although the contrary might and sometimes does happen? And yet the belief that better things, even agreeably to their wishes, will follow, makes all men venture upon uncertain enterprises, which may turn out differently from what they expect. And if the hope and belief of a better future be the support of life in every uncertain enterprise, why shall not this faith rather be rationally accepted by him who believes on better grounds than he who sails the sea, or tills the ground, or marries a wife, or engages in any other human pursuit, in the existence of a God who was the Creator of all these things, and in Him who with surpassing wisdom and divine greatness of mind dared to make known this doctrine to men in every part of the world, at the cost of great danger, and of a death considered infamous, which He underwent for the sake of the human race; having also taught those who were persuaded to embrace His doctrine at the first, to proceed, under the peril of every danger, and of ever impending death, to all quarters of the world to ensure the salvation of men?

CHAP. XII.

In the next place, when Celsus says in express words, "If they would answer me, not as if I were asking for information, for I am acquainted with all their opinions, but because I take an equal interest in them all, it would be well. And if they will not, but will keep reiterating, as they generally do, 'Do not investigate,' etc., they must, he continues, explain to me at least of what nature these things are of which they speak, and whence they are derived," etc. Now, with regard to his statement that he "is acquainted with all our doctrines," we have to say that this is a boastful and daring assertion; for if he had read the prophets in particular, which are full of acknowledged difficulties, and of declarations that are obscure to the multitude, and if he had perused the parables of the Gospels, and the other writings of the law and of the Jewish history, and the utterances of the apostles, and had read them candidly, with a desire to enter into their meaning, he would not have expressed himself with such boldness, nor said that he "was acquainted with all their doctrines." Even we ourselves, who have devoted much study to these writings, would not say that "we were acquainted with everything," for we have a regard for truth. Not one of us will assert, "I know all the doctrines of Epicurus," or will be confident that he knows all those of Plato, in the knowledge of the fact that so many differences of opinion exist among the expositors of these systems. For who is so daring as to say that he knows all the opinions of the Stoics or of the Peripatetics? Unless, indeed, it should be the case that he has heard this boast, "I know them all," from some ignorant and senseless individuals, who do not perceive their own ignorance, and should thus imagine, from having had such persons as his teachers, that he was acquainted with them all. Such an one appears to me to act very much as a person would do who had visited Egypt (where the Egyptian savans, learned in their country's literature, are greatly given to philosophizing about those things which are regarded among them as divine, but where the vulgar, hearing certain myths, the reasons of which they do not understand, are greatly elated because of their fancied knowledge), and who should imagine that he is acquainted with the whole circle of Egyptian knowledge, after having been a disciple of the ignorant alone, and without having associated with any of the priests, or having learned the mysteries of the Egyptians from any other source. And what I have said regarding the learned and ignorant among the Egyptians, I might have said also of the Persians; among whom there are mysteries, conducted on rational principles by the learned among them, but understood in a symbolical sense by the more superficial of the multitude.[1] And the same remark applies to the Syrians, and Indians, and to all those who have a literature and a mythology.

CHAP. XIII.

But since Celsus has declared it to be a saying of many Christians, that "the wisdom of this life is a bad thing, but that foolishness is good," we have to answer that he slanders the Gospel, not giving the words as they actually occur in the writings of Paul, where they run as follow: "If any one among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." [2] The apostle, therefore, does not say simply that "wisdom is foolishness with God," but "the wisdom of this world." And again, not, "If any one among you seemeth to be wise, let him become a fool universally;" but, "let him become a fool in this world, that he may become wise." We term, then, "the wisdom of this world," every false system of philosophy, which, according to the Scriptures, is brought to nought; and we call foolishness good, not without restriction, but when a man becomes foolish as to this world. As if we were to say that the Platonist, who believes in the immortality of the soul, and in the doctrine of its metempsychosis, incurs the charge of folly with the Stoics, who discard this opinion; and with the Peripatetics, who babble about the subtleties of Plato; and with the Epicureans, who call it superstition to introduce a providence, and to place a God over all things. Moreover, that it is in agreement with the spirit of Christianity, of much more importance to give our assent to doctrines upon grounds of reason and wisdom than on that of faith merely, and that it was only in certain circumstances that the latter course was desired by Christianity, in order not to leave men altogether without help, is shown by that genuine disciple of Jesus, Paul, when he says: "For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." [2] Now by these words it is clearly shown that it is by the wisdom of God that God ought to be known. But as this result did not follow, it pleased God a second time to save them that believe, not by "folly" universally, but by such foolishness as depended on preaching. For the preaching of Jesus Christ as crucified is the "foolishness" of preaching, as Paul also perceived, when he said, "But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and wisdom of God." [3]

CHAP. XIV.

Celsus, being of opinion that there is to be found among many nations a general relationship of doctrine, enumerates all the nations which gave rise to such and such opinions; but for some reason, unknown to me, he casts a slight upon the Jews, not including them amongst the others, as having either laboured along with them, and arrived at the same conclusions, or as having entertained similar opinions on many subjects. It is proper, therefore, to ask him why he gives credence to the histories of Barbarians and Greeks respecting the antiquity of those nations of whom he speaks, but stamps the histories of this nation alone as false. For if the respective writers related the events which are found in these works in the spirit of truth, why should we distrust the prophets of the Jews alone? And if Moses and the prophets have recorded many things in their history from a desire to favour their own system, why should we not say the same of the historians of other countries? Or, when the Egyptians or their histories speak evil of the Jews, are they to be believed on that point; but the Jews, when saying the same things of the Egyptians, and declaring that they had suffered great injustice at their hands, and that on this account they had been punished by God, are to be charged with falsehood? And this applies not to the Egyptians alone, but to others; for we shall find that there was a connection between the Assyrians and the Jews, and that this is recorded in the ancient histories of the Assyrians. And so also the Jewish historians (I avoid using the word "prophets," that I may not appear to prejudge the case) have related that the Assyrians were enemies of the Jews. Observe at once, then, the arbitrary procedure of this individual, who believes the histories of these nations on the ground of their being learned, and condemns others as being wholly ignorant. For listen to the statement of Celsus: "There is," he says, "an authoritative account from the very beginning, respecting which there is a constant agreement among all the most learned nations, and cities, and men." And yet he will not call the Jews a learned nation in the same way in which he does the Egyptians, and Assyrians, and Indians, and Persians, and Odrysians, and Samothracians, and Eleusinians.

How much more impartial than Celsus is Numenius the Pythagorean, who has given many proofs of being a very eloquent man, and who has carefully tested many opinions, and collected together from many sources what had the appearance of truth; for, in the first hook of his treatise *On the Good*, speaking of those nations who have adopted the opinion that God is incorporeal, he enumerates the Jews also among those who hold this view; not showing any reluctance to use even the language of their prophets in his treatise, and to give it a metaphorical signification. It is said, moreover, that Hermippus has recorded in his first book, *On Lawgivers*, that it was from the Jewish people that Pythagoras derived the philosophy which he introduced among the Greeks. And there is extant a work by the historian Hecataeus, treating of the Jews, in which so high a character is bestowed upon that nation for its learning, that Herennius Philo, in his treatise on the Jews, has doubts in the first place, whether it is really the composition of the historian; and says, in the second place, that if really his, it is probable that he was carried away by the plausible nature of the Jewish history, and so yielded his assent to their system.

CHAP. XVI.

I must express my surprise that Celsus should class the Odrysians, and Samothracians, and Eleusinians, and Hyperboreans among the most ancient and learned nations, and should not deem the Jews worthy of a place among such, either for their learning or their antiquity, although there are many treatises in circulation among the Egyptians, and Phoenicians, and Greeks, which testify to their existence as an ancient people, but which I have considered it unnecessary to quote. For any one who chooses may read what Florins Josephus has recorded in his two books, *On the Antiquity of the Jews*, where he brings together a great collection of writers, who bear witness to the antiquity of the Jewish people; and there exists the *Discourse to the Greeks of Tatian the younger*,^[2] in which with very great learning he enumerates those historians who have treated of the antiquity of the Jewish nation and of Moses. It seems, then, to be not from a love of truth, but from a spirit of hatred, that Celsus makes these statements, his object being to asperse the origin of Christianity, which is connected with Judaism. Nay, he styles the Galactophagi of Homer, and the Druids of the Gauls, and the Getae, most learned and ancient tribes, on account of the resemblance between their traditions and those of the Jews, although I know not whether any of their histories survive; but the Hebrews alone, as far as in him lies, he deprives of the honour both of antiquity and learning. And again, when making a list of ancient and learned men who have conferred benefits upon their contemporaries (by their deeds), and upon posterity by their writings, he excluded Moses from the number; while of Linus, to whom Celsus assigns a foremost place in his list, there exists neither laws nor discourses which produced a change for the better among any tribes; whereas a whole nation, dispersed throughout the entire world, obey the laws of Moses. Consider, then, whether it is not from open malevolence that he has expelled Moses from his catalogue of learned men, while asserting that Linus, and Musaeus, and Orpheus, and Pherecydes, and the Persian Zoroaster, and Pythagoras, discussed these topics, and that their opinions were deposited in books, and have thus been preserved down to the present time. And it is intentionally also that he has omitted to take notice of the myth, embellished chiefly by Orpheus, in which the gods are described as affected by human weaknesses and passions.

CHAP. XVII.

In what follows, Celsus, assailing the Mosaic history, finds fault with those who give it a tropical and allegorical signification. And here one might say to this great man, who inscribed upon his own work the title of a *True Discourse*, "Why, good sir, do you make it a boast to have it recorded that the gods should engage in such adventures as are described by your learned poets and philosophers, and be guilty of abominable intrigues, and of engaging in wars against their own fathers, and of cutting off their secret parts, and should dare to commit and to suffer such enormities; while Moses, who gives no such accounts respecting God, nor even regarding the holy angels, and who relates deeds of far less atrocity regarding men (for in his writings no one ever ventured to

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commit such crimes as Kronos did against Uranus, or Zeus against his father, or that of the father of men and gods, who had intercourse with his own daughter), should be considered as having deceived those who were placed under his laws, and to have led them into error?" And here Celsus seems to me to act somewhat as Thrasymachus the Platonic philosopher did, when he would not allow Socrates to answer regarding justice, as he wished, but said, "Take care not to say that utility is justice, or duty, or anything of that kind." For in like manner Celsus as sails (as he thinks) the Mosaic histories, and finds fault with those who understand them allegorically, at the same time bestowing also some praise upon those who do so, to the effect that they are more impartial (than those who do not); and thus, as it were, he prevents by his cavils those who are able to show the true state of the case from offering such a defence as they would wish to offer.[3]

CHAP. XVIII.

And challenging a comparison of book with book, I would say, "Come now, good sir, take down the poems of Linus, and of Musaeus, and of Orpheus, and the writings of Pherecydes, and carefully compare these with the laws of Moses histories with histories, and ethical discourses with laws and commandments and see which of the two are the better fitted to change the character of the hearer on the very spot, and which to harden[1] him in his wickedness; and observe that your series of writers display little concern for those readers who are to peruse them at once unaided,[2] but have composed their philosophy (as you term it) for those who are able to comprehend its metaphorical and allegorical signification; whereas Moses, like a distinguished orator who meditates some figure of Rhetoric, and who carefully introduces in every part language of twofold meaning, has done this in his five books: neither affording, in the portion which relates to morals, any handle to his Jewish subjects for committing evil; nor yet giving to the few individuals who were endowed with greater wisdom, and who were capable of investigating his meaning, a treatise devoid of material for speculation. But of your learned poets the very writings would seem no longer to be preserved, although they would have been carefully treasured up if the readers had perceived any benefit (likely to be derived from them); whereas the works of Moses have stirred up many, who were even aliens to the manners of the Jews, to the belief that, as these writings testify, the first who enacted these laws and delivered them to Moses, was the God who was the Creator of the world. For it became the Creator of the universe, after laying down laws for its government, to confer upon His words a power which might subdue all men in every part of the earth.[3] And this I maintain, having as yet entered into no investigation regarding Jesus, but still demonstrating that Moses, who is far inferior to the Lord, is, as the Discourse will show, greatly superior to your wise poets and philosophers."

CHAP. XIX.

After these statements, Celsus, from a secret desire to cast discredit upon the Mosaic account of the creation, which teaches that the world is not yet ten thousand years old, but very much under that, while concealing his wish, intimates his agreement with those who hold that the world is uncreated. For, maintaining that there have been, from all eternity, many conflagrations and many deluges, and that the flood which lately took place in the time of Deucalion is comparatively modern, he clearly demonstrates to those who are able to understand him, that, in his opinion, the world was uncreated. But let this assailant of the Christian faith tell us by what arguments he was compelled to accept the statement that there have been many conflagrations and many cataclysms, and that the flood which occurred in the time of Deucalion, and the conflagration in that of Phaethon, were more recent than any others. And if he should put forward the dialogues of Plato (as evidence) on these subjects, we shall say to him that it is allowable for us also to believe that there resided in the pure and pious soul of Moses, who ascended above all created things, and united himself to the Creator of the universe, and who made known divine things with far greater clearness than Plato, or those other wise men (who lived) among the Greeks and Romans, a spirit which was divine. And if he demands of us our reasons for such a belief, let him first give grounds for his own unsupported assertions, and then we shall show that this view of ours is the correct one.

CHAP. XX.

And yet, against his will, Celsus is entangled into testifying that the world is comparatively modern, and not yet ten thousand years old, when he says that the Greeks consider those things as ancient, because, owing to the deluges and conflagrations, they have not beheld or received any memorials of older events. But let Celsus have, as his authorities for the myth regarding the conflagrations and inundations, those persons who, in his opinion, are the most learned of the Egyptians, traces of whose wisdom are to be found in the worship of irrational animals, and in arguments which prove that such a worship of God is in conformity with reason, and of a secret and mysterious character. The Egyptians, then, when they boastfully give their own account of the divinity of animals, are to be considered wise; but if any Jew, who has signified his adherence to the law and the lawgiver, refer everything to the Creator of the universe, and the only God, he is, in the opinion of Celsus and those like him, deemed inferior to him who degrades the Divinity not only to the level of rational and mortal animals, but even to that of irrational also! a view which goes far beyond the mythical doctrine of transmigration, according to which the soul falls down from the summit of heaven, and enters into the body of brute beasts, both tame and savage! And if the Egyptians related fables of this kind, they are believed to convey a philosophical meaning by their enigmas and mysteries; but if Moses compose and leave behind him histories and laws for an entire nation, they are to be considered as empty fables, the language of which admits of no allegorical meaning!

CHAP. XXI.

The following is the view of Celsus and the Epicureans: "Moses having," he says, "learned the doctrine which is to be found existing among wise nations and eloquent men, obtained the reputation of divinity." Now, in answer to this we have to say, that it may be allowed him that Moses did indeed hear a somewhat ancient doctrine, and transmitted the same to the Hebrews; that if the doctrine which he heard was false, and neither pious nor venerable, and if notwithstanding, he received it and handed it down to those under his authority, he is liable to censure; but if, as you assert, he gave his adherence to opinions that were wise and true, and educated his people by means of them, what, pray, has he done deserving of condemnation? Would, indeed, that not only Epicurus, but Aristotle, whose sentiments regarding providence are not so impious (as those of the former), and the Stoics, who assert that God is a body, had heard such a doctrine! Then the world would not have been filled with opinions which either disallow or enfeeble the action of providence, or introduce a corrupt corporeal principle, according to which the god of the Stoics is a body, with respect to whom they are not afraid to say that he is capable of change, and may be altered and transformed in all his parts, and, generally, that he is capable of corruption, if there be any one to corrupt him, but that he has the good fortune to escape corruption, because there is none to corrupt. Whereas the doctrine of the Jews and Christians, which preserves the immutability and unalterableness of the divine nature, is stigmatized as impious, because it does not partake of the profanity of those whose notions of God are marked by impiety, but because it says in the supplication addressed to the Divinity, "Thou art the same,"[1] it being, moreover, an article of faith that God has said, "I change not." [2]

CHAP. XXII.

After this, Celsus, without condemning circumcision as practised by the Jews, asserts that this usage was derived from the Egyptians; thus believing the Egyptians rather than Moses, who says that Abraham was the first among men who practised the rite. And it is not Moses alone who mentions the name of Abraham, assigning to him great intimacy with God; but many also of those who give themselves to the practice of the conjuration of evil spirits, employ in their spells the expression "God of Abraham," pointing out by the very name the friendship (that existed) between that just man and God. And yet, while making use of the phrase "God of Abraham," they do not know who Abraham is! And the same remark applies to Isaac, and Jacob, and Israel; which names, although

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confessedly Hebrew, are frequently introduced by those Egyptians who profess to produce some wonderful result by means of their knowledge. The rite of circumcision, however, which began with Abraham, and was discontinued by Jesus, who desired that His disciples should not practise it, is not before us for explanation; for the present occasion does not lead us to speak of such things, but to make an effort to refute the charges brought against the doctrine of the Jews by Celsus, who thinks that he will be able the more easily to establish the falsity of Christianity, if, by assailing its origin in Judaism, he can show that the latter also is untrue.

CHAP. XXIII.

After this, Celsus next asserts that "Those herdsmen and shepherds who followed Moses as their leader, had their minds deluded by vulgar deceits, and so supposed that there was one God." Let him show, then, how, after this irrational departure, as he regards it, of the herdsmen and shepherds from the worship of many gods, he himself is able to establish the multiplicity of deities that are found amongst the Greeks, or among those other nations that are called Barbarian. Let him establish, therefore, the existence of Mnemosyne, the mother of the Muses by Zeus; or of Themis, the parent of the Hours; or let him prove that the ever naked Graces can have a real, substantial existence. But he will not be able to show, from any actions of theirs, that these fictitious representations[3] of the Greeks, which have the appearance of being invested with bodies, are (really) gods. And why should the fables of the Greeks regarding the gods be true, any more than those of the Egyptians for example, who in their language know nothing of a Mnemosyne, mother of the nine Muses; nor of a Themis, parent of the Hours; nor of a Euphrosyne, one of the Graces; nor of any other of these names? How much more manifest (and how much better than all these inventions!) is it that, convinced by what we see, in the admirable order of the world, we should worship the Maker of it as the one Author of one effect, and which, as being wholly in harmony with itself, cannot on that account have been the work of many makers; and that we should believe that the whole heaven is not held together by the movements of many souls, for one is enough, which bears the whole of the non-wandering[4] sphere from east to west, and embraces within it all things which the world requires, and which are not self-existing! For all are parts of the world, while God is no part of the whole. But God cannot be imperfect, as a part is imperfect. And perhaps profounder consideration will show, that as God is not a part, so neither is He properly the whole, since the whole is composed of parts; and reason will not allow us to believe that the God who is over all is composed of parts, each one of which cannot do what all the other parts, can.

CHAP. XXIV.

After this he continues: "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." And in a subsequent part of his work he says, 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," Now, in answer to this, we have to remark that this involves a deep and mysterious subject that, viz., respecting the nature of names: it being a question whether, as Aristotle thinks, names were bestowed by arrangement, or, as the Stoics hold, by nature; the first words being imitations of things, agreeably to which the names were formed, and in conformity with which they introduce certain principles of etymology; or whether, as Epicurus teaches (differing in this from the Stoics), names were given by nature, the first men having uttered certain words varying with the circumstances in which they found themselves. If, then, we shall be able to establish, in reference to the preceding statement, the nature of powerful names, some of which are used by the learned amongst the Egyptians, or by the Magi among the Persians, and by the Indian philosophers called Brahmans, or by the Samanaeans, and others in different countries; and shall be able to make out that the so-called magic is not, as the followers of Epicurus and Aristotle suppose, an altogether uncertain thing, but is, as those skilled in it prove, a consistent system, having words which are known to exceedingly few; then we say that the name Sabaoth, and Adonai, and the other names treated with

so much reverence among the Hebrews, are not applicable to any ordinary created things, but belong to a secret theology which refers to the Framer of all things. These names, accordingly, when pronounced with that attendant train of circumstances which is appropriate to their nature, are possessed of great power; and other names, again, current in the Egyptian tongue, are efficacious against certain demons who can only do certain things; and other names in the Persian language have corresponding power over other spirits; and so on in every individual nation, for different purposes. And thus it will be found that, of the various demons upon the earth, to whom different localities have been assigned, each one bears a name appropriate to the several dialects of place and country. He, therefore, who has a nobler idea, however small, of these matters, will be careful not to apply differing names to different things; lest he should resemble those who mistakenly apply the name of God to lifeless matter, or who drag down the title of "the Good" from the First Cause, or from virtue and excellence, and apply it to blind Plutus, and to a healthy and well-proportioned mixture of flesh and blood and bones, or to what is considered to be noble birth.[1]

CHAP. XXV.

And perhaps there is a danger as great as that which degrades the name of "God," or of "the Good," to improper objects, in changing the name of God according to a secret system, and applying those which belong to inferior beings to greater, and vice versa. And I do not dwell on this, that when the name of Zeus is uttered, there is heard at the same time that of the son of Kronos and Rhea, and the husband of Hera, and brother of Poseidon, and father of Athene, and Artemis, who was guilty of incest with his own daughter Persephone; or that Apollo immediately suggests the son of Leto and Zeus, and the brother of Artemis, and half-brother of Hermes; and so with all the other names invented by these wise men of Celsus, who are the parents of these opinions, and the ancient theologians of the Greeks. For what are the grounds for deciding that he should on the one hand be properly called Zeus, and yet on the other should not have Kronos for his father and Rhea for his mother? And the same argument applies to all the others that are called gods. But this charge does not at all apply to those who, for some mysterious reason, refer the word Sabaoth, or Adonai, or any of the other names to the (true) God. And when one is able to philosophize about the mystery of names, he will find much to say respecting the titles of the angels of God, of whom one is called Michael, and another Gabriel, and another Raphael, appropriately to the duties which they discharge in the world, according to the will of the God of all things. And a similar philosophy of names applies also to our Jesus, whose name has already been seen, in an unmistakable manner, to have expelled myriads of evil spirits from the souls and bodies (of men), so great was the power which it exerted upon those from whom the spirits were driven out. And while still upon the subject of names, we have to mention that those who are skilled in the use of incantations, relate that the utterance of the same incantation in its proper language can accomplish what the spell professes to do; but when translated into any other tongue, it is observed to become inefficacious and feeble. And thus it is not the things signified, but the qualities and peculiarities of words, which possess a certain power for this or that purpose. And so on such grounds as these we defend the conduct of the Christians, when they struggle even to death to avoid calling God by the name of Zeus, or to give Him a name from any other language. For they either use the common name God indefinitely, or with some such addition as that of the "Maker of all things," "the Creator of heaven and earth" He who sent down to the human race those good men, to whose names that of God being added, certain mighty works are wrought among men. And much more besides might be said on the subject of names, against those who think that we ought to be indifferent as to our use of them. And if the remark of Plato in the Philebus should surprise us, when he says, "My fear, O Protagoras, about the names of the gods is no small one," seeing Philebus in his discussion with Socrates had called pleasure a "god," how shall we not rather approve the piety of the Christians, who apply none of the names used in the mythologies to the Creator of the world? And now enough on this subject for the present.

CHAP. XXVI.

But let us see the manner in which this Celsus, who professes to know everything, brings a false accusation against the Jews, when he alleges that "they worship angels, and are addicted to sorcery, in which Moses was their instructor." Now, in what part of the writings of Moses he found the lawgiver laying down the worship of angels, let him tell, who professes to know all about Christianity and Judaism; and let him show also how sorcery can exist among those who have accepted the Mosaic law, and read the injunction, "Neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them." [1] Moreover, he promises to show afterwards "how it was through ignorance that the Jews were deceived and led into error." Now, if he had discovered that the ignorance of the Jews regarding Christ was the effect of their not having heard the prophecies about Him, he would show with truth how the Jews fell into error. But without any wish whatever that this should appear, he views as Jewish errors what are no errors at all. And Celsus having promised to make us acquainted, in a subsequent part of his work, with the doctrines of Judaism, proceeds in the first place to speak of our Saviour as having been the leader of our generation, in so far as we are Christians, [2] and says that "a few years ago he began to teach this doctrine, being regarded by Christians as the Son of God." Now, with respect to this point His prior existence a few years ago we have to remark as follows. Could it have come to pass without divine assistance, that Jesus, desiring during these years to spread abroad His words and teaching, should have been so successful, that everywhere throughout the world, not a few persons, Greeks as well as Barbarians, learned as well as ignorant, adopted His doctrine, so that they struggled, even to death in its defence, rather than deny it, which no one is ever related to have done for any other system? I indeed, from no wish to flatter [3] Christianity, but from a desire thoroughly to examine the facts, would say that even those who are engaged in the healing of numbers of sick persons, do not attain their object the cure of the body without divine help; and if one were to succeed in delivering souls from a flood of wickedness, and excesses, and acts of injustice, and from a contempt of God, and were to show, as evidence of such a result, one hundred persons improved in their natures (let us suppose the number to be so large), no one would reasonably say that it was without divine assistance that he had implanted in those hundred individuals a doctrine capable of removing so many evils. And if any one, on a candid consideration of these things, shall admit that no improvement ever takes place among men without divine help, how much more confidently shall he make the same assertion regarding Jesus, when he compares the former lives of many converts to His doctrine with their after conduct, and reflects in what acts of licentiousness and injustice and covetousness they formerly indulged, until, as Celsus, and they who think with him, allege, "they were deceived," and accepted a doctrine which, as these individuals assert, is destructive of the life of men; but who, from the time that they adopted it, have become in some way meeker, and more religious, and more consistent, so that certain among them, from a desire of exceeding chastity, and a wish to worship God with greater purity, abstain even from the permitted indulgences of (lawful) love.

CHAP. XXVII.

Any one who examines the subject will see that Jesus attempted and successfully accomplished works beyond the reach of human power. For although, from the very beginning, all things opposed the spread of His doctrine in the world, both the princes of the times, and their chief captains and generals, and all, to speak generally, who were possessed of the smallest influence, and in addition to these, the rulers of the different cities, and the soldiers, and the people, yet it proved victorious, as being the Word of God, the nature of which is such that it cannot be hindered; and becoming more powerful than all such adversaries, it made itself master of the whole of Greece, and a considerable portion of Barbarian lands, and convened countless numbers of souls to His religion. And although, among the multitude of converts to Christianity, the simple and ignorant necessarily outnumbered the more intelligent, as the former class always does the latter, yet Celsus, unwilling to take note of this, thinks that this philanthropic doctrine, which reaches to every soul under the sun, is vulgar, [1] and on account of its vulgarity and its want of reasoning power, obtained a hold only over the ignorant. And yet he himself admits that it was not

the simple alone who were led by the doctrine of Jesus to adopt His religion; for he acknowledges that there were amongst them some persons of moderate intelligence, and gentle disposition, and possessed of understanding, and capable of comprehending allegories.

CHAP. XXVIII.

And since, in imitation of a rhetorician training a pupil, he introduces a Jew, who enters into a personal discussion with Jesus, and speaks in a very childish manner, altogether unworthy of the grey hairs of a philosopher, let me endeavour, to the best of my ability, to examine his statements, and show that he does not maintain, throughout the discussion, the consistency due to the character of a Jew. For he represents him 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." Now, as I cannot allow anything said by unbelievers to remain unexamined, but must investigate everything from the beginning, I give it as my opinion that all these things worthily harmonize with the predictions that Jesus is the Son of God.

CHAP. XXIX.

For birth is an aid towards an individual's becoming famous, and distinguished, and talked about; viz., when a man's parents happen to be in a position of rank and influence, and are possessed of wealth, and are able to spend it upon the education of their son, and when the country of one's birth is great and illustrious; but when a man having all these things against him is able, notwithstanding these hindrances, to make himself known, and to produce an impression on those who hear of him, and to become distinguished and visible to the whole world, which speaks of him as it did not do before, how can we help admiring such a nature as being both noble in itself, and devoting itself to great deeds, and possessing a courage which is not by any means to be despised? And if one were to examine more fully the history of such an individual, why should he not seek to know in what manner, after being reared up in frugality and poverty, and without receiving any complete education, and without having studied systems and opinions by means of which he might have acquired confidence to associate with multitudes, and play the demagogue, and attract to himself many hearers, he nevertheless devoted himself to the teaching of new opinions, introducing among men a doctrine which not only subverted the customs of the Jews, while preserving due respect for their prophets, but which especially overturned the established observances of the Greeks regarding the Divinity? And how could such a person one who had been so brought up, and who, as his calumniators admit, had learned nothing great from men have been able to teach, in a manner not at all to be despised, such doctrines as he did regarding the divine judgment, and the punishments that are to overtake wickedness, and the rewards that are to be conferred upon virtue; so that not only rustic and ignorant individuals were won by his words, but also not a few of those who were distinguished by their wisdom, and who were able to discern the hidden meaning in those more common doctrines, as they were considered, which were in circulation, and which secret meaning enwrapped, so to speak, some more recondite' signification still? The Seriphian, in Plato, who reproaches Themistocles after he had become celebrated for his military skill, saying that his reputation was due not to his own merits, but to his good fortune in having been born in the most illustrious country in Greece, received from the good-natured Athenian, who saw that his native country did contribute to his renown, the following reply: "Neither would I, had I been a Seriphian, have been so distinguished as I am, nor would you have been a Themistocles, even if you had had the good fortune to be an Athenian!" And now, our

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Jesus, who is reproached with being born in a village, and that not a Greek one, nor belonging to any nation widely esteemed, and being despised as the son of a poor labouring woman, and as having on account of his poverty left his native country and hired himself out in Egypt, and being, to use the instance already quoted, not only a Seriphian, as it were, a native of a very small and undistinguished island, but even, so to speak, the meanest of the Seriphians, has yet been able to shake[1] the whole inhabited world not only to a degree far above what Themistocles the Athenian ever did, but beyond what even Pythagoras, or Plato, or any other wise man in any part of the world whatever, or any prince or general, ever succeeded in doing?

CHAP. XXX.

Now, would not any one who investigated with ordinary care the nature of these facts, be struck with amazement at this man's victory? with his complete success in surmounting by his reputation all causes that tended to bring him into disrepute, and with his superiority over all other illustrious individuals in the world? And yet it is a rare thing for distinguished men to succeed in acquiring a reputation for several things at once. For one man is admired on account of his wisdom, another for his military skill, and some of the Barbarians for their marvellous powers of incantation, and some for one quality, and others for another; but not many have been admired and acquired a reputation for many things at the same time; whereas this man, in addition to his other merits, is an object of admiration both for his wisdom, and for his miracles, and for his powers of government. For he persuaded some to withdraw themselves from their laws, and to secede to him, not as a tyrant would do, nor as a robber, who arms[3] his followers against men; nor as a rich man, who bestows help upon those who come to him; nor as one of those who confessedly are deserving of censure; but as a teacher of the doctrine regarding the God of all things, and of the worship which belongs to Him, and of all moral precepts which are able to secure the favour of the Supreme God to him who orders his life in conformity therewith. Now, to Themistocles, or to any other man of distinction, nothing happened to prove a hindrance to their reputation; whereas to this man, besides what we have already enumerated, and which are enough to cover with dishonour the soul of a man even of the most noble nature, there was that apparently infamous death of crucifixion, which was enough to efface his previously acquired glory, and to lead those who, as they who disavow his doctrine assert, were formerly deluded by him to abandon their delusion, and to pass condemnation upon their deceiver.

CHAP. XXXI.

And besides this, one may well wonder how it happened that the disciples if, as the calumniators of Jesus say, they did not see Him after His resurrection from the dead, and were not persuaded of His divinity were not afraid to endure the same sufferings with their Master, and to expose themselves to danger, and to leave their native country to teach, according to the desire of Jesus, the doctrine delivered to them by Him. For I think that no one who candidly examines the facts would say that these men devoted themselves to a life of danger for the sake of the doctrine of Jesus, without profound belief which He had wrought in their minds of its truth, not only teaching them to conform to His precepts, but others also, and to conform, moreover, when manifest destruction to life impended over him who ventured to introduce these new opinions into all places and before all audiences, and who could retain as his friend no human being who adhered to the former opinions and usages. For did not the disciples of Jesus see, when they ventured to prove not only to the Jews from their prophetic Scriptures that this is He who was spoken of by the prophets, but also to the other heathen nations, that He who was crucified yesterday or the day before underwent this death voluntarily on behalf of the human race, that this was analogous to the case of those who have died for their country in order to remove pestilence, or barrenness, or tempests? For it is probable that there is in the nature of things, for certain mysterious tea-sons which are difficult to be understood by the multitude, such a virtue that one just man, dying a voluntary death for the common good, might be the means of removing wicked spirits, which are the cause of plagues, or barrenness, or tempests, or similar calamities. Let those, therefore, who would disbelieve the statement that Jesus died on the cross on behalf of men,

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say whether they also refuse to accept the many accounts current both among Greeks and Barbarians, of persons who have laid down their lives for the public advantage, in order to remove those evils which had fallen upon cities and countries? Or will they say that such events actually happened, but that no credit is to be attached to that account which makes this so-called man to have died to ensure the destruction of a mighty evil spirit, the ruler of evil spirits, who had held in subjection the souls of all men upon earth? And the disciples of Jesus, seeing this and much more (which, it is probable, they learned from Jesus in private), and being filled, moreover, with a divine power (since it was no mere poetical virgin that endowed them with strength and courage, but the true wisdom and understanding of God), exerted all their efforts "to become distinguished among all men," not only among the Argives, but among all the Greeks and Barbarians alike, and "so bear away for themselves a glorious renown." [1]

CHAP. XXXII.

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;" and let us see whether those who have blindly concocted these fables about the adultery of the Virgin with Panthera, and her rejection by the carpenter, did not invent these stories to overturn His miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost: for they could have falsified the history in a different manner, on account of its extremely miraculous character, and not have admitted, as it were against their will, that Jesus was born of no ordinary human marriage. It was to be expected, indeed, that those who would not believe the miraculous birth of Jesus would invent some falsehood. And their not doing this in a credible manner, but (their) preserving the fact that it was not by Joseph that the Virgin conceived Jesus, rendered the falsehood very palpable to those who can understand and detect such inventions. Is it at all agreeable to reason, that he who dared to do so much for the human race, in order that, as far as in him lay, all the Greeks and Barbarians, who were looking for divine condemnation, might depart from evil, and regulate their entire conduct in a manner pleasing to the Creator of the world, should not have had a miraculous birth, but one the vilest and most disgraceful of all? And I will ask of them as Greeks, and particularly of Celsus, who either holds or not the sentiments of Plato, and at any rate quotes them, whether He who sends souls down into the bodies of men, degraded Him who was to dare such mighty acts, and to teach so many men, and to reform so many from the mass of wickedness in the world, to a birth more disgraceful than any other, and did not rather introduce Him into the world through a lawful marriage? Or is it not more in conformity with reason, that every soul, for certain mysterious reasons (I speak now according to the opinion of Pythagoras, and Plato, and Empedocles, whom Celsus frequently names), is introduced into a body, and introduced according to its deserts and former actions? It is probable, therefore, that this soul also, which conferred more benefit by its residence in the flesh than that of many men (to avoid prejudice, I do not say "all"), stood in need of a body not only superior to others, but invested with all excellent qualities.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Now if a particular soul, for certain mysterious reasons, is not deserving of being placed in the body of a wholly irrational being, nor yet in that of one purely rational, but is clothed with a monstrous body, so that reason cannot discharge its functions in one so fashioned, which has the head disproportioned to the other parts, and altogether too short; and another receives such a body that the soul is a little more rational than the other; and another still more so, the nature of the body counteracting to a greater or less degree the reception of the reasoning principle; why should there not be also some soul which receives an altogether miraculous body, possessing some qualities common to those of other men, so that it may be able to pass through life with them, but possessing also some quality of superiority, so that the soul may be able to remain untainted by sin? And if there be any truth in the doctrine of the physiognomists, whether Zopyrus, or Loxus, or Polemon, or any other who wrote on such a subject, and who profess to know in some wonderful way that all bodies are adapted to the habits of the souls,

must there have been for that soul which was to dwell with miraculous power among men, and work mighty deeds, a body produced, as Celsus thinks, by an act of adultery between Panthera and the Virgin?! Why, from such unhallowed intercourse there must rather have been brought forth some fool to do injury to mankind, a teacher of licentiousness and wickedness, and other evils; and not of temperance, and righteousness, and the other virtues!

CHAP. XXXIV.

But it was, as the prophets also predicted, from a virgin that there was to be born, according to the promised sign, one who was to give His name to the fact, showing that at His birth God was to be with man. Now it seems to me appropriate to the character of a Jew to have quoted the prophecy of Isaiah, which says that Immanuel was to be born of a virgin. This, however, Celsus, who professes to know everything, has not done, either from ignorance or from an unwillingness (if he had read it and voluntarily passed it by in silence) to furnish an argument which might defeat his purpose. And the prediction runs thus: "And the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the RD thy God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us." [1] And that it was from intentional malice that Celsus did not quote this prophecy, is clear to me from this, that although he makes numerous quotations from the Gospel according to Matthew, as of the star that appeared at the birth of Christ, and other miraculous occurrences, he has made no mention at all of this. Now, if a Jew should split words, and say that the words are not, "Lo, a virgin," but, "Lo, a young woman," [3] we reply that the word "Olmah" which the Septuagint have rendered by "a virgin," and others by "a young woman" occurs, as they say, in Deuteronomy, as applied to a "virgin," in the following connection: "If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, [3] because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he humbled his neighbour's wife." [4] And again: "But if a man find a betrothed damsel in a field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die: but unto the damsel [5] ye shall do nothing; there is in her no sin worthy of death."

CHAP. XXXV.

But that we may not seem, because of a Hebrew word, to endeavour to persuade those who are unable to determine whether they ought to believe it or not, that the prophet spoke of this man being born of a virgin, because at his birth these words, "God with us," were uttered, let us make good our point from the words themselves. The Lord is related to have spoken to Ahaz thus: "Ask a sign for thyself from the LORD thy God, either in the depth or height above;" [6] and afterwards the sign is given, Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." [7] What kind of sign, then, would that have been a young woman who was not a virgin giving birth to a child? And which of the two is the more appropriate as the mother of Immanuel (i.e., "God with us"), whether a woman who has had intercourse with a man, and who has conceived after the manner of women, or one who is still a pure and holy virgin? Surely it is appropriate only to the latter to produce a being at whose birth it is said, "God with us." And should he be so captious as to say that it is to Ahaz that the command is addressed, "Ask for thyself a sign from the LORD thy God," we shall ask in return, who in the times of Ahaz bore a son at whose birth the expression is made use of, "Immanuel," i.e., "God with us?" And if no one can be found, then manifestly what was said to Ahaz was said to the house of David, because it is written that the Saviour was born of the house of David according to the flesh; and this sign is said to be "in the depth or in the height," since "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." [8] And these arguments I employ as against a Jew who believes in prophecy. Let Celsus now tell me, or any of those who think with him,

with what meaning the prophet utters either these statements about the future, or the others which are contained in the prophecies? Is it with any foresight of the future or not? If with a foresight of the future, then the prophets were divinely inspired; if with no foresight of the future, let him explain the meaning of one who speaks thus boldly regarding the future, and who is an object of admiration among the Jews because of his prophetic powers.

CHAP. XXXVI.

And now, since we have touched upon the subject of the prophets, what we are about to advance will be useful not only to the Jews, who believe that they spake by divine inspiration, but also to the more candid among the Greeks. To these we say that we must necessarily admit that the Jews had prophets, if they were to be kept together under that system of law which had been given them, and were to believe in the Creator of the world, as they had learned, and to be without pretexts, so far as the law was concerned, for apostatizing to the polytheism of the heathen. And we establish this necessity in the following manner. "For the nations," as it is written in the law of the Jews itself, "shall hearken unto observers of times, and diviners;"[1] but to that people it is said: "But as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do." [1] And to this is subjoined the promise: "A prophet shall the LORD thy God raise up unto thee from among thy brethren." [2] Since, therefore, the heathen employ modes of divination either by oracles or by omens, or by birds, or by ventriloquists, or by those who profess the art of sacrifice, or by Chaldean genealogists all which practices were forbidden to the Jews this people, if they had no means of attaining a knowledge of futurity, being led by the passion common to humanity of ascertaining the future would have despised their own prophets, as not having in them any particle of divinity; and would not have accepted any prophet after Moses, nor committed their words to writing, but would have spontaneously betaken themselves to the divining usages of the heathen, or attempted to establish some such practices amongst themselves. There is therefore no absurdity in their prophets having uttered predictions even about events of no importance, to soothe those who desire such things, as when Samuel prophesies regarding three she-asses which were lost,[3] or when mention is made in the third book of Kings respecting the sickness of a king's son.[4] And why should not those who desired to obtain auguries from idols be severely rebuked by the administrators of the law among the Jews? as Elijah is found rebuking Ahaziah, and saying, "Is it because there is not a God in Israel that ye go to inquire of Baalzebub, god of Ekron?"

CHAP. XXXVII.

I think, then, that it has been pretty well established not only that our Saviour was to be born of a virgin, but also that there were prophets among the Jews who uttered not merely general predictions about the future, as, e.g., regarding Christ and the kingdoms of the world, and the events that were to happen to Israel, and those nations which were to believe on the Saviour, and many other things concerning Him, but also prophecies respecting particular events; as, for instance, how the asses of Kish, which were lost, were to be discovered, and regarding the sickness which had fallen upon the son of the king of Israel, and any other recorded circumstance of a similar kind. But as a further answer to the Greeks, who do not believe in the birth of Jesus from a virgin, we have to say that the Creator has shown, by the generation of several kinds of animals, that what He has done in the instance of one animal, He could do, if it pleased Him, in that of others, and also of man himself. For it is ascertained that there is a certain female animal which has no intercourse with the male (as writers on animals say is the case with vultures), and that this animal, without sexual intercourse, preserves the succession of race. What incredibility, therefore, is there in supposing that, if God wished to send a divine teacher to the human race, He caused Him to be born in some manner different from the common! [6] Nay, according to the Greeks themselves, all men were not born of a man and woman. For if the world has been created, as many even of the Greeks are pleased to admit, then the first men must have been produced not from sexual intercourse, but from the earth, in which spermatic elements existed; which, however, I consider more incredible than that Jesus was born like other men, so far as regards the half of his birth. And there is no absurdity in employing Grecian histories to answer Greeks, with the

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view of showing that we are not the only persons who have recourse to miraculous narratives of this kind. For some have thought fit, not in regard to ancient and heroic narratives, but in regard to events of very recent occurrence, to relate as a possible thing that Plato was the son of Amphictione, Ariston being prevented from having marital intercourse with his wife until she had given birth to him with whom she was pregnant by Apollo. And yet these are veritable fables, which have led to the invention of such stories concerning a man whom they regarded as possessing greater wisdom and power than the multitude, and as having received the beginning of his corporeal substance from better and diviner elements than others, because they thought that this was appropriate to persons who were too great to be human beings. And since Celsus has introduced the Jew disputing with Jesus, and tearing in pieces, as he imagines, the fiction of His birth from a virgin, comparing the Greek fables about Danae, and Melanippe, and Auge, and Antiope, our answer is, that such language becomes a buffoon, and not one who is writing in a serious tone.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

But, moreover, taking the history, contained in the Gospel according to Matthew, of our Lord's descent into Egypt, he refuses to believe the miraculous circumstances attending it, viz., either that the angel gave the divine intimation, or that our Lord's quitting Judea and residing in Egypt was an event of any significance; but he invents something altogether different, admitting somehow the miraculous works done by Jesus, by means of which He induced the multitude to follow Him as the Christ. And yet he desires to throw discredit on them, as being done by help of magic and not by divine power; for he asserts "that he (Jesus), having been brought up as an illegitimate child, and having served for hire in Egypt, and then coming to the knowledge of certain miraculous powers, returned from thence to his own country, and by means of those powers proclaimed himself a god." Now I do not understand how a magician should exert himself to teach a doctrine which persuades us always to act as if God were to judge every man for his deeds; and should have trained his disciples, whom he was to employ as the ministers of his doctrine, in the same belief. For did the latter make an impression upon their hearers, after they had been so taught to work miracles; or was it without the aid of these? The assertion, therefore, that they did no miracles at all, but that, after yielding their belief to arguments which were not at all convincing, like the wisdom of Grecian dialectics,[1] they gave themselves up to the task of teaching the new doctrine to those persons among whom they happened to take up their abode, is altogether absurd. For in what did they place their confidence when they taught the doctrine and disseminated the new opinions? But if they indeed wrought miracles, then how can it be believed that magicians exposed themselves to such hazards to introduce a doctrine which forbade the practice of magic?

CHAP. XXXIX.

I do not think it necessary to grapple with an argument advanced not in a serious but in a scoffing spirit, such as the following: "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;" or, "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." And it is in the same scoffing spirit that he adds: "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." In what respect does such language differ from that of those who pour abuse on others on the public streets, and whose words are unworthy of any serious attention?

CHAP. XL.

After these assertions, he takes from the Gospel of Matthew, and perhaps also from the other Gospels, the

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account of the dove alighting upon our Saviour at His baptism by John, and desires to throw discredit upon the statement, alleging that the narrative is a fiction. Having completely disposed, as he imagined, of the story of our Lord's birth from a virgin, he does not proceed to deal in an orderly manner with the accounts that follow it; since passion and hatred observe no order, but angry and vindictive men slander those whom they hate, as the feeling comes upon them, being prevented by their passion from arranging their accusations on a careful and orderly plan. For if he had observed a proper arrangement, he would have taken up the Gospel, and, with the view of assailing it, would have objected to the first narrative, then passed on to the second, and so on to the others. But now, after the birth from a virgin, this Celsus, who professes to be acquainted with all our history, attacks the account of the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the baptism. He then, after that, tries to throw discredit upon the prediction that our Lord was to come into the world. In the next place, he runs away to what immediately follows the narrative of the birth of Jesus the account of the star, and of the wise men who came from the east to worship the child. And you yourself may find, if you take the trouble, many confused statements made by Celsus throughout his whole book; so that even in this account he may, by those who know how to observe and require an orderly method of arrangement, be convicted of great rashness and boasting, in having inscribed upon his work the title of A True Discourse, a thing which is never done by a learned philosopher. For Plato says, that it is not an indication of an intelligent man to make strong assertions respecting those matters which are somewhat uncertain; and the celebrated Chrysippus even, who frequently states the reasons by which he is decided, refers us to those whom we shall find to be abler speakers than himself. This man, however, who is wiser than those already named, and than all the other Greeks, agreeably to his assertion of being acquainted with everything, inscribed upon his book the words, A True Discourse!

CHAP. XLI.

But, that we may not have the appearance of intentionally passing by his charges through inability to refute them, we have resolved to answer each one of them separately according to our ability, attending not to the connection and sequence of the nature of the things themselves, but to the arrangement of the subjects as they occur in this book. Let us therefore notice what he has to say by way of impugning the bodily appearance of the Holy Spirit to our Saviour in the form of a dove. 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." And then this same Jew of his, continuing his interrogations, asks, "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?"

CHAP. XLII.

Before we begin our reply, we have to remark that the endeavour to show, with regard to almost any history, however true, that it actually occurred, and to produce an intelligent conception regarding it, is one of the most difficult undertakings that can be attempted, and is in some instances an impossibility. For suppose that some one were to assert that there never had been any Trojan war, chiefly on account of the impossible narrative interwoven therewith, about a certain Achilles being the son of a sea-goddess Thetis and of a man Peleus, or Sarpedon being the son of Zeus, or Ascalaphus and Ialmenus the sons of Ares, or Aeneas that of Aphrodite, how should we prove that such was the case, especially under the weight of the fiction attached, I know not how, to the universally prevalent opinion that there was really a war in Ilium between Greeks and Trojans? And suppose, also, that some one disbelieved the story of Oedipus and Jocasta, and of their two sons Eteocles and Polynices, because the sphinx, a kind of half-virgin, was introduced into the narrative, how should we demonstrate the reality of such a thing? And in like manner also with the history of the Epigoni, although there is no such marvellous event interwoven with it, or with the return of the Heracleidae, or countless other historical events. But he who deals

candidly with histories, and would wish to keep himself also from being imposed upon by them, will exercise his judgment as to what statements he will give his assent to, and what he will accept figuratively, seeking to discover the meaning of the authors of such inventions, and from what statements he will withhold his belief, as having been written for the gratification of certain individuals. And we have said this by way of anticipation respecting the whole history related in the Gospels concerning Jesus, not as inviting men of acuteness to a simple and unreasoning faith, but wishing to show that there is need of candour in those who are to read, and of much investigation, and, so to speak, of insight into the meaning of the writers, that the object with which each event has been recorded may be discovered.

CHAP. XLIII.

We shall therefore say, in the first place, that if he who disbelieves the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove had been described as an Epicurean, or a follower of Democritus, or a Peripatetic, the statement would have been in keeping with the character of such an objector. But now even this Celsus, wisest of all men, did not perceive that it is to a Jew, who believes more incredible things contained in the writings of the prophets than the narrative of the appearance of the dove, that he attributes such an objection! For one might say to the Jew, when expressing his disbelief of the appearance, and thinking to assail it as a fiction, "How are you able to prove, sir, that the Lord spake to Adam, or to Eve, or to Cain, or to Noah, or to Abraham, or to Isaac, or to Jacob, those words which He is recorded to have spoken to these men?" And, to compare history with history, I would say to the Jew, "Even your own Ezekiel writes, saying, 'The heavens were opened, and I saw a vision of God.' After relating which, he adds, 'This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD; and He said to me,'"[2] etc. Now, if what is related of Jesus be false, since we cannot, as you suppose, clearly prove it to be true, it being seen or heard by Himself alone, and, as you appear to have observed, also by one of those who were punished, why should we not rather say that Ezekiel also was dealing in the marvellous when he said, "The heavens were opened," etc.? Nay, even Isaiah asserts, "I saw the Lord of hosts sitting on a throne, high and lifted up; and the seraphim stood round about it: the one had six wings, and the other had six wings." [3] How can we tell whether he really saw them or not? Now, O Jew, you have believed these visions to be true, and to have been not only shown to the prophet by a diviner Spirit, but also to have been both spoken and recorded by the same. And who is the more worthy of belief, when declaring that the heavens were opened before him, and that he heard a voice, or beheld the Lord of Sabaoth sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, whether Isaiah and Ezekiel or Jesus? Of the former, indeed, no work has been found equal to those of the latter; whereas the good deeds of Jesus have not been confined solely to the period of His tabernacling in the flesh, but up to the present time His power still produces conversion and amelioration of life in those who believe in God through Him. And a manifest proof that these things are done by His power, is the fact that, although, as He Himself said, and as is admitted, there are not labourers enough to gather in the harvest of souls, there really is nevertheless such a great harvest of those who are gathered together and conveyed into the everywhere existing threshing-floors and Churches of God.

CHAP. XLIV.

And with these arguments I answer the Jew, not disbelieving, I who am a Christian, Ezekiel and Isaiah, but being very desirous to show, on the footing of our common belief, that this man is far more worthy of credit than they are when He says that He beheld such a sight, and, as is probable, related to His disciples the vision which He saw, and told them of the voice which He heard. But another party might object, that not all those who have narrated the appearance of the dove and the voice from heaven heard the accounts of these things from Jesus, but that that Spirit which taught Moses the history of events before his own time, beginning with the creation, and descending down to Abraham his father, taught also the writers of the Gospel the miraculous occurrence which took place at the time of Jesus' baptism. And he who is adorned with the spiritual gift,[1] called the "word of wisdom," will explain also the reason of the heavens opening, and the dove appearing, and why the Holy Spirit

appeared to Jesus in the form of no other living thing than that of a dove. But our present subject does not require us to explain this, our purpose being to show that Celsus displayed no sound judgment in representing a Jew as disbelieving, on such grounds, a fact which has greater probability in its favour than many events in which he firmly reposes confidence.

CHAP. XLV.

And I remember on one occasion, at a disputation held with certain Jews who were reputed learned men, having employed the following argument in the presence of many judges: "Tell me, sirs," I said, "since there are two individuals who have visited the human race, regarding whom are related marvellous works surpassing human power Moses, viz., your own legislator, who wrote about himself, and Jesus our teacher, who has left no writings regarding Himself, but to whom testimony is borne by the disciples in the Gospels what are the grounds for deciding that Moses is to be believed as speaking the truth, although the Egyptians slander him as a sorcerer, and as appearing to have wrought his mighty works by jugglery, while Jesus is not to be believed because you are His accusers? And yet there are nations which bear testimony in favour of both: the Jews to Moses; and the Christians, who do not deny the prophetic mission of Moses, but proving from that very source the truth of the statement regarding Jesus, accept as true the miraculous circumstances related of Him by His disciples. Now, if ye ask us for the reasons of our faith in Jesus, give yours first for believing in Moses, who lived before Him, and then we shall give you ours for accepting the latter. But if you draw back, and shirk a demonstration, then we, following your own example, decline for the present to offer any demonstration likewise; Nevertheless, admit that ye have no proof to offer for Moses, and then listen to our defence of Jesus derived from the law and the prophets. And now observe what is almost incredible! It is shown from the declarations concerning Jesus, contained in the law and the prophets, that both Moses and the prophets were truly prophets of God."

CHAP. XLVI.

For the law and the prophets are full of marvels similar to those recorded of Jesus at His baptism, viz., regarding the dove and the voice from heaven. And I think the wonders wrought by Jesus are a proof of the Holy Spirit's having then appeared in the form of a dove, although Celsus, from a desire to cast discredit upon them, alleges that He performed only what He had learned among the Egyptians. And I shall refer not only to His miracles, but, as is proper, to those also of the apostles of Jesus. For they could not without the help of miracles and wonders have prevailed on those who heard their new doctrines and new teachings to abandon their national usages, and to accept their instructions at the danger to themselves even of death. And there are still preserved among Christians traces of that Holy Spirit which appeared in the form of a dove. They expel evil spirits, and perform many cures, and foresee certain events, according to the will of the Logos. And although Celsus, or the Jew whom he has introduced, may treat with mockery what I am going to say, I shall say it nevertheless, that many have been converted to Christianity as if against their will, some sort of spirit having suddenly transformed their minds from a hatred of the doctrine to a readiness to die in its defence, and having appeared to them either in a waking vision or a dream of the night. Many such instances have we known, which, if we were to commit to writing, although they were seen and witnessed by ourselves, we should afford great occasion for ridicule to unbelievers, who would imagine that we, like those whom they suppose to have invented such things, had ourselves also done the same. But God is witness of our conscientious desire, not by false statements, but by testimonies of different kinds, to establish the divinity of the doctrine of Jesus. And as it is a Jew who is perplexed about the account of the Holy Spirit having descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, we would say to him, "Sir, who is it that says in Isaiah, 'And now the Lord hath sent me and His Spirit?'[1] In which sentence, as the meaning is doubtful viz., whether the Father and the Holy Spirit sent Jesus, or the Father sent both Christ and the Holy Spirit the latter is correct. For, because the Saviour was sent, afterwards the Holy Spirit was sent also, that the prediction of the prophet might be fulfilled; and as it was necessary that the fulfilment of the prophecy should be known to

posterity, the disciples of Jesus for that reason committed the result to writing.

CHAP. XLVII.

I would like to say to Celsus, who represents the Jew as accepting somehow John as a Baptist, who baptized Jesus, that the existence of John the Baptist, baptizing for the remission of sins, is related by one who lived no great length of time after John and Jesus. For in the 18th book of his Antiquities[2] of the Jews, Josephus bears witness to John as having been a Baptist, and as promising purification to those who underwent the rite. Now this writer, although not believing in Jesus as the Christ, in seeking after the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, whereas he ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people, since they put to death Christ, who was a prophet, says nevertheless being, although against his will, not far from the truth that these disasters happened to the Jews as a punishment for the death of James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus (called Christ), the Jews having put him to death, although he was a man most distinguished for his justice.[3] Paul, a genuine disciple of Jesus, says that he regarded this James as a brother of the Lord, not so much on account of their relationship by blood, or of their being brought up together, as because of his virtue and doctrine.[4] If, then, he says that it was on account of James that the desolation of Jerusalem was made to overtake the Jews, how should it not be more in accordance with reason to say that it happened on account (of the death) of Jesus Christ, of whose divinity so many Churches are witnesses, composed of those who have been convened from a flood of sins, and who have joined themselves to the Creator, and who refer all their actions to His good pleasure.

CHAP. XLVIII.

Although the Jew, then, may offer no defence for himself in the instances of Ezekiel and Isaiah, when we compare the opening of the heavens to Jesus; and the voice that was heard by Him, to the similar cases which we find recorded in Ezekiel and Isaiah, or any other of the prophets, we nevertheless, so far as we can, shall support our position, maintaining that, as it is a matter of belief that in a dream impressions have been brought before the minds of many, some relating to divine things, and others to future events of this life, and this either with clearness or in an enigmatic manner, a fact which is manifest to all who accept the doctrine of providence; so how is it absurd to say that the mind which could receive impressions in a dream should be impressed also in a waking vision, for the benefit either of him on whom the impressions are made, or of those who are to hear the account of them from him? And as in a dream we fancy that we hear, and that the organs of hearing are actually impressed, and that we see with our eyes although neither the bodily organs of sight nor hearing are affected, but it is the mind alone which has these sensations so there is no absurdity in believing that similar things occurred to the prophets, when it is recorded that they witnessed occurrences of a rather wonderful kind, as when they either heard the words of the Lord or beheld the heavens opened. For I do not suppose that the visible heaven was actually opened, and its physical structure divided, in order that Ezekiel might be able to record such an occurrence. Should not, therefore, the same be believed of the Saviour by every intelligent hearer of the Gospels? although such an occurrence may be a stumbling-block to the simple, who in their simplicity would set the whole world in movement, and split in sunder the compact and mighty body of the whole heavens. But he who examines such matters more profoundly will say, that there being, as the Scripture calls it, a kind of general divine perception which the blessed man alone knows how to discover, according to the saying of Solomon, "Thou shall find the knowledge of God;"[5] and as there are various forms of this perceptive power, such as a faculty of vision which can naturally see things that are better than bodies, among which are ranked the cherubim and seraphim; and a faculty of hearing which can perceive voices which have not their being in the air; and a sense of taste which can make use of living bread that has come down from heaven, and that giveth life unto the world; and so also a sense of smelling, which scents such things as leads Paul to say that he is a sweet savour of Christ unto God:[1] and a sense of touch, by which John says that he "handled with his hands of the Word of

life;"[2] the blessed prophets having discovered this divine perception, and seeing and hearing in this divine manner, and tasting likewise, and smelling, so to speak, with no sensible organs of perception, and laying hold on the Logos by faith, so that a healing effluence from it comes upon them, saw in this manner what they record as having seen, and heard what they say they heard, and were affected in a similar manner to what they describe when eating the roll of a book that was given them.[3] And so also Isaac smelled the savour of his son's divine garments,[4] and added to the spiritual blessing these words: "See, the savour of my son is as the savour of a full field which the LORD blessed." [5] And similarly to this, and more as a matter to be understood by the mind than to be perceived by the senses, Jesus touched the leper,[6] to cleanse him, as I think, in a twofold sense, freeing him not only, as the multitude heard, from the visible leprosy by visible contact, but also from that other leprosy, by His truly divine touch. It is in this way, accordingly, that John testifies when he says, "I beheld the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said to me, Upon whom you will see the Spirit descending, and abiding on Him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost And I saw, and bear witness, that this is the Son of God." [7] Now it was to Jesus that the heavens were opened; and on that occasion no one except John is recorded to have seen them opened. But with respect to this opening of the heavens, the Saviour, foretelling to His disciples that it would happen, and that they would see it, says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." [8] And so Paul was carried away into the third heaven, having previously seen it opened, since he was a disciple of Jesus. It does not, however, belong to our present object to explain why Paul says, "Whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not: God knoweth." [9] But I shall add to my argument even those very points which Celsus imagines, viz., that Jesus Himself related the account of the opening of the heavens, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him at the Jordan in the form of a dove, although the Scripture does not assert that He said that He saw it. For this great man did not perceive that it was not in keeping with Him who commanded His disciples on the occasion of the vision on the mount, "Tell what ye have seen to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead," [10] to have related to His disciples what was seen and heard by John at the Jordan. For it may be observed as a trait of the character of Jesus, that He on all occasions avoided unnecessary talk about Himself; and on that account said, "If I speak of Myself, My witness is not true." [11] And since He avoided unnecessary talk about Himself, and preferred to show by acts rather than words that He was the Christ, the Jews for that reason said to Him, "If Thou art the Christ, tell us plainly." [12] And as it is a Jew who, in the work of Celsus, uses the language to Jesus regarding the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, "This is your own testimony, unsupported save by one of those who were sharers of your punishment, whom you adduce," it is necessary for us to show him that such a statement is not appropriately placed in the mouth of a Jew. For the Jews do not connect John with Jesus, nor the punishment of John with that of Christ. And by this instance, this man who boasts of universal knowledge is convicted of not knowing what words he ought to ascribe to a Jew engaged in a disputation with Jesus.

CHAP. XLIX.

After this he wilfully sets aside, I know not why, the strongest evidence in confirmation of the claims of Jesus, viz., that His coming was predicted by the Jewish prophets Moses, and those who succeeded as well as preceded that legislator from inability, as I think, to meet the argument that neither the Jews nor any other heretical sect refuse to believe that Christ was the subject of prophecy. But perhaps he was unacquainted with the prophecies relating to Christ. For no one who was acquainted with the statements of the Christians, that many prophets foretold the advent of the Saviour, would have ascribed to a Jew sentiments which it would have better befitted a Samaritan or a Sadducee to utter; nor would the Jew in the dialogue have expressed himself in language like the following: "But my prophet once declared in Jerusalem, that the Son of God will come as the Judge of the righteous and the Punisher of the wicked." Now it is not one of the prophets merely who predicted the advent of Christ. But although the Samaritans and Sadducees, who receive the books of Moses alone, would say that there were contained in them predictions regarding Christ, yet certainly not in Jerusalem, which is not even mentioned in the times of Moses, was the prophecy uttered. It were indeed to be desired, that all the accusers of Christianity

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were equally ignorant with Celsus, not only of the facts, but of the bare letter of Scripture, and would so direct their assaults against it, that their arguments might not have the least available influence in shaking, I do not say the faith, but the little faith of unstable and temporary believers. A Jew, however, would not admit that any prophet used the expression, "The ' Son of God' will come;" for the term which they employ is, "The 'Christ of God' will come." And many a time indeed do they directly interrogate us about the "Son of God," saying that no such being exists, or was made the subject of prophecy. We do not of course assert that the "Son of God" is not the subject of prophecy; but we assert that he most inappropriately attributes to the Jewish disputant, who would not allow that He was, such language as, "My prophet once declared in Jerusalem that the ' Son of God' will come."

CHAP. L.

In the next place, as if the only event predicted were this, that He was to be "the Judge of the righteous and the Punisher of the wicked," and as if neither the place of His birth, nor the sufferings which He was to endure at the hands of the Jews, nor His resurrection, nor the wonderful works which He was to perform, had been made the subject of prophecy, he continues "Why should it be you alone, rather than innumerable others, who existed after the prophecies were published, to whom these predictions are applicable?" And desiring, I know not how, to suggest to others the possibility of the notion that they themselves were the persons referred to by the prophets, he says that "some, carried away by enthusiasm, and others having gathered a multitude of followers, give out that the Son of God is come down from heaven." Now we have not ascertained that such occurrences are admitted to have taken place among the Jews. we have to remark then, in the first place, that many of the prophets have uttered predictions! in all kinds of ways[1] regarding Christ; some by means of dark sayings, others in allegories or in some other manner, and some also in express words. And as in what follows he says, in the character of the Jew addressing the converts from his own nation, and repeating emphatically and malevolently, that "the prophecies referred to the events of his life may also suit other events as well," we shall state a few of them out of a greater number; and with respect to these, any one who chooses may say what he thinks fitted to ensure a refutation of them, and which may turn away intelligent believers from the faith.

CHAP. LI.

Now the Scripture speaks, respecting the place of the Saviour's birth that the Ruler was to come forth from Bethlehem in the following manner: "And thou Bethlehem, house of Ephrata, art not the least among the thousands of Judah: for out of thee shall He come forth unto Me who is to be Ruler in Israel; and His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." [2] Now this prophecy could not suit any one of those who, as Celsus' Jew says, were fanatics and mob-leaders, and who gave out that they had come from heaven, unless it were clearly shown that He had been born in Bethlehem, or, as another might say, had come forth from Bethlehem to be the leader of the people. With respect to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, if any one desires, after the prophecy of Micah and after the history recorded in the Gospels by the disciples of Jesus, to have additional evidence from other sources, let him know that, in conformity with the narrative in the Gospel regarding His birth, there is shown at Bethlehem the cave [3] where He was born, and the manger in the cave where He was wrapped in swaddling-clothes. And this sight is greatly talked of in surrounding places, even among the enemies of the faith, it being said that in this cave was born that Jesus who is worshipped and revered by the Christians. [4] Moreover, I am of opinion that, before the advent of Christ, the chief priests and scribes of the people, on account of the distinctness and clearness of this prophecy, taught that in Bethlehem the Christ was to be born. And this opinion had prevailed also extensively among the Jews; for which reason it is related that Herod, on inquiring at the chief priests and scribes of the people, heard from them that the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea, "whence David was." It is stated also in the Gospel according to John, that the Jews declared that the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, "whence David was." [1] But after our Lord's coming, those who busied themselves with

overthrowing the belief that the place of His birth had been the subject of prophecy from the beginning, withheld such teaching from the people; acting in a similar manner to those individuals who won over those soldiers of the guard stationed around the tomb who had seen Him arise from the dead, and who instructed these eye-witnesses to report as follows: "Say that His disciples, while we slept, came and stole Him away. And if this come to the governor's ears, we shall persuade him, and secure you." [2]

CHAP. LII.

Strife and prejudice are powerful instruments in leading men to disregard even those things which are abundantly clear; so that they who have somehow become familiar with certain opinions, which have deeply imbued their minds, and stamped them with a certain character, will not give them up. For a man will abandon his habits in respect to other things, although it may be difficult for him to tear himself from them, more easily than he will surrender his opinions. Nay, even the former are not easily put aside by those who have become accustomed to them; and so neither houses, nor cities, nor villages, nor intimate acquaintances, are willingly forsaken when we are prejudiced in their favour. This, therefore, was a reason why many of the Jews at that time disregarded the clear testimony of the prophecies, and miracles which Jesus wrought, and of the sufferings which He is related to have endured. And that human nature is thus affected, will be manifest to those who observe that those who have once been prejudiced in favour of the most contemptible and paltry traditions of their ancestors and fellow-citizens, with difficulty lay them aside. For example, no one could easily persuade an Egyptian to despise what he had learned from his fathers, so as no longer to consider this or that irrational animal as a god, or not to guard against eating, even under the penalty of death, of the flesh of such an animal. Now, if in carrying our examination of this subject to a considerable length, we have enumerated the points respecting Bethlehem, and the prophecy regarding it, we consider that we were obliged to do this, by way of defence against those who would assert that if the prophecies current among the Jews I regarding Jesus were so clear as we represent them, why did they not at His coming give in their adhesion to His doctrine, and betake them selves to the better life pointed out by Him? Let no one, however, bring such a reproach against believers, since he may see that reasons of no light weight are assigned by those who have learned to state them, for their faith in Jesus.

CHAP. LIII.

And if we should ask for a second prophecy, which may appear to us to have a clear reference to Jesus, we would quote that which was written by Moses very many years before the advent of Christ, when he makes Jacob, on his departure from this life, to have uttered predictions regarding each of his sons, and to have said of Judah along with the others: "The ruler will not fail from Judah, and the governor from his loins, until that which is reserved for him come." [3] Now, any one meeting with this prophecy, which is in reality much older than Moses, so that one who was not a believer might suspect that it was not written by him, would be surprised that Moses should be able to predict that the princes of the Jews, seeing there are among them twelve tribes, should be born of the tribe of Judah, and should be the rulers of the people; for which reason also the whole nation are called Jews, deriving their name from the ruling tribe. And, in the second place, one who candidly considers the prophecy, would be surprised how, after declaring that the rulers and governors of the people were to proceed from the tribe of Judah, he should determine also the limit of their rule, saying that "the ruler should not fail from Judah, nor the governor from his loins, until there should come that which was reserved for him, and that He is the expectation of the Gentiles." [4] For He came for whom these things were reserved, viz., the Christ of God, the ruler of the promises of God. And manifestly He is the only one among those who preceded, and, I might make bold to say, among those also who followed Him, who was the expectation of the Gentiles; for converts from among all the Gentile nations have believed on God through Him, and that in conformity with the prediction of Isaiah, that in His name the Gentiles had hoped: "In Thy name shall the Gentiles hope." [5] And this man said also to those who are in prison, as every man is a captive to the chains of his sins, "Come forth;" and to the ignorant, "Come into the

light:" these things also having been thus foretold: "I have given Thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritage; saying to the prisoners, Go forth; and to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves." [1] And we may see at the appearing of this man, by means of those who everywhere throughout the world have reposed a simple faith in Him, the fulfilment of this prediction: "They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all the beaten tracks." [2]

CHAP. LIV.

And since Celsus, although professing to know all about the Gospel, reproaches the Saviour because of His sufferings, saying that He received no assistance from the Father, or was unable to aid Himself; we have to state that His sufferings were the subject of prophecy, along with the cause of them; because it was for the benefit of mankind that He should die on their account, [3] and should suffer stripes because of His condemnation. It was predicted, moreover, that some from among the Gentiles would come to the knowledge of Him (among whom the prophets are not included); and it had been declared that He would be seen in a form which is deemed dishonourable among men. The words of prophecy run thus: "Lo, my Servant shall have understanding, and shall be exalted and glorified, and raised exceedingly high. In like manner, many shall be astonished at Thee; so Thy form shall be in no reputation among men, and Thy glory among the sons of men. Lo, many nations shall marvel because of Him; and kings shall close their mouths: because they, to whom no message about Him was sent, shall see Him; and they who have not heard of Him, shall have knowledge of Him." [4] "Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom was the arm of the LORD revealed? We have reported, as a child before Him, as a root in a thirsty ground. He has no form nor glory; and we beheld Him, and He had not any form nor beauty: but His appearance was without honour, and deficient more than that of all men. He was a man under suffering, and who knew how to bear sickness: because His countenance was averted, He was treated with disrespect, and was made of no account. This man bears our sins, and suffers pain on our behalf; and we regarded Him as in trouble, and in suffering, and as ill-treated. But He was wounded for our sins, and bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; by His stripes we were healed. We all, like sheep, wandered from the way. A man wandered in his way, and the Lord delivered Him on account of our sins; and He, because of His evil treatment, opens not His mouth. As a sheep was He led to slaughter; and as a lamb before her shearer is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. In His humiliation His judgment was taken away. And who shall describe His generation? because His life is taken away from the earth; because of the iniquities of My people was He led unto death." [5]

CHAP. LV.

Now I remember that, on one occasion, at a disputation held with certain Jews, who were reckoned wise men, I quoted these prophecies; to which my Jewish opponent replied, that these predictions bore reference to the whole people, regarded as one individual, and as being in a state of dispersion and suffering, in order that many proselytes might be gained, on account of the dispersion of the Jews among numerous heathen nations. And in this way he explained the words, "Thy form shall be of no reputation among men;" and then, "They to whom no message was sent respecting him shall see;" and the expression, "A man under suffering." Many arguments were employed on that occasion during the discussion to prove that these predictions regarding one particular person were not rightly applied by them to the whole nation. And I asked to what character the expression would be appropriate, "This man bears our sins, and suffers pain on our behalf;" and this, "But He was wounded for our sins, and bruised for our iniquities;" and to whom the expression properly belonged, "By His stripes were we healed." For it is manifest that it is they who had been sinners, and had been healed by the Saviour's sufferings (whether belonging to the Jewish nation or converts from the Gentiles), who use such language in the writings of the prophet who foresaw these events, and who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, applied these words to a person. But we seemed to press them hardest with the expression, "Because of the iniquities of My people was He led away unto death." For if the people, according to them, are the subject of the prophecy, how is the man said to

be led away to death because of the iniquities of the people of God, unless he be a different person from that people of God? And who is this person save Jesus Christ, by whose stripes they who believe on Him are healed, when "He had spoiled the principalities and powers (that were over us), and had made a show of them openly on His cross?"[6] At another time we may explain the several parts of the prophecy, leaving none of them unexamined. But these matters have been treated at greater length, necessarily as I think, on account of the language of the Jew, as quoted in the work of Celsus.

CHAP. LVI.

Now it escaped the notice of Celsus, and of the Jew whom he has introduced, and of all who are not believers in Jesus, that the prophecies speak of two advents of Christ: the former characterized by human suffering and humility, in order that Christ, being with men, might make known the way that leads to God, and might leave no man in this life a ground of excuse, in saying that he knew not of the judgment to come; and the latter, distinguished only by glory and divinity, having no element of human infirmity intermingled with its divine greatness. To quote the prophecies at length would be tedious; and I deem it sufficient for the present to quote a part of the forty-fifth Psalm, which has this inscription, in addition to others, "A Psalm for the Beloved," where God is evidently addressed in these words: "Grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God will bless Thee for ever and ever. Gird Thy sword on Thy thigh, O mighty One, with Thy beauty and Thy majesty. And stretch forth, and ride prosperously, and reign, because of Thy truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall lead Thee marvellously. Thine arrows are pointed, O mighty One; the people will fall under Thee in the heart of the enemies of the King." [1] But attend carefully to what follows, where He is called God: "For Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." [2] And observe that the prophet, speaking familiarly to God, whose "throne is for ever and ever," and "a sceptre of righteousness the sceptre of His kingdom," says that this God has been anointed by a God who was His God, and anointed, because more than His fellows He had loved righteousness and hated iniquity. And I remember that I pressed the Jew, who was deemed a learned man, very hard with this passage; and he, being perplexed about it, gave such an answer as was in keeping with his Judaistic views, saying that the words, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom," are spoken of the God of all things; and these, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore Thy God hath anointed Thee," etc., refer to the Messiah. [3]

CHAP. LVII.

The Jew, moreover, in the treatise, addresses the Saviour thus: "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?" In reply to whom we say, that every man who, as Paul expresses it, is no longer under fear, as a schoolmaster, but who chooses good for its own sake, is "a son of God;" but this man is distinguished far and wide above every man who is called, on account of his virtues, a son of God, seeing He is, as it were, a kind of source and beginning of all such. The words of Paul are as follow: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." [4] But, according to the Jew of Celsus, "countless individuals will convict Jesus of falsehood, alleging that those predictions which were spoken of him were intended of them." We are not aware, indeed, whether Celsus knew of any who, after coming into this world, and having desired to act as Jesus did, declared themselves to be also the "sons of God," or the "power" of God. But since it is in the spirit of truth that we examine each passage, we shall mention that there was a certain Theudas among the Jews before the birth of Christ, who gave himself out as some great one, after whose death his deluded followers were completely dispersed. And after him, in the days of the census, when Jesus appears to have been born, one Judas, a Galilean, gathered around him many of the Jewish people, saying he was a wise man, and a

ORIGEN AGAINST CELSUS, v1

teacher of certain new doctrines. And when he also had paid the penalty of his rebellion, his doctrine was overturned, having taken hold of very few persons indeed, and these of the very humblest condition. And after the times of Jesus, Dositheus the Samaritan also wished to persuade the Samaritans that he was the Christ predicted by Moses; and he appears to have gained over some to his views. But it is not absurd, in quoting the extremely wise observation of that Gamaliel named in the book of Acts, to show how those persons above mentioned were strangers to the promise, being neither "sons of God" nor "powers" of God, whereas Christ Jesus was truly the Son of God. Now Gamaliel, in the passage referred to, said: "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought" (as also did the designs of those men already mentioned after their death); "but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow this doctrine, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." [3] There was also Simon the Samaritan magician, who wished to draw away certain by his magical arts. And on that occasion he was successful; but now—a—days it is impossible to find, I suppose, thirty of his followers in the entire world, and probably I have even overstated the number. There are exceedingly few in Palestine; while in the rest of the world, through which he desired to spread the glory of his name, you find it nowhere mentioned. And where it is found, it is found quoted from the Acts of the Apostles; so that it is to Christians that he owes this mention of himself, the unmistakable result having proved that Simon was in no respect divine.

CHAP. LVIII.

After these matters this Jew of Celsus, instead of the Magi mentioned in the Gospel, says that "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." See now in this instance the blunder of one who cannot distinguish between Magi and Chaldeans, nor perceive that what they profess is different, and so has falsified the Gospel narrative. I know not, moreover, why he has passed by in silence the cause which led the Magi to come, and why he has not stated, according to the scriptural account, that it was a star seen by them in the east. Let us see now what answer we have to make to these statements. The star that was seen in the east we consider to have been a new star, unlike any of the other well-known planetary bodies, either those in the firmament above or those among the lower orbs, but partaking of the nature of those celestial bodies which appear at times, such as comets, or those meteors which resemble beams of wood, or beards, or wine jars, or any of those other names by which the Greeks are accustomed to describe their varying appearances. And we establish our position in the following manner.

CHAP. LIX.

It has been observed that, on the occurrence of great events, and of mighty changes in terrestrial things, such stars are wont to appear, indicating either the removal of dynasties or the breaking out of wars, or the happening of such circumstances as may cause commotions upon the earth. But we have read in the Treatise on Comets by Chaeremon the Stoic, that on some occasions also, when good was to happen, comets made their appearance; and he gives an account of such instances. If, then, at the commencement of new dynasties, or on the occasion of other important events, there arises a comet so called, or any similar celestial body, why should it be matter of wonder that at the birth of Him who was to introduce a new doctrine to the human race, and to make known His teaching not only to Jews, but also to Greeks, and to many of the barbarous nations besides, a star should have arisen? Now I would say, that with respect to comets there is no prophecy in circulation to the effect that such and such a comet was to arise in connection with a particular kingdom or a particular time; but with respect to the appearance of a star at the birth of Jesus there is a prophecy of Balaam recorded by Moses to this effect: "There shall arise a star out of Jacob, and a man shall rise up out of Israel." [1] And now, if it shall be deemed necessary to examine the narrative about the Magi, and the appearance of the star at the birth of Jesus, the following is what we have to

say, partly in answer to the Greeks, and partly to the Jews.

CHAP. LX.

To the Greeks, then, I have to say that the Magi, being on familiar terms with evil spirits, and invoking them for such purposes as their knowledge and wishes extend to, bring about such results only as do not appear to exceed the superhuman power and strength of the evil spirits, and of the spells which invoke them, to accomplish; but should some greater manifestation of divinity be made, then the powers of the evil spirits are overthrown, being unable to resist the light of divinity. It is probable, therefore, that since at the birth of Jesus "a multitude of the heavenly host," as Luke records, and as I believe, "praised God, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men," the evil spirits on that account became feeble, and lost their strength, the falsity of their sorcery being manifested, and their power being broken; this overthrow being brought about not only by the angels having visited the terrestrial regions on account of the birth of Jesus, but also by the power of Jesus Himself, and His innate divinity. The Magi, accordingly, wishing to produce the customary results, which formerly they used to perform by means of certain spells and sorceries, sought to know the reason of their failure, conjecturing the cause to be a great one; and beholding a divine sign in the heaven, they desired to learn its signification. I am therefore of opinion that, possessing as they did the prophecies of Balaam, which Moses also records, inasmuch as Balaam was celebrated for such predictions, and finding among them the prophecy about the star, and the words, "I shall show him to him, but not now; I deem him happy, although he will not be near," [1] they conjectured that the man whose appearance had been foretold along with that of the star, had actually come into the world; and having pro-determined that he was superior in power to all demons, and to all common appearances and powers, they resolved to offer him homage. They came, accordingly, to Judea, persuaded that some king had been born; but not knowing over what kingdom he was to reign, and being ignorant also of the place of his birth. bringing gifts, which they offered to him as one whose nature partook, if I may so speak, both of God and of a mortal man, gold, viz., as to a king; myrrh, as to one who was mortal; and incense, as to a God; and they brought these offerings after they had learned the place of His birth. But since He was a God, the Saviour of the human race, raised far above all those angels which minister to men, an angel rewarded the piety of the Magi for their worship of Him, by making known to them that they were not to go back to Herod, but to return to their own homes by another way.

CHAP. LXI.

That Herod conspired against the Child (although the Jew of Celsus does not believe that this really happened), is not to be wondered at. For wickedness is in a certain sense blind, and would desire to defeat fate, as if it were stronger than it. And this being Herod's condition, he both believed that a king of the Jews had been born, and yet cherished a purpose contradictory of such a belief; not seeing that the Child is assuredly either a king and will come to the throne, or that he is not to be a king, and that his death, therefore, will be to no purpose. He desired accordingly to kill Him, his mind being agitated by contending passions on account of his wickedness, and being instigated by the blind and wicked devil who from the very beginning plotted against the Saviour, imagining that He was and would become some mighty one. An angel, however, perceiving the course of events, intimated to Joseph, although Celsus may not believe it, that he was to withdraw with the Child and His mother into Egypt, while Herod slew all the infants that were in Bethlehem and the surrounding borders, in the hope that he would thus destroy Him also who had been born King of the Jews. For he saw not the sleepless guardian power that is around those who deserve to be protected and preserved for the salvation of men, of whom Jesus is the first, superior to all others in honour and excellence, who was to be a King indeed, but not in the sense that Herod supposed, but in that in which it became God to bestow a kingdom, for the benefit, viz., of those who were to be under His sway, who was to confer no ordinary and unimportant blessings, so to speak, upon His subjects, but who was to train them and to subject them to laws that were truly from God. And Jesus, knowing this well, and

denying that He was a king in the sense that the multitude expected, but declaring the superiority of His kingdom, says: "If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not of this world." [2] Now, if Celsus had seen this, he would not have said: "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?" Now, it is not dishonourable to avoid exposing one's self to dangers, but to guard carefully against them, when this is done, not through fear of death, but from a desire to benefit others by remaining in life, until the proper time come for one who has assumed human nature to die a death that will be useful to mankind. And this is plain to him who reflects that Jesus died for the sake of men, a point of which we have spoken to the best of our ability in the preceding pages.

CHAP. LXII.

And after such statements, showing his ignorance even of the number of the apostles, he proceeds thus: "Jesus having gathered around him ten or eleven persons of notorious character, the very wickedest of tax-gatherers and sailors, fled in company with them from place to place, and obtained his living in a shameful and importunate manner." Let us to the best of our power see what truth there is in such a statement. It is manifest to us all who possess the Gospel narratives, which Celsus does not appear even to have read, that Jesus selected twelve apostles, and that of these Matthew alone was a tax-gatherer; that when he calls them indiscriminately sailors, he probably means James and John, because they left their ship and their father Zebedee, and followed Jesus; for Peter and his brother Andrew, who employed a net to gain their necessary subsistence, must be classed not as sailors, but as the Scripture describes them, as fishermen. The Lebes [3] also, who was a follower of Jesus, may have been a tax-gatherer; but he was not of the number of the apostles, except according to a statement in one of the copies of Mark's Gospel. [1] And we have not ascertained the employments of the remaining disciples, by which they earned their livelihood before becoming disciples of Jesus. I assert, therefore, in answer to such statements as the above, that it is clear to all who are able to institute an intelligent and candid examination into the history of the apostles of Jesus, that it was by help of a divine power that these men taught Christianity, and succeeded in leading others to embrace the word of God. For it was not any power of speaking, or any orderly arrangement of their message, according to the arts of Grecian dialectics or rhetoric, which was in them the effective cause of converting their hearers. Nay, I am of opinion that if Jesus had selected some individuals who were wise according to the apprehension of the multitude, and who were fitted both to think and speak so as to please them, and had used such as the ministers of His doctrine, He would most justly have been suspected of employing artifices, like those philosophers who are the leaders of certain sects, and consequently the promise respecting the divinity of His doctrine would not have manifested itself; for had the doctrine and the preaching consisted in the persuasive utterance and arrangement of words, then faith also, like that of the philosophers of the world in their opinions, would have been through the wisdom of men, and not through the power of God. Now, who is there on seeing fishermen and tax-gatherers, who had not acquired even the merest elements of learning (as the Gospel relates of them, and in respect to which Celsus believes that they speak the truth, inasmuch as it is their own ignorance which they record), discoursing boldly not only among the Jews of faith in Jesus, but also preaching Him with success among other nations, would not inquire whence they derived this power of persuasion, as theirs was certainly not the common method followed by the multitude? And who would not say that the promise, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men," [2] had been accomplished by Jesus in the history of His apostles by a sort of divine power? And to this also, Paul, referring in terms of commendation, as we have stated a little above, says: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." [3] For, according to the predictions in the prophets, foretelling the preaching of the Gospel, "the Lord gave the word in great power to them who preached it, even the King of the powers of the Beloved," [4] in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled which said, "His words shall run very swiftly." [5] And we see that "the voice of the apostles of Jesus has gone forth into all the earth, and their words to the end of the

world,"[6] On this account are they who hear the word powerfully proclaimed filled with power, which they manifest both by their dispositions and their lives, and by struggling even to death on behalf of the truth; while some are altogether empty, although they profess to believe in God through Jesus, inasmuch as, not possessing any divine power, they have the appearance only of being converted to the word of God. And although I have previously mentioned a Gospel declaration uttered by the Saviour, I shall nevertheless quote it again, as appropriate to the present occasion, as it confirms both the divine manifestation of our Saviour's foreknowledge regarding the preaching of His Gospel, and the power of His word, which without the aid of teachers gains the mastery over those who yield their assent to persuasion accompanied with divine power; and the words of Jesus referred to are, "The harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."[7]

CHAP. LXIII.

And since Celsus has termed the apostles of Jesus men of infamous notoriety, saying that they were tax-gatherers and sailors of the vilest character, we have to remark, with respect to this charge, that he seems, in order to bring an accusation against Christianity, to believe the Gospel accounts only where he pleases, and to express his disbelief of them, in order that he may not be forced to admit the manifestations of Divinity related in these same books; whereas one who sees the spirit of truth by which the writers are influenced, ought, from their narration of things of inferior importance, to believe also the account of divine things. Now in the general Epistle of Barnabas, from which perhaps Celsus took the statement that the apostles were notoriously wicked men, it is recorded that "Jesus selected His own apostles, as persons who were more guilty of sin than all other evildoers."[8] And in the Gospel according to Luke, Peter says to Jesus, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man."[9] Moreover, Paul, who himself also at a later time became an apostle of Jesus, says in his Epistle to Timothy, "This is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into, the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief."[1] And I do not know how Celsus should have forgotten or not have thought of saying something about Paul, the founder, after Jesus, of the Churches that are in Christ. He saw, probably, that anything he might say about that apostle would require to be explained, in consistency with the fact that, after being a persecutor of the Church of God, and a bitter opponent of believers, who went so far even as to deliver over the disciples of Jesus to death, so great a change afterwards passed over him, that he preached the Gospel of Jesus from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum, and was ambitious to carry the glad tidings where he needed not to build upon another man's foundation, but to places where the Gospel of God in Christ had not been proclaimed at all. What absurdity, therefore, is there, if Jesus, desiring to manifest to the human race the power which He possesses to heal souls, should have selected notorious and wicked men, and should have raised them to such a degree of moral excellence, that they, became a pattern of the purest virtue to all who were converted by their instrumentality to the Gospel of Christ?

CHAP. LXIV.

But if we were to reproach those who have been converted with their former lives, then we would have occasion to accuse Phaedo also, even after he became a philosopher; since, as the history relates, he was drawn away by Socrates from a house of bad fame[2] to the pursuits of philosophy. Nay, even the licentious life of Polemo, the successor of Xenocrates, will be a subject of reproach to philosophy; whereas even in these instances we ought to regard it as a ground of praise, that reasoning was enabled, by the persuasive power of these men, to convert from the practice of such vices those who had been formerly entangled by them. Now among the Greeks there was only one Phaedo, I know, not if there were a second, and one Polemo, who betook themselves to philosophy, after a licentious and most wicked life; while with Jesus there were not only at the time we speak of, the twelve disciples, but many more at all times, who, becoming a band of temperate men, speak in the following terms of their former lives: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour

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towards man appeared, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed upon us richly,"[3] we became such as we are. For "God sent forth His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions,"[4] as the prophet taught in the book of Psalms. And in addition to what has been already said, I would add the following: that Chrysippus, in his treatise on the Cure of the Passions, in his endeavours to restrain the passions of the human soul, not pretending to determine what opinions are the true ones, says that according to the principles of the different sects are those to be cured who have been brought under the dominion of the passions, and continues: "And if pleasure be an end, then by it must the passions be healed; and if there be three kinds of chief blessings, still, according to this doctrine, it is in the same way that those are to be freed from their passions who are under their dominion;" whereas the assailants of Christianity do not see in how many persons the passions have been brought under restraint, and the flood of wickedness checked, and savage manners softened, by means of the Gospel. So that it well became those who are ever boasting of their zeal for the public good, to make a public acknowledgement of their thanks to that doctrine which by a new method led men to abandon many vices, and to bear their testimony at least to it, that even though not the truth, it has at all events been productive of benefit to the human race.

CHAP. LXV.

And since Jesus, in teaching His disciples not to be guilty of rashness, gave them the precept. "If they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another; and if they persecute you in the other, flee again into a third,"[5] to which teaching He added the example of a consistent life, acting so as not to expose Himself to danger rashly, or unseasonably, or without good grounds; from this Celsus takes occasion to bring a malicious and slanderous accusation, the Jew whom he brings forward saying to Jesus, "In company with your disciples you go and hide yourself in different places." Now similar to what has thus been made the ground of a slanderous charge against Jesus and His disciples, do we say was the conduct recorded of Aristotle. This philosopher, seeing that a court was about to be summoned to try him, on the ground of his being guilty of impiety on account of certain of his philosophical tenets which the Athenians regarded as impious, withdrew from Athens, and fixed his school in Chalcis, defending his course of procedure to his friends by saying, "Let us depart from Athens, that we may not give the Athenians a handle for incurring guilt a second time, as formerly in the case of Socrates, and so prevent them from committing a second act of impiety against philosophy." He further says, "that Jesus went about with His disciples, and obtained His livelihood in a disgraceful and importunate manner." Let him show wherein lay the disgraceful and importunate element in their manner of subsistence. For it is related in the Gospels, that there were certain women who had been healed of their diseases, among whom also was Susanna, who from their own possessions afforded the disciples the means of support. And who is there among philosophers, that, when devoting himself to the service of his acquaintances, is not in the habit of receiving from them what is needful for his wants? Or is it only in them that such acts are proper and becoming; but when the disciples of Jesus do the same, they are accused by Celsus of obtaining their livelihood by disgraceful importunity?

CHAP. LXVI.

And in addition to the above, this Jew of Celsus afterwards addresses Jesus: "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?" From these words Celsus seems to think that there was no element of divinity in the human body and soul of Jesus, but that His body was not even such as is described in the fables of Homer; and with a taunt also at the blood of Jesus which was shed upon the cross, he adds that it was not

"Ichor, such as flows in the veins of the blessed gods."[1]

We now, believing Jesus Himself, when He says respecting His divinity, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life,"[2] and employs other terms of similar import; and when He says respecting His being clothed with a human body, "And now ye seek to kill Me, a man that hath told you the truth,"[3] conclude that He was a kind of compound being. And so it became Him who was making provision for His sojourning in the world as a human being, not to expose Himself unseasonably to the danger of death. And in like manner it was necessary that He should be taken away by His parents, acting under the instructions of an angel from heaven, who communicated to them the divine will, saying on the first occasion, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost;"[4] and on the second, "Arise, and take the young Child, and His mother, and flee into Egypt; and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."[5] Now, what is recorded in these words appears to me to be not at all marvellous. For in either passage of Scripture it is stated that it was in a dream that the angel spoke these words; and that in a dream certain persons may have certain things pointed out to them to do, is an event of frequent occurrence to many individuals, the impression on the mind being produced either by an angel or by some other thing. Where, then, is the absurdity in believing that He who had once become incarnate, should be led also by human guidance to keep out of the way of dangers? Not indeed from any impossibility that it should be otherwise, but from the moral fitness that ways and means should be made use of to ensure the safety of Jesus. And it was certainly better that the Child Jesus should escape the snare of Herod, and should reside with His parents in Egypt until the death of the conspirator, than that Divine Providence should hinder the free-will of Herod in his wish to put the Child to death, or that the fabled poetic helmet of Hades should have been employed, or anything of a similar kind done with respect to Jesus, or that they who came to destroy Him should have been smitten with blindness like the people of Sodom. For the sending of help to Him in a very miraculous and unnecessarily public manner, would not have been of any service to Him who, wished to show that as a man, to whom witness was borne by God, He possessed within that form which was seen by the eyes of men some higher element of divinity, that which was properly the Son of God God the Word the power of God, and the wisdom of God He who is called the Christ. But this is not a suitable occasion for discussing the composite nature of the incarnate Jesus; the investigation into such a subject being for believers, so to speak, a sort of private question.

CHAP. LXVII.

After the above, this Jew of Celsus, as if he were a Greek who loved learning, and were well instructed in Greek literature, continues: "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 unmistakeable sign that you were the Son of God." In reply to which we have to say Let the Greeks show to us, among those who have been enumerated, any one whose deeds have been marked by a utility and splendour extending to after generations, and which have been so great as to produce a belief in the fables which represented them as of divine descent. But these Greeks can show us nothing regarding those men of whom they speak, which is even inferior by a great degree to what Jesus did; unless they take us back to their fables and histories, wishing us to believe them without any reasonable grounds, and to discredit the Gospel accounts even after the clearest evidence. For we assert that the whole habitable world contains evidence of the works of Jesus, in the existence of those Churches of God which have been founded through Him by those who have been converted from the practice of innumerable sins.[1] And the name of Jesus can still remove distractions from the minds of men, and expel demons, and also take away diseases; and produce a marvellous meekness of spirit and complete change of character, and a humanity, and goodness, and gentleness in those individuals who do not feign themselves to be Christians for the sake of subsistence or the supply of any mortal wants, but who have honestly accepted the doctrine concerning God and Christ, and the judgment to come.

CHAP. LXVIII.

But after this, Celsus, having a suspicion that the great works performed by Jesus, of which we have named a few out of a great number, would be brought forward to view, affects to grant that those statements may be true which are made regarding His cures, or His resurrection, or the feeding of a multitude with a few loaves, from which many fragments remained over, or those other stories which Celsus thinks the disciples have recorded as of a marvellous nature; and he adds: "Well, let us believe that these were actually wrought by you." But then he immediately compares them to 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. And he asks, "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?" You see that by these expressions he allows, as it were, the existence of magic. I do not know, however, if he is the same who wrote several books against it. But, as it helped his purpose, he compares the (miracles) related of Jesus to the results produced by magic. There would indeed be a resemblance between them, if Jesus, like the dealers in magical arts, had performed His works only for show; but now there is not a single juggler who, by means of his proceedings, invites his spectators to reform their manners, or trains those to the fear of God who are amazed at what they see, nor who tries to persuade them so to live as men who are to be justified[2] by God. And jugglers do none of these things, because they have neither the power nor the will, nor any desire to busy themselves about the reformation of men, inasmuch as their own lives are full of the grossest and most notorious sins. But how should not He who, by the miracles which He did, induced those who beheld the excellent results to undertake the reformation of their characters, manifest Himself not only to His genuine disciples, but also to others, as a pattern of most virtuous life, in order that His disciples might devote themselves to the work of instructing men in the will of God, and that the others, after being more fully instructed by His word and character than by His miracles, as to how they were to direct their lives, might in all their conduct have a constant reference to the good pleasure of the universal God? And if such were the life of Jesus, how could any one with reason compare Him with the sect of impostors, and not, on the contrary, believe, according to the promise, that He was God, who appeared in human form to do good to our race?

CHAP. LXIX.

After this, Celsus, confusing together the Christian doctrine and the opinions of some heretical sect, and bringing them forward as charges that were applicable to all who believe in the divine word, says: "Such a body as yours could not have belonged to God." Now, in answer to this, we have to say that Jesus, on entering into the world, assumed, as one born of a woman, a human body, and one which was capable of suffering a natural death. For which reason, in addition to others, we say that He was also a great wrestler;[1] having, on account of His human body, been tempted in all respects like other men, but no longer as men, with sin as a consequence, but being altogether without sin. For it is distinctly clear to us that "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; and as one who knew no sin,"[2] God delivered Him up as pure for all who had sinned. Then Celsus says: "The body of god would not have been so generated as you, O Jesus, were." He saw, besides, that if, as it is written, it had been born, His body somehow might be even more divine than that of the multitude, and in a certain sense a body of god. But he disbelieves the accounts of His conception by the Holy Ghost, and believes that He was begotten by one Panthera, who corrupted the Virgin, "because a god's body would not have been so generated as you were." But we have spoken of these matters at greater length in the preceding pages.

CHAP. LXX.

He asserts, moreover, that "the body of a god is not nourished with such food (as was that of Jesus)," since he is able to prove from the Gospel narratives both that He partook of food, and food of a particular kind. Well, be it so. Let him assert that He ate the passover with His disciples, when He not only used the words, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you," but also actually partook of the same. And let him say also, that He experienced the sensation of thirst beside the well of Jacob, and drank of the water of the well. In what respect do these facts militate against what we have said respecting the nature of His body? Moreover, it appears indubitable that after His resurrection He ate a piece of fish; for, according to our view, He assumed a (true) body, as one born of a woman. "But," objects Celsus, "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." These are, indeed, trifling and altogether contemptible objections. For our reply to him will be, that he who is believed among the Greeks to be a god, viz., the Pythian and Didymean Apollo, makes use of such a voice for his Pythian priestess at Delphi, and for his prophetess at Miletus; and yet neither the Pythian nor Didymean is charged by the Greeks with not being a god, nor any other Grecian deity whose worship is established in one place. And it was far better, surely, that a god should employ a voice which, on account of its being uttered with power, should produce an indescribable sort of persuasion in the minds of the hearers.

CHAP. LXXI.

Continuing to pour abuse upon Jesus as one who, on account of his impiety and wicked opinions, was, so to speak, hated by God, he asserts that "these tenets of his were those of a wicked and God-hated sorcerer." And yet, if the name and the thing be properly examined, it will be found an impossibility that man should be hated by God, seeing God loves all existing things, and "hateth nothing of what He has made," for He created nothing in a spirit of hatred. And if certain expressions in the prophets convey such an impression, they are to be interpreted in accordance with the general principle by which Scripture employs such language with regard to God as if He were subject to human affections. But what reply need be made to him who, while professing to bring forward credible statements, thinks himself bound to make use of calumnies and slanders against Jesus, as if He were a wicked sorcerer? Such is not the procedure of one who seeks to make good his case, but of one who is in an ignorant and unphilosophic state of mind, inasmuch as the proper course is to state the case, and candidly to investigate it; and, according to the best of his ability, to bring forward what occurs to him with regard to it. But as the Jew of Celsus has, with the above remarks, brought to a close his charges against Jesus, so we also shall here bring to a termination the contents of our first book in reply to him. And if God bestow the gift of that truth which destroys all falsehood, agreeably to the words of the prayer, "Cut them off in thy truth,"[3] we shall begin, in what follows, the consideration of the second appearance of the Jew, in which he is represented by Celsus as addressing those who have become converts to Jesus.