

ORIGEN  
CONTRA CELSUM

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Henry Chadwick

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TRANSLATED  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION & NOTES  
BY

HENRY CHADWICK



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## PREFATORY NOTE TO THE 1965 REPRINT

The reprinting of this book gives a necessarily restricted opportunity for small changes. There are rare additions in the commentary. Three books published since 1953 call for special mention. The first is Jean Scherer's fine edition of the seventh century papyrus from Tura, *Extraits des Livres I et II du Contre Celse d'Origène d'après le papyrus no. 88747 de Musée du Caire* (Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Bibliothèque d'étude, xxviii, 1956). The papyrus shows that the Vatican manuscript has suffered minor losses here and there, and that the biblical quotations are better preserved in the Philocalia tradition; but it gives good ground for general confidence in the tradition represented by the Vatican text. The places where the translation is affected by the improved text that the papyrus makes possible are extremely rare. In *J.T.S. new series* viii (1957), pp. 322–326, I have discussed and attempted to meet some of the arguments advanced by Professor Scherer about the authority of the corrections in the Vatican manuscript.

Secondly the achievement of Celsus as a whole has been admirably treated by Carl Andresen, *Logos und Nomos: Die Polemik des Kelsos wider das Christentum* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 30, 1955). Although reserved towards some of his language about Celsus' philosophy of history or 'Geschichtssystematik', I think there is probability in his thesis that Celsus has Justin in mind and is formulating a rejoinder to his proposals for a marriage between Christianity and Platonism and a divorce between the best Greek philosophy and the old polytheistic tradition. It is in any event a masterly study.

Thirdly, on a point of detail, one complex passage about the knowledge of God (vii, 43–44) has been illuminated by Fr. A.-J. Festugière in the fourth volume of his *magnum opus*, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, iv *Le Dieu inconnu et la gnose* (1954).

On particular questions, however, enlargement of the commentary has not been possible. Occasionally, citations from Celsus are more clearly marked. Attention may be drawn to the obscure passage in ii, 6–7 where Origen meets the charges (a) that Jesus kept the Jewish Law, and (b) that he was 'arrogant, deceitful and profane'. I now think that everything becomes clear if Celsus had put the question, 'If Jesus' intention was to abolish the Mosaic Law, why did he observe it?' It was deceitful to keep it if he wanted to do away with it, and arrogant and profane to treat in this

PREFATORY NOTE TO THE 1965 REPRINT

way the sacred and ancient traditions of the Jewish people.' Origen leaves out more of Celsus' text than may appear at first sight, but it is sometimes possible to conjecture with probability at the lost words or ideas.

The bibliography remains unaltered. On Origen's work as a whole the best bibliography for work up to 1958 is given by H. Crouzel, *Origène et la 'Connaissance Mystique'* (1959). Fr. Crouzel has occasion to treat parts of the *contra Celsum* both there and in his more recent *Origène et la Philosophie* (1961). H.C.

CHRIST CHURCH  
OXFORD  
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POSTSCRIPT (1979)

In this third printing of a work first published more than 25 years ago I have introduced minor changes affecting both translation and notes, the more important being in I, 10-11; II, 78; VIII, 75. Among a number of weighty contributions to the study of Origen's work, special mention must be made of Marcel Borret's full edition and annotated translation in the series *Sources Chrétiennes*, in five volumes (1967-76). The variant readings of the Tura papyrus are recorded in his apparatus criticus. A forthcoming study of the text is announced by Pierre Nautin in his important revision of the biography of Origen (*Origène, sa vie et son œuvre*, 1977). A full critical bibliography of Origen has been published by Henri Crouzel (The Hague, 1971). I have discussed the broad intellectual and religious context of Celsus and Origen in *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford, 1966).

H.C.

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# INTRODUCTION

## I. PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

There are perhaps few works of the early Christian Church which compare in interest or in importance with that which is here translated. The *contra Celsum* stands out as the culmination of the whole apologetic movement of the second and third centuries. The apostolic church had not included among its members many wise or many mighty, and as Christianity spread it was natural enough that some attempts should be made to make this Oriental faith, which had not the merit of great antiquity behind it, into a creed which could be found acceptable by thinking minds. The Apologists have in view two closely related objects. They hope to assure the Roman authorities that Christians are not a pernicious and unpatriotic minority group with seditious tendencies and immoral rites; and they want to present Christianity to the educated classes as something intellectually respectable. In the work of Origen it is primarily the latter desire which is uppermost. What he gives us in the *contra Celsum* is not merely a refutation point by point of a remarkably well-informed opponent. The apology also helps us to see both the arguments which Origen would have used when engaged in disputation with learned pagans at Alexandria or Caesarea, and the way in which he himself in his own mind could be satisfied that Christianity was not an irrational credulity but a profound philosophy.

Origen stands upon the shoulders of his predecessors who made his achievement a possibility. Although he never mentions him, he owed much to Clement; even if it cannot now be taken as certain that Origen was his pupil,<sup>1</sup> nevertheless he had certainly read his works and absorbed his point of view. He is considerably indebted to such predecessors as Justin, Tatian, Theophilus, and Athenagoras, not for detailed arguments, but for having so to speak constructed a platform for his own apologetic. All of them had taken over the traditional apologetic for Judaism which had been developed in the hellenistic synagogue. From this they took the contention that Moses and the prophets could be proved to be earlier than the Greek philosophers and poets, and therefore must have been the source of their learning,<sup>2</sup> so that all the mysteries of Greek philosophy are therefore to be found expressed, even if obscurely, in the Pentateuch;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. Munck, *Untersuchungen über Klemens von Alexandria (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Geistesgeschichte 2, Stuttgart, 1933)*, pp. 224-9.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *c. Cels.* IV, 39; VI, 19.

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from the same source they could borrow the defence of an absolute monotheism over against the pagan arguments by which polytheism was rationalized. All this in turn became part of the regular stock-in-trade of the Christian Apologist as much as it had been that of his Jewish predecessor.

To no less an extent were the Apologists indebted to the debates between the various schools of Greek philosophy in the hellenistic period. The Stoics had undertaken the defence and rationalization of the traditional religion: oracles and the practice of divination were indeed a necessary corollary of the existence of divine providence; the Homeric gods and the whole pantheon could be so discreetly allegorized as to make it possible for a philosophical mind to continue to worship according to the tradition of his fathers without the disturbance of an undue number of mental reservations. On the other hand the Academy, the successors of Plato, who had made such offensive comments on the morality of the Homeric gods and had even gone so far as to expel the ancient poet from his ideal state, developed almost into a professional opposition to all Stoic doctrines and, in particular, to the Stoic defence of the traditional cultus. The Academy, especially as led by the brilliant debater Carneades in the middle of the second century B.C., the force of whose destructive criticisms is apparent from Cicero's writings, thus built up an arsenal of argument against the cultus of the anthropomorphic and immoral deities of Homer and the poets; and upon this arsenal both Jewish and Christian Apologists were not slow to draw. The arguments become quite stereotyped in the tradition: for example, the Cretans say that they have the tomb of Zeus—how then can Zeus be a god if he is dead? The Egyptians worship animals, cats, crocodiles, monkeys, and indeed a whole divine menagerie; could anything be more degrading or absurd? These and many other such arguments are preserved in the Academic polemic contained in Cicero's work *On the Nature of the Gods* and in Lucian of Samosata, and they reappear with unfailing constancy in one apologist after another. They recur in Origen.

In truth, the Stoa and the Academy had provided arguments and counter-arguments on a wide range of subjects, with the result that we frequently find that where Celsus shows affinity with the Academy, Origen has only to fall back on the traditional refutation provided by the Stoics, and vice versa. If Celsus takes one side in the debate, Origen will usually take the other. An example of this occurs at the end of the fourth book where Celsus ridicules as naïve the Christian belief that the people of God are the aim and centre of the creation and that the world was made for them; Celsus develops here a long attack on the view that the world

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exists for the sake of man any more than for the irrational animals. His arguments are almost certainly lifted straight out of some tractate deriving from the Academic tradition which contained a polemic against the Stoic doctrine that the animals exist for the sake of mankind. Origen's reply is simply based on the traditional Stoic answer to the Academy.<sup>1</sup>

Partly in consequence of this continual reference to the debates of the hellenistic philosophical schools the *contra Celsum* is of high interest not merely to the historian of the Christian Church, but also to the student of hellenistic philosophy. In respect of some Stoic doctrines it has been observed that they are first made intelligible by Origen's comments thereon.<sup>2</sup> He is well read in the works of Chrysippus and is particularly interested in the arguments about providence, and about fate and free will. He drew freely on the traditional theodicy used by the Stoics to defend their doctrine of *pronoia*.<sup>3</sup> Like several other contemporary Platonists his philosophical affinities are mainly with the eclectic type of Platonism which emerges in the later hellenistic period, a type of thought which felt itself to stand fundamentally in the Platonic tradition in its theology and *Weltanschauung*, but which, partly unconsciously, absorbed much of the Stoic conception of ethics and of providence. Even such Platonists of the second century A.D. as Plutarch, Atticus, and Calvisius Taurus, who are concerned to purify Platonism from the dilution and perversion resulting from fusion with Aristotelian and Stoic doctrines, are indebted to the Stoa in spite of themselves.

Popular philosophy under the Empire was in fact thoroughly impregnated with Stoicism, and the essential concern of the school with ethical problems enabled the Church to come to terms with it to a remarkable degree. So it is that Tertullian in his famous phrase can speak of *Seneca saepe noster*. Platonic metaphysics were the peculiar study of the few, of an intellectual aristocracy, while there was an immediate popular appeal about the simple ethical exhortations of Epictetus' discourses, as Origen himself tells us (*c. Cels.* vi, 2). The philosopher of the period was not expected to concern himself with an abstract and detached search for metaphysical truth, but rather with practical ethical questions; his vocation is that of a missionary; he is a physician of souls, whose ideal for himself and his fellow-men is summed up in the Platonic phrase 'likeness to God as far as possible' (*Theaet.* 176B). For Origen in particular, the Stoics made a considerable contribution to his theology by their defence of the doctrine of providence. The Epicureans admittedly believed in gods,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my remarks in *J.T.S.* XLVIII (Jan. 1947), at pp. 36f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, 1 (1905), Praef. pp. xlvif.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Karl Gronau, *Das Theodizeeproblem in der altchristlichen Auffassung* (1922).

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beings in human form compounded of atoms, dwelling in the spaces between the worlds, who discussed Epicurean philosophy in a language very like Greek; but these gods took no interest whatever in earthly affairs. The Peripatetics only believed in a limited sphere of divine providence and denied that it operated at all in the region below the moon. As against these the Stoics firmly asserted the reality of providence. To those who asked hard questions about the reasons for the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked, or why the best people are killed in wars,<sup>1</sup> the Stoic affirmed his faith in the ultimate purpose of the divine *pronoia* immanent in the cosmos. Even things in nature apparently useless or worse all had their place. When Chrysippus was asked, 'What is the use of bugs?' he could reply that 'They prevent us from sleeping too long.'<sup>2</sup> And if suffering were caused to individuals, yet it was possible to believe that providence cares for the whole and must put that before the well-being of the individual person (cf. iv, 70).

To deal thoroughly with Origen's debt to the philosophical background would demand much extended discussion which would be out of place in this introduction; but so much may be said to make the controversy with Celsus appear in its historical setting. In the *contra Celsum* Origen does not merely vindicate the character of Jesus and the credibility of the Christian tradition; he also shows that Christians can be so far from being irrational and credulous illiterates such as Celsus thinks them to be that they may know more about Greek philosophy than the pagan Celsus himself, and can make intelligent use of it to interpret the doctrines of the Church. In the range of his learning he towers above his pagan adversary, handling the traditional arguments of Academy and Stoa with masterly ease and fluency. He saw clearly how the principles involved in these debates could be used to illuminate the discussion of Christian theology. So, for example, his well-known criticisms of the traditional Church doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh are in fact nothing more than a slight modification of the arguments used by the Academy against the anthropomorphism of the Epicurean notion of the gods.<sup>3</sup> And even his famous illustration, which passed through numerous ecclesiastical writers down the centuries (even to appear in Luther's ninety-five theses), comparing the unity of the divine and human natures in Christ to the unity of red-hot iron in the fire where the iron and the fire become indistinguishable from one another, was borrowed from Chrysippus himself who used it to explain the way in which the soul permeated the body in every part.<sup>4</sup> It is

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Epicurus in Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* iii, 17, 8 (= *frag.* 370 Usener).

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia*, 1044D.      <sup>3</sup> I have argued this in *H.T.R.* xli (1948), pp. 83-102.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *J.T.S. loc. cit.* pp. 39-40; also *J.T.S.* (n.s.), II (1951), at pp. 160ff.

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worth noting also that the idea which has been described as his most notable contribution to Christian theology, the concept of the eternal generation of the Son and the formulation of the famous phrase which was to play so prominent a part in the Arian controversy— $\text{o}\ddot{\upsilon}\kappa \eta\nu \text{ποτὲ } \delta\tau\epsilon \text{o}\ddot{\upsilon}\kappa \eta\nu$ —was but an adaptation of the language and argument used by contemporary Platonists in discussing the problem of the eternity of the cosmos.<sup>1</sup>

Such illustrations of Origen's method help to make clear his historical significance. In spite of his apparent opposition to philosophy as identified with paganism and the polytheistic tradition, his whole position is informed by a philosophical approach, the influence of which on his mind he himself was perhaps inclined to underestimate. Recent studies have laid emphasis on the religious and mystical side of Origen,<sup>2</sup> as opposed to the intellectualist and philosophical aspect. That Origen was a 'mystic' is perhaps doubtful; but that his whole attitude was fundamentally religious is no doubt true. This explains why in the preface of the *contra Celsum* he feels it necessary to apologise to his readers for undertaking such a rational defence at all, and tells Ambrose his patron that he regards it as unnecessary to argue the matter. The *contra Celsum*, in fact, brings into prominence one side of Origen's work and shows him diverted from his central task of Biblical exegesis and textual criticism into the line of apologetic. It seems that the subsequent influence of the work on the Church was not very great; what the Church absorbed from Origen was felt primarily in the sphere of Biblical interpretation and in the profound influence of his ideals of the spiritual life upon later monasticism. But in the history of the intellectual struggle between the old and the new religion the *contra Celsum* is of the first importance, comparable only with Augustine's *City of God*. For whereas to Celsus writing about seventy years earlier the majority of Christians seemed to be stupid and uneducated fools, if they were not knaves, with Origen Christians and pagans met intellectually on equal terms.

<sup>1</sup> See Hal Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis: Studien über Origenes und sein Verhältnis zum Platonismus* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1932), pp. 259–61.

<sup>2</sup> W. Völker, *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes* (Tübingen, 1931), criticized by Koch, *op. cit.* pp. 330ff.; A. Lieske, *Die Theologie der Logos-Mystik bei Origenes* (Münster, 1938); J. Daniélou, *Origène* (Paris, 1948); H. de Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit: L'Intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène* (Paris, 1950); F. Bertrand, *Mystique de Jésus chez Origène* (Paris, 1951); J. Lebreton, 'La source et le caractère de la mystique d'Origène', in *Anal. Boll.* LXXVI (1949), pp. 55–62.

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### II. DATE OF THE CONTRA CELSUM

All discussion of the date of Origen's work must begin from the statement of Eusebius (*H.E.* VI, 36, 2) that during the reign of Philip the Arabian (A.D. 244-9) when Origen was over sixty years of age (i.e. after 245) 'he wrote the eight treatises in reply to the work of Celsus the Epicurean entitled *The True Doctrine*'. Eusebius puts this in the same period as the great commentary on St Matthew and that on the twelve minor prophets.

The internal evidence is coherent with this notice in Eusebius, and points to a date earlier than the outbreak of the Decian persecution. First, Origen says that the Church has been enjoying a long period of peace (III, 15 ad init.), and that, because the deaths of the martyrs defeat the power of the evil daemons, the daemons have not been too keen to return to the struggle, so that until they forget the suffering which they have brought on themselves the world will probably remain at peace with the Church (VIII, 44 ad init.; cf. VIII, 70, Koetschau II, 287, 10). During this long period of peace the Church has expanded and increased to become a vast multitude (VII, 26).

Secondly, in the course of the work Origen refers to his commentaries on the Bible, such as his commentary on Genesis (IV, 37, 39; VI, 49, 51, 60), an early work written mainly in his Alexandrian period; his commentaries on Isaiah, Ezekiel, and some of the minor prophets (VII, 11) which fall in the period between 238 and 244;<sup>1</sup> and his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (V, 47; VIII, 65) which was probably composed during the period 244-7.<sup>2</sup> These references again substantiate the information offered by Eusebius.

Thirdly, in III, 15 Origen says that although the Church has had peace for a long time, nevertheless 'it is probable that the freedom of believers from anxiety for their lives will come to an end when again those who attack Christianity in every possible way regard the multitude of believers as responsible for the revolt which is so strong at this moment, because they are not being persecuted by the governors as they were formerly'. In the year 248 the Arabian emperor was faced with three usurpers in the Empire. The Pannonian armies set up Pacatianus as a rival emperor; on the borders of Cappadocia and Syria there appeared Jotapianus as a claimant, and in Syria itself Uranius Antoninus.<sup>3</sup> It is at least

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. von Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, II (*Die Chronologie*), ii, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> The commentary is often dated exactly in 246, but the evidence is quite insufficient.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. W. Ensslin in *Camb. Anc. Hist.* XII (1939), p. 92; M. Rostovtzeff in *Berytus*, VIII, fasc. 1 (1943), at p. 31; A. T. Olmstead in *Class. Philol.* xxxvii (1942), pp. 261 f.

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a probability that Origen has this in mind when he refers to ἡ ἐπι-  
 τοσοῦτο νῦν στάσις. Evidently contemporary pagans were saying that  
 the trouble was caused by the fact that nothing was being done to perse-  
 cute the Christians. It is well known that public calamities were usually  
 put to the account of the Christians, as Tertullian complains in a famous  
 passage (*Apol.* XL, 1-2) 'quod existiment omnis publicae cladis, omnis  
 popularis incommodi primordio [a primordio, *Waltzing*] temporum  
 Christianos esse in causa. Si Tiberis ascendit in moenia, si Nilus non  
 ascendit in rura, si caelum stetit, si terra movit, si fames, si lues, statim  
 "Christianos ad leonem".' The persecution in Asia Minor under Maxi-  
 minus Thrax in 235 was a direct consequence of severe earthquakes in  
 Cappadocia and Pontus according to the testimony of Firmilian of  
 Caesarea (in Cyprian, *Ep.* LXXV, 10). And Origen refers elsewhere to  
 this common pagan attitude.<sup>1</sup>

It has been suggested<sup>2</sup> that the occasion of Origen's work was the  
 celebration of Rome's millennium in 247-8, a reminder to all citizens of  
 the Empire that the greatness of Rome had depended on the goodwill of  
 the gods who had been propitious. If the *contra Celsum* was Origen's  
 reply to these celebrations, then the work can be dated precisely to 248.  
 But there is no reference to this anywhere in the work, and no reliance can  
 be put on this argument. In any event it is not certain that the celebrations  
 were the cause of the Decian persecution. The occasion of this seems not  
 to have been the restoration of the *pax deorum* so much as the result of  
 Decius' demand for sacrifice as an act of loyalty to the emperor and of his  
 attempt by this means to achieve some unity in the Empire in face of the  
 tremendous crisis of the time.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to say what effect the millen-  
 nium had on the public mind, and whether this effect extended much into  
 the provinces. Harnack rejects Neumann's attempt to date the *contra*  
*Celsum* in 248 exactly, and prefers to leave the question open within the  
 period from 246 to 248,<sup>4</sup> but he is perhaps inclined to underestimate the  
 evidence of III, 15 (quoted above) which suggests that Origen is writing  
 on the eve of a persecution, the imminence of which is already apparent  
 to those with eyes to see.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Origen, in *Matt. Comm. Ser.* 39. Cf. note on III, 15.

<sup>2</sup> K. J. Neumann, *Der römische Staat und die allgemeine Kirche bis auf Diocletian*, 1 (1890),  
 p. 273.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. Alföldi, 'Zu den Christenverfolgungen in der Mitte des 3. Jahrhunderts', in  
*Klio*, xxxi (1938), pp. 323-48. He summarizes his view in *Camb. Anc. Hist.* xii (1939),  
 pp. 202 ff. Cf. N. H. Baynes in *ibid.* pp. 656f.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* II, p. 35 n. 4, p. 51 n. 6.

<sup>5</sup> In the Commentary on St Matthew (xiii, 23), written about the same time as the  
*contra Celsum* (Eus. *H.E.* vi, 36, 2), Origen observes that the daemons are furious because  
 they are now deprived of Sacrifices. Evidently anti-Christian feeling was rising.

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### III. CELSUS' THEOLOGY

Celsus begins his assault upon Christianity by observing that, because the Church is a secret society, it is an illegal body which ought not to exist. The Christian associations violate the common law. What, then, are the characteristics of this powerful secret society with its firm coherence in face of common dangers? 'The doctrine was originally barbarian.' That in the eyes of a Greek is something to be placed on the debit side for a start. Celsus' respect for the Platonic tradition (*Epinomis*, 987 E) leads him to admit that the barbarians have indeed discovered sound doctrines; the pre-eminence of the Greeks lies in the fact that they have interpreted them philosophically and understood them better.

Nevertheless, the barbarian nations are of theological importance to Celsus. 'There is an ancient doctrine which has existed from the beginning, which has always been maintained by the wisest nations and cities and wise men' (I, 14). This ancient tradition has been handed down among the Egyptians, Assyrians, Indians, Persians, Odrysians, Samothracians, Eleusinians, and Hyperboreans.<sup>1</sup> Among the wise men are included 'inspired theologians' such as Linus, Musaeus, and Orpheus,<sup>2</sup> together with Pherecydes, Zoroaster, and Pythagoras.

But what does Celsus conceive as being the content of this ancient tradition which, in his view, the Christians have abandoned and corrupted?

Some seventy years or so before Celsus' time the travelling philosopher and orator, Dio of Prusa, speaks in his Olympic oration of the way in which men first attained their knowledge of the gods, as follows:

Now concerning the nature of the gods in general, and especially that of the ruler of the universe, first and foremost an idea regarding him and a conception of him common to the whole human race, to the Greeks and to the barbarians alike, a conception that is inevitable and innate in every creature endowed with reason, arising in the course of nature without the aid of human teacher and free from the deceit of any expounding priest, has made its way, and it rendered

<sup>1</sup> For the popular hellenistic notion that races living in remote places or dating from remote antiquity were extremely pious, cf. the remarks of A. Dieterich, *Nekyia* (1893), pp. 35 f.; W. L. Knox, *Some Hellenistic Elements in Primitive Christianity* (1944), p. 16 n. 3. Numenius (ap. Eus. *P.E.* ix, 7, 411 c) similarly holds that the tradition of Plato and Pythagoras is in concord with the traditions of the famous nations (τὰ ἔθνη τὰ εὐδοκίμουῦντα), the Brahmins, Jews, Magi, and Egyptians. Cf. H. C. Puech, 'Numénios d'Apamée et les théologies orientales au II<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *Mélanges Bidez* (1934), pp. 745-78. For the appeal to barbarian cosmogonies, cf. A. D. Nock in *Journ. Rom. Stud.* xxvii (1937), p. 111, quoting Damascius. The interest in Persian and Indian philosophy which Ammonius Saccas aroused in Plotinus led him to join Gordian's army against Persia (Porphyry, *Vita Plot.* iii).

<sup>2</sup> For the importance of these cf. Plato, *Apol.* 41 A. For Celsus' appeal to their authority, vi, 42, 80; vii, 28, 45, 58. Musaeus and Linus were said to have been the first to be inspired by the gods: Cosmas Hieros., *ad Carm. S. Greg. Theol.* 64, 243 (Migne, *P.G.* xxxviii, 496).

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manifest God's kinship with man and furnished many evidences of the truth, which did not suffer the earliest and most ancient men to doze and grow indifferent to them.<sup>1</sup>

Here is a notion of the way men first acquired knowledge of God which admittedly is more coloured by Stoicism than the theology found in Celsus. But it throws some light on what Celsus thought he meant by an 'ancient doctrine which has existed from the beginning'. In the theology of the hellenistic age it has become possible to harmonize a continued acceptance of the old polytheism with a kind of monotheism. The one God was felt to be manifested in different forms in nature—in water, air, earth, and fire, said the Stoics. The Platonic tradition since the time of Xenocrates in the latter part of the fourth century B.C. had thought of the popular gods as intermediate between the supreme God and man. They were 'daemons'. It was not a long step to affirm that in the local deities of each nation there were to be found subordinate administrators of the one supreme God. Such a conception underlies Celsus' declaration that 'it makes no difference whether we call Zeus the Most High, or Zen, or Adonai, or Sabaoth, or Amoun like the Egyptians, or Papaeus like the Scythians' (v, 45). 'The gods are one nature, but many names', remarks Celsus' contemporary, the Platonizing sophist Maximus of Tyre; it is only from ignorance that we give God different names in accordance with the various benefits he confers on us. The ocean is one, but has various parts, such as the Aegean or the Ionian sea. So also the good is one, and it is only through lack of insight and of knowledge that we divide it up.<sup>2</sup>

'The one doctrine upon which all the world is united', says the same Maximus in another discourse, 'is that one God is king of all and father, and that there are many gods, sons of God, who rule together with God. This is believed by both the Greek and the barbarian.'<sup>3</sup>

For such a theology monotheism and polytheism are not mutually exclusive. And so the philosophers have come to provide a method of rationalizing cultus offered to any number of deities. All such worship is offered ultimately to the one supreme God; but it reaches him by being offered through his subordinates, the local deities. In the short tractate

<sup>1</sup> Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* xii, 27 (trans. J. W. Cohoon, Loeb Class. Libr.); cf. *ibid.* 39 for ἡ ἔμφυτος ἀπασιν ἀνθρώποις ἐπίνοια. . . παρὰ πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἀρξαμένη καὶ διαμένουσα. Similarly Clement, *Protr.* xxv, 3 ἦν δὲ τις ἔμφυτος ἀρχαία πρὸς οὐρανὸν ἀνθρώποις κοινωμία.

<sup>2</sup> Max. Tyr. xxxix, 5. Cf. Dio Chrys. xxxi, 11 'Some say that Apollo, Helios, and Dionysus are the same god, as indeed you also think; and many maintain that all the gods are simply one particular force and power so that it makes no difference whether one worships this one or that one.'

<sup>3</sup> *Idem* ii, 5. Cf. Plotinus, v, 8, 9-10.

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*Concerning the World*,<sup>1</sup> which became included in the Aristotelian corpus (its indebtedness to Posidonius has been much canvassed), we find an interesting attempt by a philosopher strongly influenced by later Stoicism to combine a belief in a transcendent supreme Deity with belief in numerous subordinate powers. The writer feels that it is unseemly for the supreme King of the universe to be involved in the petty details of its administration.

It is therefore better, even as it is more seemly and befitting God, to suppose that the power which is established in the heavens is the cause of permanence even in those things which are furthest removed from it—in a word, in all things—rather than to hold that it passed forth and travels to and fro to places which become and befit it not, and personally administers the affairs of this earth. For indeed, to superintend any and every operation does not become even the rulers among mankind—the chief, for example, of an army or a city, or the head of a household, if it were necessary to bind up a sack of bedding or perform any other somewhat menial task, such as in the days of the Great King [of Persia] would not be performed by any ordinary slave.

The writer continues by developing at length his comparison of God with the Persian Great King. Every department of State had its appointed head with a hierarchy of subordinates below him.

All the Empire of Asia, bounded on the west by the Hellespont and on the east by the Indus, was apportioned according to races among generals and satraps and subject-princes of the Great King; and there were couriers and watchmen and messengers and superintendents of signal-fires. So effective was the organization, in particular the system of signal-fires, which formed a chain of beacons from the furthest bounds of the empire to Susa and Ecbatana, that the king received the same day the news of all that was happening in Asia.

If, therefore, the dignity of Xerxes and Darius was so great as this, must not the majesty of the supreme God be even greater?

If it was beneath the dignity of Xerxes to appear himself to administer all things and to carry out his own wishes and superintend the government of his kingdom, such functions would be still less becoming for God.

God, the writer suggests, is like a marionette-showman.<sup>2</sup> He has only to pull a single string, and the chain of consequences duly follows.

The comparison of God with the Great King of Persia could be used on the other side of the theological controversy. Philo, the learned Jew of Alexandria, has an interesting polemic against the pagan worship offered to beings subordinate to God.

<sup>1</sup> In what follows I am indebted to the evidence assembled by E. Peterson, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem* (1935). I have used E. S. Forster's translation of the *De Mundo* (1914).

<sup>2</sup> For this figure cf. Synesius, *de Providentia*, 1x (Migne, P.G. LXVI, 1228B), and J. H. Waszink's commentary on Tertullian, *de Anima*, vi, 3 (pp. 136-7).

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Just as anyone who rendered to the subordinate satraps the honours due to the Great King would have seemed to reach the heights not only of unwisdom but of foolhardiness, by bestowing on servants what belonged to their master, in the same way anyone who pays the same tribute to the creatures as to their Maker may be assured that he is the most senseless and unjust of men in that he gives equal measure to those who are not equal, though he does not thereby honour the meaner many but deposes the superior.<sup>1</sup>

Even by the time of Philo, therefore, it was evidently common enough to justify polytheistic practice by pleading that the local deities are as it were God's provincial administrators and governors. In the second century A.D. the notion is widespread. In the orations of the neurotic valetudinarian Aelius Aristides, we learn that Zeus appoints administrators for the various regions of the world, like governors and satraps—*ὄλον ὑπαρχοὶ τινες καὶ σατράπαι*.<sup>2</sup> It is on this basis that Celsus develops his argument for polytheism. 'The satrap and subordinate governor or officer or procurator of the Persian or Roman emperor, and, furthermore, even those who hold lesser positions or responsibilities or offices, could do much harm if they were slighted. Would the satraps and ministers both in the air and on the earth do but little harm if they were insulted?'<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, for monotheism Celsus has little to say. The origins of monotheism, he thinks, are that 'Moses heard of this doctrine which was current among the wise nations and distinguished men and acquired a name for divine power' (I, 21). As all pagans knew, Moses was an expert magician. And so, 'the goatherds and shepherds who followed Moses as their leader were deluded by clumsy deceits into thinking that there was only one God called the Most High, or Adonai, or the Heavenly One, or Sabaoth, or however they like to call this world; and they acknowledged nothing more' (I, 23-4). The Christians are even worse. They reject the worship of daemons and quote the saying of Jesus, 'No man can serve two masters.' But this for Celsus is 'a rebellious utterance of people who wall themselves off and break away from the rest of mankind' (VIII, 2). What is more, the fantastic respect shown by the Christians for this Jew who was crucified a few years back shows just how seriously they take all their talk about serving only one master. 'If these men worshipped no other God but one, perhaps they would have had a valid argument against the others. But in fact they worship to an

<sup>1</sup> Philo, *de Decal.* 61 (trans. F. H. Colson).

<sup>2</sup> Aelius Aristides, *Orat.* XLIII, 18 (Keil II, 343, 26).

<sup>3</sup> Celsus in VIII, 35. For further material, Cumont, *Les Religions orientales dans le paganisme romain* (4th ed. 1929), p. 299 n. 21, and to the references there given add Prudentius, *Apotheosis*, 186 ff.; Maximus of Madaura in Augustine, *Ep.* XVI (*C.S.E.L.* XXXIV, 37 ff.).

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extravagant degree this man who appeared recently, and yet think it is not inconsistent with monotheism if they also worship his servant' (VIII, 12).

Celsus' respect for tradition and the custom of antiquity comes out in several passages. For the Jews he shares all the contempt and hostility which was characteristic of the age. But one thing could be said in their favour. Even if they had abandoned the belief in many gods and only worshipped their own God as if he were the only one, at any rate they did worship in accordance with the customs of their fathers. 'Their worship may be very peculiar, but is at least traditional' (v, 25). Each nation ought to observe its own traditions of worship, whatever they may be. For they accord with the wish of the daemon in charge of the nation. *Cuius regio eius religio*.<sup>1</sup> 'The practices done by each nation are right when they are done in the way that pleases the overseers; and it is impious to abandon the customs which have existed in each locality from the beginning.' The Jews are thus not entirely without defence. But not so the Christians. 'I will ask them where they have come from, or who is the author of their traditional laws. Nobody, they will say' (v, 33). The Christians have no authority for their doctrine, which is a perversion and caricature of the ancient tradition (v, 65).

That the Christians have corrupted ancient tradition is a leading theme in Celsus' book.<sup>2</sup> Christian notions of hell misunderstand the ancient beliefs about judgment beneath the earth (III, 16). Their ethical teaching is borrowed from other philosophers (I, 4). Their idea of humility grossly misunderstands the teaching of Plato (*Laws*, 715 E), and Jesus' saying that it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God corrupts the doctrine of Plato, *Laws*, 743 A (VI, 15-16). Again the idea of 'the kingdom of God' is taken from the Platonic saying 'God is King of all' (*Epist.* 312 E); the belief that God is in heaven misunderstands *Phaedrus*, 247 B (VI, 18-20). The Christian belief in seven heavens is frankly plagiarized from the Mithraic mysteries (VI, 21 ff.). The fantastic notion of Satan is a misunderstanding of 'the divine enigmas', hinted at in ancient writers like Heraclitus, Pherecydes, and Homer, and symbolized in the myths of the Titans, of Osiris and Typhon, and in the festival of the Panathenaia (VI, 42-3). Even the title 'Son of God' which they give to Jesus is taken from the ancient manner of referring to the world as God's

<sup>1</sup> The Jewish idea that each nation is under an angel is used by Origen in v, 30 ff. For discussion, cf. E. Peterson, 'Das Problem des Nationalismus im alten Christentum', in *Theol. Zeits.* VII (1951), pp. 81-91; J. Daniélou, 'Les sources juives de la doctrine des anges des nations chez Origène', in *Rech. de science religieuse* XXXVIII (1951), pp. 132-7. For Clement of Alexandria, cf. *Strom.* VII, 6, 4. Also Iamblichus, *de Myst.* v, 24-5.

<sup>2</sup> This has been admirably emphasized by A. Wifstrand, 'Die wahre Lehre des Kelsos' in *Bull. Soc. Roy. Lund* (1941-2), pp. 391-431.

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child (vi, 47). Their belief in heaven as a place of bliss is only taken from the ancient belief in the Islands of the Blest or the Elysian Fields (vii, 28). Their teaching about non-resistance to evil plagiarizes Plato's *Crito*, 49 B-E (vii, 58). Their refusal to tolerate images and temples and altars is derived from the Scythians, Libyans, and Persians, if it is not a misunderstanding of an obscure saying of Heraclitus (vii, 62). If they say that God is a spirit, even that is simply borrowed from the Stoics (vi, 71).

It is this ancient tradition which is for Celsus *The True Doctrine*, ἀληθῆς λόγος as he entitles his work. The title itself has a strongly Platonic ring. In support of the view that it is Platonizing, Bader refers to Plato, *Epist.* vii, 342 A, which Celsus quotes in vi, 9.<sup>1</sup> Wifstrand is able to quote a still more likely source in *Meno*, 81 A, where Socrates says: ἀκήκοα γὰρ ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν σοφῶν περὶ τὰ θεῖα πράγματα. — *Meno*: τίνα λόγον λεγόντων; — Socrates: ἀληθῆ, ἔμοιγε δοκεῖν, καὶ καλόν. Socrates goes on to speak of the content of this 'true doctrine', which concerns the immortality of the soul.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly Celsus believes that there is a true doctrine, of the greatest antiquity, held by the most ancient and pious races and the wisest of men. It has been perverted or misunderstood first by the Jews, and then by the Christians, who are only an offshoot from an already corrupt stem, Judaism.

It is necessary to keep this belief in mind when reading Celsus' work if a true historical perspective is to be kept. Although he says many sarcastic things about Christianity, it is not fair to think of him as merely destructive. He is no cold, ridiculing rationalist like Lucian for whom 'Christianity is only one more futility to add to the interminable list of human insanities'.<sup>3</sup> It is clear from the last section of Celsus' polemic that he is in truth deeply concerned about this fanatical new movement that is taking people away from the worship of the old gods and is undermining the structure and stability of society. Let the Christians return to take their stand upon the old paths and abandon this newly invented absurdity of worshipping a Jew recently crucified in disgraceful circumstances. Let them return to the old polytheism, to the customs of their fathers.<sup>4</sup> Christianity is a dangerous modern innovation, and if it is not

<sup>1</sup> Bader, *Der Aethes Logos des Kelsos*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Wifstrand, 'Kelsos', p. 399. Wifstrand also compares *Laws*, 757 A; *Tim.* 20 D; *Epin.* 992 C; *Phaedr.* 270 C; *Laws*, 783 A. (We may add *Epin.* 977 D.)

<sup>3</sup> P. de Labriolle, *La Réaction païenne*, p. 108.

<sup>4</sup> Celsus' high estimate of oracles is significant (vii, 2; viii, 45). Although the oracles at Delphi and elsewhere had been much neglected in the first century B.C. and the first century A.D., there was a revival in the first half of the second century A.D. under Trajan and Hadrian. Cf. Cumont, *Religions orientales* (1929), p. 285 n. 2.

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checked it will be a disaster for the Roman Empire. The Christians are not pulling their weight; they ought to take their share of civic responsibility, hold public office, fight in the army, and support the Emperor in his struggle to maintain the peace of the Empire.<sup>1</sup>

In short, Celsus is no second-century Voltaire. That is a title perhaps appropriate to Lucian, but not to Celsus, who had he been writing his book in the twentieth century might well have entitled his work 'A Recall to Religion'.

### IV. THE RECONSTRUCTION OF CELSUS' TEXT

Much—perhaps too much—energy has been expended upon the attempt to reconstruct Celsus' text. Origen's method of quoting his opponent sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, has ensured that a substantial part of the work is preserved in its original wording. Concerning how much has been lost estimates have varied. Neumann thought that a tenth had been altogether omitted by Origen, but that for three-quarters the actual words have been faithfully preserved.<sup>2</sup> Neumann himself projected a reconstruction of the work, but it was never published. An attempt to reproduce Celsus' words in the Greek text<sup>3</sup> was made by Otto Glöckner in Lietzmann's *Kleine Texte*, 151 (1924).<sup>4</sup> However, this little book has now been superseded by the more competent work of Robert Bader, *Der ἀληθῆς λόγος des Kelsos* (Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 33, Stuttgart-Berlin, 1940).

Bader takes a less sanguine view than Glöckner of the possibility of reconstructing Celsus' text, and in a long and carefully argued introduction shows that Origen omits and abbreviates more freely than one might be led to suppose from a superficial reading.<sup>5</sup> There are some passages where it is clear from Origen's explicit statements that he has omitted or abbreviated matter. For example, II, 32 where Origen refuses to discuss the charge that Jesus was a sorcerer on the ground that it is only a repeti-

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that no appeal to the Christians to be patriotic occurs in Porphyry, the next and most formidable pagan critic of Christianity, not, at least, in any of the surviving fragments. By the time of Porphyry in the latter part of the third century the Christian attitude has begun to change. In any event, Porphyry and the neo-Platonist opponents of Christianity were scarcely in a position to criticize the Church on this ground.

<sup>2</sup> K. J. Neumann, art. 'Celsus' in Herzog-Hauck, *Realencycl. f. prot. Theol. u. Kirche* (3rd ed.), III, p. 773.

<sup>3</sup> Keim, *Celsus' Wahres Wort* (1873), gives only a German version, no Greek text. An earlier attempt to reconstruct the Greek was published by Jachmann in 1836.

<sup>4</sup> On the inadequacies of this book, see Kurt Schmidt in *Gnomon*, III (1927), pp. 117-25. The text is taken from Glöckner's dissertation for his Münster doctorate, which has not been published, and exists (or at least existed) only in manuscript. I have only known this work through the occasional quotations from it given in Bader's notes.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. II, 20 where Origen says that he wishes to comply with Ambrose's request that he will answer even the most futile arguments.

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tion of what has already been answered; II, 79 ('he says nothing else worth mentioning'); VI, 22 ('it seemed to me that to quote Celsus' words here would be absurd'); VI, 26 ('we leave on one side what Celsus has said on this question as superfluous and irrelevant'). Similar evidence of omissions occurs at III, 64; VI, 17, 50, 74; VII, 27, 32.

Bader adds other passages where a close inspection reveals evidence of the same process. Thus I, 34 where Origen says that Celsus 'has quoted several things from the gospel according to Matthew, such as the star that arose at the birth of Jesus and other miracles'. We hear more of the star, nothing of the other miracles. Also there are several places where Origen's words convey the impression of providing what can scarcely be more than a bare summary of Celsus' words (e.g. II, 7, 34, 40-2; III, 73; IV, 20). He complains of Celsus' repetitions and says he will not trouble to refute them a second time (II, 70). Occasionally an indication is given when Origen refers back to previous remarks made by Celsus which in fact he has not quoted before at all (IV, 79, 97). V, 20 shows that somewhere Celsus compared Jesus with Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoic school, to the disadvantage of the former; but the passage is nowhere quoted.<sup>1</sup> The information Celsus provides about the Ophites (VI, 27) is sadly truncated. In VI, 73 Origen remarks that Celsus 'claims to have learnt about things indifferent'; no sentence on this subject occurs in any quotation given elsewhere. Celsus' remarks about the martyrs are entirely passed over (VIII, 48). Origen comments (I, 32) that Celsus often refers to Pythagoras, Plato, and Empedocles; yet Empedocles is only mentioned once (VIII, 53).<sup>2</sup>

For the fact that it is possible to reconstruct what remains of Celsus' work in some sort of order we have to thank Origen's decision to change his method after he had begun to compose his reply. He informs us explicitly of this decision in his preface which he prefixed after he had completed the first twenty-seven chapters of the first book.

I decided to put this preface at the beginning after I had composed the reply to everything up to the point where Celsus puts the attack against Jesus into the mouth of the Jew [cf. I, 28 ff.] . . . The preface may serve as my apology for the fact that I wrote the beginning of my answer to Celsus on one plan, but after the first part followed a different one. At first I contemplated making notes on the main points and giving brief answers to them, and then putting the work into definite shape. But afterwards the material itself suggested to me that I would save time if I were to be content with the points which I had answered in this way at the beginning, and in what followed to combat in detail Celsus' charges against us to the best of our ability.

<sup>1</sup> This is pointed out by Labriolle, *La Réaction païenne*, p. 117 n.

<sup>2</sup> For all this, see Bader's introduction, pp. 10-24.

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Accordingly the fragments from Celsus which occur in I, 1-27 cannot necessarily be taken to have occurred at the beginning of Celsus' book. And some of the matter there answered is in fact quoted again later in the work when Origen comes to the place in Celsus' text. Thus Wifstrand<sup>1</sup> has observed that I, 17 refers to Celsus' criticisms of the Mosaic cosmogony and of Christians who tried to interpret it allegorically; these criticisms Origen quotes in IV, 48 f. In I, 24 the first sentence quoted from Celsus evidently came near the beginning of his book. But the second, to the effect that 'it makes no difference whether one calls the supreme God by the name used among the Greeks, or by that, for example, used among the Indians, or by that among the Egyptians', is only a summary of what Origen quotes more fully in V, 41.

### V. THE IDENTITY AND DATE OF CELSUS

The identity of Celsus was a matter of uncertainty even to Origen himself. He knows that Celsus 'has already been dead a long time' (Praef. 4), but is not sure who he was. 'We have heard', he says, 'that there were two Epicurean philosophers called Celsus, the earlier one a contemporary of Nero, while the other lived in Hadrian's time and later' (I, 8). If our Celsus can be identified with either of these two, he must be identified with the second. At any rate, Origen takes his opponent, though with some hesitation, to be an Epicurean.

We know of a Celsus who was an Epicurean, flourishing in the latter half of the second century, from other sources. Lucian of Samosata dedicated to him his amusing pamphlet *Alexander the False Prophet*, and from Lucian's language it appears that his friend was an Epicurean (cf. 25, 43 and 61); Lucian's friend was also the author of a book attacking magicians (*ibid.* 21: κερὰ μάγων). This last work is mentioned by Origen (I, 68): 'You see how by these words he gives his assent, as it were, to the reality of magic. I do not know whether he is the same as the man who wrote several books against magic.' It was probably the same writer with whom Galen had some correspondence.<sup>2</sup>

Some scholars have maintained that Origen was right, and that the author of the attack on Christianity is to be identified with Lucian's Epicurean friend. The most persuasive statement of this view is to be found in the work of Theodor Keim, *Celsus' Wahres Wort* (Zürich, 1873), pp. 275-93, whose arguments convinced Harnack among others.<sup>3</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> 'Kelsos', pp. 393-5.

<sup>2</sup> Galen, *de Libris Propriis*, 16 (*Scripta minora*, ed. I. Müller, II, p. 124), mentions 'a letter to Celsus the Epicurean'.

<sup>3</sup> A. von Harnack, *Chronologie*, I (1897), pp. 314-15.

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identification is open to the serious objection that it is perfectly clear from almost every page of the *contra Celsum* that Celsus is far from being in any sense an Epicurean. His philosophy is that of Middle Platonism, and with Epicureanism he betrays no affinities at all. Keim tries to evade this difficulty by arguing that the friend of Lucian was not 'a full-blooded Epicurean', and could even have been an eclectic Platonist like the Celsus of Origen; he argues that the characteristics of Lucian's friend and Origen's opponent are strikingly similar; Lucian writes of his friend's 'wisdom, love of truth, gentleness, moderation, tranquillity of life, and courtesy' (*Alex.* 61). According to Keim, 'one must be almost blind not to recognize our Celsus in the description of the character of Lucian's Celsus' (p. 287). Again, both men are hostile to sorcerers. Lucian's friendship with the Epicurean is significant; cannot one picture Origen's opponent arm in arm with the Samosatene? Furthermore, Lucian's friend lived under Commodus about A.D. 180, and Origen's opponent probably wrote about 177-80 (see below). They lived about the same time, and even in the same place. It is therefore probable that they are one and the same person.

But as against Keim's view there are strong considerations on the other side. In the first place, his arguments that Lucian's friend was not a whole-hearted Epicurean read uncomfortably like special pleading when the text of Lucian is fairly considered. For example, at the end of his *Alexander* (61) Lucian says that he has written the tract not only to please his friend, but also to vindicate Epicurus, 'which you will like also' (ὅτι καὶ σοὶ ἡδίων, Ἐπικούρω τιμωρῶν). Earlier (47) he tells Celsus that Alexander burnt the *Κύρια Δόξα* of Epicurus, 'which, as you know, is the finest of his books'. Similarly, he says that Alexander, being a sorcerer and an enemy of the truth, was naturally hostile to Epicurus, 'who perceived the nature of things and alone understood the truth'; with the Platonists, Stoics, and Pythagoreans, however, he was on excellent terms (25). The natural interpretation of these passages is that Celsus, the friend to whom Lucian was writing, was himself an avowed Epicurean.

In the second place, if Origen's opponent really could be identified with Lucian's Epicurean friend, we should expect to find some traces, at least, of this philosophy in the quotations which Origen gives. But Origen's Celsus at no point shows any signs of holding any Epicurean opinions whatever. Origen admits as much himself when he remarks: 'From *other* writings he is found to be an Epicurean' (I, 8). Evidently he could find no support for this view in the work before him. Possibly Origen was led to suppose that his opponent was given to Epicureanism by Ambrose, his friend and patron, who sent the work to him with a request for a refutation. Perhaps also Origen himself concluded that so bitter an attack on

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Christianity could only be the work of an atheist. It is a plausible suggestion that, although Origen eventually realized that Celsus was a Platonist, he accused him of Epicureanism partly to discredit him in the eyes of his readers. As Dr W. R. Inge has observed, "Epicurean" was then a term of abuse, like Fascist or Bolshevik now.<sup>1</sup> But it is significant that Origen's references to Celsus' alleged philosophy become more and more hesitant, and cease entirely after the beginning of the fifth book (the last reference is v, 3). In the early part of his reply Origen attempts to make out that Celsus is a secret Epicurean who is disguising his real belief (cf. III, 22, 35, 80) to avoid discrediting his polemic. But his hesitancy increases; in iv, 54 he thinks it possible that Celsus may have been converted from his Epicureanism, or that his opponent is another writer of the same name. Ultimately, Origen recognizes that his opponent is a 'Platonizing' philosopher (iv, 83), and notes that Celsus often speaks of Plato in terms of profound respect (vi, 47).

Celsus' philosophy is that of an eclectic Platonist. His affinities are with the Middle Platonists like Albinus. It is, accordingly, inconceivable that he can be identified with a well-known Epicurean. The name was common enough at this period; Keim himself reckons that he could count two dozen men named Celsus in the first three centuries (*op. cit.* p. 276). We must therefore conclude that we know nothing of Origen's opponent except what can be inferred from the text of Origen himself.<sup>2</sup>

For the determination of Celsus' date the significant passages are as follows: (a) in VIII, 69 Celsus writes that the Christians are hunted out and liable to the death penalty: ὑμῶν δὲ κἂν πλανᾶται τις ἔτι λανθάνων, ἀλλὰ ζητεῖται πρὸς θανάτου δίκην. This seems clearly to point to a time of active persecution, and is connected by Keim (p. 271) and Neumann (p. 58 n. 1) with the persecution at Lyon and Vienne in 177 which followed the rescript of Marcus Aurelius; (b) in VIII, 71 Celsus writes: 'It is quite intolerable of you to say that, if those who reign over us now were persuaded by you and were taken prisoner, you would persuade those who reign after them...', etc. The phrase οἱ νῦν βασιλεύοντες points to the conclusion that at the time of writing there was more than one emperor, and may refer to the joint *imperium* of Marcus Aurelius with Verus (161-9) or to that of Marcus Aurelius with Commodus (177-80).

<sup>1</sup> 'Origen', p. 3 (in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xxxii, Annual Lecture on a Master Mind, dated 20 March 1946).

<sup>2</sup> In iv, 36 Origen writes ironically: 'Celsus the Epicurean, if, at least, he is the one who also composed two other books against the Christians...'. Neumann (in Pauly-Wissowa, III, 1885) thinks the two other books are to be identified with the *True Doctrine* and the second treatise projected by Celsus (VIII, 76).

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The latter period is adopted by Neumann; Keim (p. 273) would even date the work precisely in 178.<sup>1</sup>

This view, however, was criticized by Lightfoot.<sup>2</sup> He points out that once the identification of Origen's opponent with Lucian's friend is discarded, we have no direct clue to the date. He admits that in VIII, 71 of *vñ βασιλεύοντες* might be evidential if it stood alone. But elsewhere Celsus uses the singular (e.g. VIII, 73), and in VIII, 68 quotes the well-known verse from the *Iliad*—'let there be one king'—to urge Christians to obey the emperor. 'Could any language more unfortunate be conceived, if at this very time there were two Augusti? Why should he, when he was expressly enforcing the duty of loyalty to two emperors, quote as authoritative a passage which declares emphatically that there ought only to be one?' Lightfoot accordingly concludes that Celsus could not have written later than 161 when Marcus Aurelius and Verus were joint-emperors, and that the phrase 'those who now reign over us' in VIII, 71 is to be taken generically, and so does not imply more than one emperor at the time of writing. Thus Justin (*Apol.* 1, 14, 17) can speak of Pius, Marcus, and Lucius as *βασιλεῖς* although there was then only one emperor. Therefore, Lightfoot 'provisionally' assigned Celsus' work to the reign of Antoninus Pius.

Neumann argued against Lightfoot that his interpretation was ruled out by the *vñ*. More cogent is the consideration that the Homeric verse was a stock quotation; and the sharing of the *imperium* was not held to affect in any way the *monarchia* of the emperor.<sup>3</sup> The quotation is not such strong evidence as Lightfoot assumes.

A position intermediate between that of Lightfoot and that of Neumann is taken by F. X. Funk.<sup>4</sup> He agrees with both that Lucian's friend cannot be Origen's opponent. But he questions the view of Neumann and Keim that there was a widespread persecution of the Church throughout the Empire in 177, appealing to the words of Eusebius (*H.E.* v. praef. 1) that the persecution occurred 'in some parts of the world'. The martyrs at Lyon and Vienne would then be victims of a local and sporadic outbreak, not of a general and universal proscription of Christianity. On the other hand, he thinks it difficult to put Celsus' work as early as Antoninus Pius. The developed state of heresy reflected in the remarks about the Gnostic sects points to a slightly later date. Irenaeus (*adv. Haer.* 1, 25, 6, Harvey,

<sup>1</sup> Aubé, *Hist. des pers. de l'église*, II (1878), pp. 172 ff., dates the work 176–80.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pt. II (2nd ed. 1889), I, pp. 530–1.

<sup>3</sup> See Peterson, *Monotheismus*, pp. 13, 119, and *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> 'Die Zeit des wahren Wortes von Celsus', in *Kirchengeschichtliche Abhandlungen und Untersuchungen*, II (1899), pp. 152–61. This paper is a revision of his article in *Theol. Quartalschr.* LXVIII (1886), pp. 302–15.

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I, 210) tells us that the foundress of the Marcellinian sect, mentioned by Celsus in v, 54, came to Rome in the time of bishop Anicetus, that is, at the earliest in 154. Celsus' appeal to the Christians to support the emperor and fight in the army lest the Empire be overrun by barbarians (VIII, 68, 71, 73, 75) suggests that he is writing in the late sixties or more probably the seventies, about the time of the wars of Marcus Aurelius with the Parthians, Quadi, and Marcomanni. Accordingly, he would leave the date open between 161 and 185, within which period a date between 170 and 185 is more probable than the early part of Marcus' reign.

The weakness in Funk's argument against Keim and Neumann is his belittling of the evidence for widespread persecution in 177. The evidence is not confined to Eusebius' statement in the preface to the fifth book of his *Church History* that it occurred 'in some parts of the world'. In the fourth book he seems to assign the death of Polycarp to the same persecution (*H.E.* IV, 15) and recently Professor Henri Grégoire has argued that this date should be accepted.<sup>1</sup> If there was severe persecution in Asia Minor, it is intelligible that the Gallic churches should write to encourage their brethren in Asia and Phrygia (*Eus. H.E.* v, 1, 3) who were enduring similar distresses. It is possible that the martyrs of Pergamum, Carpus, Papyrus, and Agathonice, also suffered at this time.<sup>2</sup>

On balance, therefore, probability lies with the view that Celsus' date is to be assigned to the period 177-80.

The place of origin of Celsus' work is even more uncertain. Celsus is excellently informed about the Gnostic sects. Many of these flourished at Rome, which was the scene of the most acute conflict between orthodoxy and heresy in the second century. It is an attractive conjecture that Celsus wrote in Rome (Keim, pp. 274 f.), and his patriotic appeal at the end of book VIII might lend support to the view that he lived in the imperial capital. On the other hand, Celsus is interested in Egyptian lore (III, 17, 19; VIII, 58),<sup>3</sup> and quotes the opinion of a certain Dionysius, an Egyptian musician, in VI, 41. In II, 31 he seems to betray knowledge of the Logos-theology of Hellenistic Judaism (see note *ad loc.*). These latter considera-

<sup>1</sup> 'La Véritable Date du Martyre de S. Polycarpe (23 février 177) et le corpus Polycarpianum', in *Anal. Boll.* LXIX (1951), pp. 1-38. For a statement of the arguments in favour of 155 or 156, see Lightfoot, *op. cit.* 1, pp. 646-715, 727. Grégoire is severely criticized by W. Telfer in *J.T.S.* n.s. III (1952), pp. 79-83.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. H. Delehaye, *Les Passions des Martyrs et les genres littéraires* (1921), pp. 136 f., and in *Anal. Boll.* LVIII (1940), pp. 142 ff.; Grégoire, *loc. cit.* p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Celsus' remarks in III, 17 are a literary commonplace (see note there) and are not evidential. This is ignored by E. C. Butler, in *J.T.S.* XXII (1921), p. 143.

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tions may suggest Alexandria as his home.<sup>1</sup> We may also add to the considerations in favour of Alexandria, that Origen is not infrequently incensed that Celsus confuses the tenets of orthodox Christianity with beliefs held by Gnostic sects.<sup>2</sup> At Rome the Christian community appears to have been very conscious of the dividing line between heresy and orthodoxy. At Alexandria, on the other hand, such little evidence as there is rather suggests that the dividing line was not precisely delineated.<sup>3</sup> Celsus' confusion is therefore more intelligible if he is writing at Alexandria. Moreover, in vi, 22 Celsus describes the Mithraic mystery of the ladder with seven gates, corresponding to the seven planets, and explains it by means of 'musical theories'. This indicates that Celsus explains the peculiar order of the planets in the Mithraic list (i.e. that of the days of the week) by neo-Pythagorean doctrines of the harmony of the spheres and of the tetrachord. There is other evidence that the neo-Pythagorean sect was interested in the beliefs of the Persian magi.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that Celsus may have met with the sect in Rome or Alexandria where it flourished.

### VI. MANUSCRIPTS, EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

For the text we are dependent upon two lines of tradition. The first is the direct tradition represented by the Vatican manuscript, Vatic. Gr. 386 (= A), of the thirteenth century, which contains the complete work. All other manuscripts of the *contra Celsum* are derived from this.<sup>5</sup> The second is the indirect tradition represented by the manuscripts of the *Philocalia*, the anthology of passages from Origen's works compiled by St Basil and St Gregory in the fourth century. This contains extracts of

<sup>1</sup> Neumann, article 'Celsus', in P.-W., III (1899), 1885, thinks Celsus' home was in the East. Cf. vii, 3, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. v, 61-5; vi, 24 ff.; vii, 25; viii, 15.

<sup>3</sup> The evidence is set out by W. Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (*Beitr. z. hist. Theol.* x, 1934), pp. 49-64.

<sup>4</sup> Cumont, in *Rev. de l'hist. des Relig.* ciii (1931), p. 90 n. 2, remarks that Lydus, treating of the days of the week (*de Mens.* ii, 4, 6), cites as authorities Zoroaster and Hystaspes, but the chapter is full of speculations on numbers, which suggests that Lydus knew about the Oriental sages through some neo-Pythagorean intermediary. Furthermore, Nicomachus of Gerasa, the Pythagorean of the first century, also appeals to Zoroaster and Ostanes when speaking of planetary spheres (in Iamblichus, *Theol. arithm.* p. 56 Falco). Cumont (p. 55 n. 4) thinks it must have been through some neo-Pythagorean work that Celsus knew of the Persian theology.

<sup>5</sup> Koetschau originally thought that Codex Parisinus Suppl. Gr. 616 (= P), dated 1339, is independent of A: *Die Textüberlieferung der Bücher des Origenes gegen Celsus* (Texte und Untersuchungen vi, 1, Leipzig, 1889). But he became convinced that P is a copy of A by the arguments of J. A. Robinson (*Journal of Philology*, xviii (1890), pp. 288-96). See Robinson's introduction to his edition of the *Philocalia* (Cambridge, 1893), pp. ix, xxviii; Neumann in Koetschau's introduction to his edition of the *contra Celsum*, pp. lix-lxvi.

varying length from books I–VII. The manuscripts of the *Philocalia* are generally earlier. The two earliest are Venice 47, of the eleventh century, and the Patmos manuscript of the tenth century.

It is now necessary to add that the direct tradition has been strengthened by a recent papyrus find in Egypt. In 1941 there was found at Tura, a few miles south of Cairo, a considerable theological library. The papyri date from the sixth century, and include the minutes of a disputation between Origen and a bishop Heraclides whose Trinitarian orthodoxy was suspect,<sup>1</sup> and parts of the first two books of the *contra Celsum*. The text of the latter is proved to derive from the same line of tradition as the Vatican manuscript by the fact that at the end of the first book it has exactly the same subscription as is found in A: μετεβλήθη καὶ ἀντεβλήθη ἐξ ἀντιγράφων τῶν αὐτοῦ ὠριγένους βιβλίων—‘it was copied from and compared with copies of the books of Origen himself’. When this papyrus text is published, it will no doubt throw light on some obscure places.

The *contra Celsum* was first printed by David Hoeschel, and published at Augsburg in 1605. This text was reprinted by William Spencer, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and published by the University Press in 1658 (2nd ed. 1677). A better edition was produced by the Benedictine C. Delarue (Paris, 1733), reprinted in volumes XVIII–XX of the convenient edition of Lommatzsch (Berlin, 1845–6), and also in Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca* (XI, 1857).

The standard text today is that undertaken by the late Dr Paul Koetschau for the Berlin Academy corpus.<sup>2</sup> This edition was based on the critical investigation of the manuscript tradition carried out by Armitage Robinson, Neumann, and Koetschau himself. Its foundation is the text of A, of which Koetschau collated books I–III, Neumann books IV–VIII. I have been able to check the collations by means of photostats of the manuscript.<sup>3</sup>

Koetschau’s text had no sooner appeared than it was met by a bitter and hasty review from the pen of P. Wendland in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* for 1899 (pp. 276–304). Wendland’s chief complaint was that

<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing (1953) this is the only part of the find published: *Entretien d’Origène avec Héraclide et les évêques ses collègues sur le Père, le Fils, et l’Âme*, ed. J. Scherer (Publications de la Société Fouad I de Papyrologie, Textes et Documents, IX, Cairo, 1949). For reports on the find, see O. Guéraud in *Rev. d’Hist. des Religions*, 131 (Jan. 1946), pp. 85–108; H. C. Puech in *Comptes Rendus de l’Acad. des Inscr.* (1946), pp. 367–9; E. Klostermann in *Theol. Lit.-Zeit.* (Oct. 1947), pp. 203–8. Further discussion in B. Capelle, ‘L’Entretien d’Origène avec Héraclide’, in *Journ. Eccl. Hist.* II (1951), pp. 143–57; H. C. Puech, ‘Les nouveaux écrits d’Origène et de Didyme découverts à Toura’, in *Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, XXXI (1951), pp. 293–329.

<sup>2</sup> *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*, Bde II–III (1899).

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to the Managers of the Hort Memorial Fund for having made such an investigation possible, and to the Prefect of the Vatican Library for his good offices.

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Koetschau had preferred the authority of the Vatican manuscript to that of the *Philocalia* tradition. Wendland also contributed numerous conjectural emendations, some of which are as brilliant as others are unreasonable. To this attack Koetschau attempted a reply in his *Kritische Bemerkungen zu meiner Ausgabe von Origenes*, in turn reviewed by Wendland in the same periodical (pp. 613–22). The bitter feeling that informs this controversy makes it unedifying reading.<sup>1</sup>

An attempt to clarify the question was made by Franz Anton Winter in a dissertation of great diligence and carefulness.<sup>2</sup> The conclusion reached by Winter is that the *Philocalia* text is superior to that of the direct tradition. Koetschau, although convinced by Winter's argument in several particular instances, remained unconvinced on the general question. In 1926–7 he produced a translation in the series *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter*, edited by Bardenhewer, Weyman, and Zellinger.<sup>3</sup> In the introduction (p. xv) he had occasion to refer to the controversy, and remarked that 'even by Winter the controversy does not seem to me to have been finally decided yet'.

It is noteworthy, however, that in several places Koetschau came to accept in his translation suggestions made by Wendland which he had scornfully rejected in his *Kritische Bemerkungen*. And the necessity of providing an intelligible interpretation of his own text led him to make over four hundred changes, roughly two for every three pages of the Greek text. Several of these changes I have accepted in the present translation.

Recently a valuable list of suggested emendations has been made by Professor Albert Wifstrand, of Lund.<sup>4</sup> The majority of these I have accepted.

In revising the present translation I have found it useful to refer to my predecessors in this task. The French translation by Élie Bouhèreau (*Traité d'Origène contre Celse*, Amsterdam, 1700) remains valuable not only for the appended notes containing several conjectural emendations

<sup>1</sup> Koetschau's edition received favourable notice from other scholars, and Wendland's criticisms did not carry the day. Cf. P. M. Barnard in *J.T.S.* 1 (1900), pp. 455–61; A. Jülicher in *Theol. Lit.-Zeit.* (1899), cols. 599–606.

<sup>2</sup> *Über den Wert der direkten und indirekten Überlieferung von Origenes Büchern contra Celsus* (Programm Burghausen, 1902/3 and 1903/4). It appears that the only copy of this work in England is that possessed by the Bodleian Library, Oxford. I am indebted to the Curators for having made the book available for me to read at Cambridge.

<sup>3</sup> Bde LI–LII, Munich, 1926–7.

<sup>4</sup> See his 'Eikota' IV, in *Bull. Soc. Roy. Lund* (1938/9), pp. 9–40, and 'Die Wahre Lehre des Kelsos', *ibid.* (1941/2), pp. 391–431, reviewed by O. Stählin in *Philologische Wochenschrift* for 10 June 1944, cols. 124–6. Reference may also be made here to Wifstrand's review of R. Bader's reconstruction of Celsus in *Theol. Lit.-Zeit.* (1941), nr. 11/12; Stählin reviews Bader in *Philol. Woch.* (1942), pp. 1–7.

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but also for the interpretation of some difficult passages. In Delarue's edition there is printed by the side of the Greek text a Latin translation by Vincent Thuillier. The first German translation is that of J. L. Mosheim, *Acht Bücher von der Wahrheit der christlichen Religion wider den Weltweisen Celsus* (Hamburg, 1745). It is also translated by Rohm in Thalhoffer's *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter* (Kempten, 1874). The German translation which I have found most useful is that of Koetschau himself, already mentioned.

The first English translation was produced in the eighteenth century, and only includes the first two books.<sup>1</sup> The standard of accuracy is not high. The first complete translation into English was that made by F. Crombie and W. H. Cairns for the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* (vols. x and xxiii, Edinburgh, 1869-72). This is a serviceable translation, based on the Delarue text; it provides little or nothing by way of explanatory notes.

The text used as the basis of the present translation is that of Koetschau. All variations from his text are noted. Occasionally, in the textual notes, references to the *contra Celsum* give not only the book and chapter but also in brackets the page and line in Koetschau. References to other works of Origen are to the Berlin Corpus edition where this is available. Where it is not, I have used Lommatzsch.

Irenaeus is quoted by Massuet's divisions, often with the volume and page of Harvey. Philo is cited by the sections of Cohn-Wendland, Maximus Tyrius from Hobein.

References to the Old Testament are to the Septuagint, and follow the edition of Swete.

For passages where the Synoptic Gospels are parallel usually the Matthaean reference only is given.

<sup>1</sup> *Origen against Celsus, Translated from the Original into English* by James Bellamy, Gent. London, Printed by B. Mills and sold by J. Robinson, at the Golden Lyon in St Paul's Church-Yard (n.d. c. 1712). The preface of this work is lively reading, but the translation of insufficient accuracy.

## ABBREVIATIONS

The *Realencyclopädie* of Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll is commonly abbreviated as P.-W. H. von Arnim's *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* is cited as *S.V.F.*

In textual notes the following abbreviations are used:

K.tr. = Koetschau's German translation	Bo. = Bouhéreau
We. = Wendland	Del. = Delarue
Wi. = Winter	Ba. = Bader
Wif. = Wifstrand	Rob. = Robinson

### MANUSCRIPTS

A = Vaticanus graecus 386, saec. xiii
M = Venetus Marcianus 45, saec. xiv
P = Parisinus suppl. graecus 616, a. 1339
V = Venetus Marcianus 44, saec. xiv
Φ = Consensus of <i>Philocalia</i> manuscripts



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# CONTRA CELSUM



## PREFACE

1. Our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ was silent<sup>1</sup> when false witnesses spoke against him, and answered nothing<sup>2</sup> when he was accused; he was convinced that all his life and actions among the Jews were better than any speech in refutation of the false witness and superior to any words that he might say in reply to the accusations. And, God-loving Ambrose, I do not know why you wanted me to write an answer to Celsus' false accusations in his book against the Christians and the faith of the churches. It is as though there was not in the mere facts a clear refutation better than any written reply, which dispels the false charges and deprives the accusations of any plausibility and force. Concerning the silence of Jesus when false witnesses spoke against him, it is enough here to quote Matthew's version; for Mark's words amount to the same thing. The text of Matthew reads as follows:<sup>3</sup> 'The high priest and the sanhedrin sought for false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death; and they found it not, though many false witnesses came. But afterward there came two who said, This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it up again in three days. And the high priest stood up and said to him, Answerest thou nothing to what they witness against thee? But Jesus kept silence.' Moreover, of the fact that he did not reply when accused it is written as follows:<sup>4</sup> 'And Jesus stood before the governor; and he questioned him saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? And Jesus said to him, Thou sayest. And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Dost thou not hear how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him not a word, so that the governor marvelled greatly.'

2. It might well cause amazement among those with moderate intellectual powers that a man who was accused and charged falsely did not defend himself and prove himself not guilty of any of the charges, although he could have done so by expatiating on the fine quality of his life and showing that his miracles were done by God, to give the judge an opportunity of giving his case a more favourable judgment. This he did not do, but despised and nobly ignored his accusers. That the judge would have released Jesus without hesitation if he had made any defence is clear from what is written about him where he said: 'Which of the two do you wish me to release to you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?' and, as the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 59-63; Mark xiv. 55-61.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii. 12-14; Mark xv. 3-5; Luke xxiii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxvi. 59-63.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxvii. 11-14.

scripture goes on to say: 'For he knew that for envy they delivered him.'<sup>1</sup> Now Jesus is always being falsely accused, and there is never a time when he is not being accused so long as there is evil among men. He is still silent in face of this and does not answer with his voice; but he makes his defence in the lives of his genuine disciples, for their lives cry out the real facts and defeat all false charges, refuting and overthrowing the slanders and accusations.

3. I would therefore go so far as to say that the defence which you ask me to compose will weaken the force of the defence that is in the mere facts, and detract from the power of Jesus which is manifest to those who are not quite stupid. Nevertheless, that we may not appear to shirk the task which you have set us, we have tried our best to reply to each particular point in Celsus' book and to refute it as it seemed fitting to us, although his arguments cannot shake the faith of any true Christian. God forbid that there should be found anyone who, after receiving such love of God as that which is in Christ Jesus, has been shaken in his purpose by the words of Celsus or one of his sort. For when Paul gave a list of the countless things which usually tend to separate men from the love of Christ and the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, to all of which the love that is in him is superior, he did not include argument in the number. Notice what he says first: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we were accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.' And secondly, when setting forth another list of things which naturally tend to separate people who are unstable in their religion, he says: 'For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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.'<sup>2</sup>

4. We in truth might well be proud if tribulation and the things following it in this first list do not separate us. But not so for Paul and the apostles, and anyone like them; it is because he was far above such things that he said: 'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.' That is greater than just conquering. But if even apostles may be proud that they are not being separated from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, they would boast on the ground that 'neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities', nor any of those that follow, can separate them 'from the love of God which is in

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvii. 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 35-9.

Christ Jesus our Lord'. Accordingly I have no sympathy with anyone who had faith in Christ such that it could be shaken by Celsus (who is no longer living the common life among men but has already been dead a long time), or by any plausibility of argument. I do not know in what category I ought to reckon one who needs written arguments in books to restore and confirm him in his faith after it has been shaken by the accusations brought by Celsus against the Christians. But nevertheless, since among the multitude of people supposed to believe some people of this kind might be found, who may be shaken and disturbed by the writings of Celsus, and who may be restored by the reply to them if what is said is of a character that is destructive of Celsus' arguments and clarifies the truth, we decided to yield to your demand and to compose a treatise in reply to that which you sent us. But I do not think that any of those who have made even slight progress in philosophy will agree that it is *The True Doctrine* as Celsus has entitled it.

5. Now Paul perceived that there are impressive doctrines in Greek philosophy which are convincing to most people, but which present as truth what is untrue, and says of them: 'Take heed lest there shall be anyone that makes spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ.'<sup>1</sup> Seeing that there was some greatness apparent in the theories of the wisdom of the world, he said that the theories of the philosophers were 'after the elements of the world'. But no intelligent man would say that Celsus' writings were 'after the elements of the world'. Those ideas which have some deceit about them Paul calls 'vain deceit', perhaps in antithesis to deceit that is not vain. Jeremiah had this in mind when he dared to say to God: 'O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou wast stronger than I and didst prevail.'<sup>2</sup> But Celsus' arguments appear to me to have no deceit at all, not even vain deceit such as that in the opinions of those who have established philosophical schools and have<sup>3</sup> received exceptional mental ability in that respect. And just as no one would call an elementary blunder in geometrical propositions a fallacy, or would even put it on record for the sake of the training derived from these exercises, so what is to be called vain deceit 'after<sup>4</sup> the tradition of men, after the elements of the world', ought to resemble the ideas of those who have founded philosophical sects.

6. I decided to put this preface at the beginning after I had composed the reply to everything up to the point where Celsus puts the attack against Jesus into the mouth of the Jew.<sup>5</sup> I did this so that the reader of

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 8.<sup>2</sup> Jer. xx. 7.<sup>3</sup> Om. τῶν with K. tr.<sup>4</sup> Read κατὰ παράδοσιν with Wi.<sup>5</sup> I, 28 ff.

my replies to Celsus may start with it and see that this book is not written at all for true Christians, but either for those entirely without experience of faith in Christ, or for those whom the apostle calls 'weak in faith'; for he says this: 'Him that is weak in faith receive ye.'<sup>1</sup> The preface may serve as my apology for the fact that I wrote the beginning of my answer to Celsus on one plan but after the first part followed a different one. At first I contemplated making notes on the main points and giving brief answers to them, and then putting the work into definite shape. But afterwards the material itself suggested to me that I would save time if I were to be content with the points which I had answered in this way at the beginning, and in what followed to combat in detail Celsus' charges against us to the best of our ability. We therefore ask indulgence for the part at the beginning following the preface. If; however, you are not impressed also by the effectiveness of the answers after that, then I ask pardon likewise for those and refer you, if you still want a written reply, to people wiser<sup>2</sup> than myself, who can refute by words and books Celsus' charges against us. Yet better is the man who, even if he meets with Celsus' book, has no need of any answer to it at all, but pays no attention to anything in his book, which is despised with good reason even by the ordinary believer in Christ on account of the Spirit which is in him.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 1.<sup>2</sup> Om. δυνατοῦς with Bo.

## BOOK I

1. Celsus' first main point in his desire to attack Christianity is that the Christians secretly make associations with one another contrary to the laws, because *societies which are public are allowed by the laws, but secret societies are illegal*. And wishing to slander the so-called love (*agape*)<sup>1</sup> which Christians have for one another, he says that *it exists because of the common danger and is more powerful than any oath*.<sup>2</sup> As he talks much of the common law saying that *the associations of the Christians violate this*, I have to make this reply. Suppose that a man were living among the Scythians whose laws are contrary to the divine law, who had no opportunity to go elsewhere and was compelled to live among them; such a man for the sake of the<sup>3</sup> true law, though illegal among the Scythians, would rightly form associations with like-minded people contrary to the laws of the Scythians. So, at the bar of truth, the laws of the nations such as those about images and the godless polytheism are laws of the Scythians or, if possible, more impious than theirs. Therefore it is not wrong to form associations against the laws for the sake of truth. For just as it would be right for people to form associations secretly to kill a tyrant who had seized control of their city, so too, since the devil, as Christians call him, and falsehood reign as tyrants, Christians form associations against the devil contrary to his laws, in order to save others whom they might be able to persuade to abandon the law which is like that of the Scythians and of a tyrant.<sup>4</sup>

2. Next he says that *the doctrine* (obviously meaning Judaism with which Christianity is connected) *was originally barbarian*. Having an open mind he does not reproach the gospel for its barbarian origin, but praises *the barbarians* for being *capable of discovering doctrines*; but he adds to this that *the Greeks are better able to judge the value of what the barbarians have discovered, and to establish the doctrines and put them into practice by virtue*.<sup>5</sup> Taking up the words he has used this is our reply in respect of the fundamental truths of Christianity. A man coming to the gospel from Greek

<sup>1</sup> That ἀγάπη probably means brotherly love and not the love-feast is shown by πρὸς ἀλλήλους. Cf. Völker, *Das Bild*, pp. 44–5. For danger as uniting the Christians, cf. III, 14. For illegal Societies, cf. *Dig.* XLVII, 22; Pliny, *Ep. ad Tr.* XCVI, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps read ὑπὲρ ὄρκια, cf. Homer, *Il.* III, 299; IV, 67.

<sup>3</sup> Read τὸν with A.

<sup>4</sup> For the contrast between the law of nature and the existing codes, cf. v, 37. It is worth noting that Origen is apparently the first to justify the right to resist tyranny by appealing to natural law. Cf. VIII, 65.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. [Plato], *Epinomis*, 987E: 'We may take it that whatever the Greeks take from the barbarians, they turn it to something better'; Celsus in VI, 1.

conceptions and training would not only *judge* that it<sup>1</sup> was true, but would also *put it into practice* and so prove it to be correct; and he would complete what seemed to be lacking judged by the criterion of a Greek proof, thus establishing the truth of Christianity. Moreover, we have to say this, that the gospel has a proof which is peculiar to itself, and which is more divine than a Greek proof based on dialectical argument. This more divine demonstration the apostle calls a 'demonstration of the Spirit and of power'<sup>2</sup>—of spirit because of the prophecies and especially those which refer to Christ, which are capable of convincing anyone who reads them; of power because of the prodigious miracles which may be proved to have happened by this argument among many others, that traces of them still remain among those who live according to the will of the Logos.<sup>3</sup>

3. After this he says that *Christians perform their rites and teach their doctrines in secret, and they do this with good reason to escape the death penalty that hangs over them*. He compares the *danger to the risks encountered for the sake of philosophy as by Socrates*. He could also have added 'as by Pythagoras and other philosophers'. I reply to this that in Socrates' case the Athenians at once regretted what they had done,<sup>4</sup> and cherished no grievance against him or against Pythagoras; at any rate, the Pythagoreans have for a long time established their schools in the part of Italy which has been called Magna Graecia. But in the case of the Christians the Roman Senate, the contemporary emperors, the army, the people, and the relatives of believers fought against the gospel and would have hindered it; and it would have been defeated by the combined force of so many unless it had overcome and risen above the opposition by divine power, so that it has conquered the whole world that was conspiring against it.

4. Let us see also how he thinks he can criticize our *ethical teaching* on the grounds that it *is commonplace and in comparison with the other philosophers contains no teaching that is impressive or new*.<sup>5</sup> I have to reply to this that for people who affirm the righteous judgment of God, it would have been impossible to believe in the penalty inflicted for sins unless in accordance with the universal ideas all men had a sound conception of moral principles.<sup>6</sup> There is therefore nothing amazing about it if the same

<sup>1</sup> Read αὐτόν with K. tr.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. ii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. I, 46; II, 8; VII, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Diog. Laert. II, 43; Maximus Tyr. III, 2e.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Celsus in II, 5; Tert. *Apol.* XLVI, 2 'Eadem, inquit, et philosophi monent atque profitentur, innocentiam, iustitiam, patientiam, sobrietatem, pudicitiam.'

<sup>6</sup> Origen appeals in reply to the Stoic doctrine of κοινὰ ἔθνητα implanted in every man by nature; cf., for example, Cicero, *de Legibus*, I, 6, 18; Philo, *Quod Omnis Prob.* 46.

God has implanted in the souls of all men the truths which He taught through the prophets and the Saviour; He did this that every man might be without excuse at the divine judgment, having the requirement of the law written in his heart.<sup>1</sup> The Bible hinted at this in what Greeks regard as a myth when it made God write the commandments with His own finger and give them to Moses.<sup>2</sup> The sin of the people who made the calf shattered them,<sup>3</sup> which is as if he said, the flood of evil swept them away. But when Moses had cut a stone God wrote them a second time<sup>4</sup> and gave them again, which is as if the prophetic word was preparing the soul after the first sin for a second writing of God.

5. In giving an account of the attitude to idolatry as characteristic of Christians he even supports that view, saying: *Because of this they would not regard as gods those that are made with hands, since it is irrational that things should be gods which are made by craftsmen of the lowest kind who are morally wicked. For often they have been made by bad men.*<sup>5</sup> Later, when he wants to make out that the idea is commonplace and that it was not discovered first by Christianity, he quotes the saying of Heraclitus which says: *Those who approach lifeless things as gods act like a man who holds conversation with houses.*<sup>6</sup> I would reply in this instance also, as in that of the other ethical principles, that moral ideas have been implanted in men, and that it was from these that Heraclitus and any other Greek or barbarian conceived the notion of maintaining this doctrine. He also quotes *the Persians as holding this view*, adducing *Herodotus as authority for this.*<sup>7</sup> We will also add that Zeno of Citium says in his *Republic*: *There will be no need to build temples; for nothing ought to be thought sacred, or of great value, and holy, which is the work of builders and artisans.*<sup>8</sup> Obviously therefore, in respect of this doctrine also, the knowledge of what is right conduct was written by God in the hearts of men.

6. After this, impelled by some unknown power, Celsus says: *Christians get the power which they seem to possess by pronouncing the names of certain daemons and incantations,*<sup>9</sup> hinting I suppose at those who subdue daemons by enchantments and drive them out. But he seems blatantly to misrepresent the gospel. For they do not *get the power which they seem to possess* by

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxxi. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xxxii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xxxiv. 1.

<sup>5</sup> For an attack on the character of image-makers, cf. Clem. Al. *Protr.* iv, 53; Origen in III, 76 below.

<sup>6</sup> Heraclitus, *frag.* B 5 Diels, quoted below in VII, 62, 65; Clem. Al. *Protr.* iv, 50, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Herodotus I, 131.

<sup>8</sup> *S.V.F.* I, 265. Koetschau (trans.) wants to emend the text on the basis of Clem. Al. *Strom.* v, 76, and Plutarch, *Mor.* 1034B; but Origen may be quoting from memory.

<sup>9</sup> For this charge, cf. Celsus in VI, 40; VIII, 37; *Passio S. Perpetuae* 16.

any *incantations* but by the name of Jesus with the recital of the histories about him.<sup>1</sup> For when these are pronounced they have often made daemons to be driven out of men, and especially when those who utter them speak with real sincerity and genuine belief. In fact the name of Jesus is so powerful against the daemons that sometimes it is effective even when pronounced by bad men. Jesus taught this when he said: 'Many shall say to me in that day, In thy name we have cast out daemons and performed miracles.'<sup>2</sup> I do not know whether Celsus intentionally and wickedly overlooked this, or if he was ignorant of it. However he next attacks the Saviour also, saying that *it was by magic that he was able to do the miracles which he appeared to have done; and because he foresaw that others too would get to know the same formulas and do the same thing, and boast that they did so by God's power, Jesus expelled them from his society.*<sup>3</sup> He makes the accusation against him that *if he was right in driving them out, although he was guilty of the same himself, he is a bad man; but if he is not a bad man for having done this, neither are they bad who acted as he did.* But, on the contrary, even if it seems impossible to prove how Jesus did these things, it is clear that Christians make no use of spells, but only of the name of Jesus with other words which are believed to be effective, taken from the divine scripture.<sup>4</sup>

7. Then since he often calls our doctrine *secret*, in this point also I must refute him. For almost the whole world has come to know the preaching of Christians better than the opinions of philosophers. Who has not heard of Jesus' birth from a virgin, and of his crucifixion, and of his resurrection in which many have believed, and of the proclamation of the judgment which punishes sinners according to their deserts and pronounces the righteous worthy of reward? Moreover, the mystery of the resurrection, because it has not been understood, is a byword and a laughing-stock with the unbelievers. In view of this it is quite absurd to say that *the doctrine is secret*. The existence of certain doctrines, which are beyond those which are exoteric and do not reach the multitude, is not a peculiarity of Christian doctrine only, but is shared by the philosophers. For they had some doctrines which were exoteric and some esoteric. Some hearers of

<sup>1</sup> The ἱστορία was probably some such phrase as 'crucified under Pontius Pilate'. Cf. III, 24; Justin, *Apol.* II, 6; *Dial.* 30 and 76; Irenaeus, *adv. Haer.* II, 32, 4 (Harvey I, 375); *Epidexis*, 97. Cf. R. H. Connolly, *J.T.S.* xxv (1924), p. 346 n.; J. Kröll, *Gott u. Hölle* (1932), p. 128 n. 1. But narratives from the gospels are found used as spells in the magical papyri.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Bader suggests that ἀπελαύνει τῆς ἑαυτοῦ πολιτείας may allude to Plato's expulsion of Homer and the poets from his Republic.

<sup>4</sup> For the superior potency of scriptural names and phrases cf. Origen, *Hom. in Iesu Nave*, xx, 1 (*Philocalia*, 12); Athanasius, *Ep. ad Marcellinum* 33 (*P.G.* xxvii, 45).

Pythagoras only learnt of the master's 'ipse dixit';<sup>1</sup> but others were taught in secret doctrines which could not deservedly reach ears that were uninitiated and not yet purified. None of the mysteries in any place, in Greece and in barbarian lands, has been attacked for being secret. Therefore Celsus has no reason to attack the secrecy of Christianity and has no accurate understanding of it.

8. He appears shrewd in approving somehow of the actions of those who witness for Christianity to the point of death, saying: *And I do not mean that a man who embraces a good doctrine, if he is about to run into danger from men because of it, ought to renounce the doctrine, or pretend that he had renounced it, or come to deny it.* He condemns people who hold Christian opinions but pretend that they do not do so or deny them, saying that a man who holds the doctrine ought not to pretend that he had renounced it or come to deny it. But I may prove that Celsus contradicts himself. For from other writings he is found to be an Epicurean. But here because he appears to have more reasonable grounds for criticising Christianity if he does not confess the opinions of Epicurus, he pretends that *there is something in man superior to the earthly part, which is related to God.* He says that *those in whom this part is healthy* (that is, the soul) *always long<sup>2</sup> for him to whom it is related* (he means God), *and they desire to hear something of him and to be reminded about him.* See now the corruption of his soul; for although just now he said that *the man who embraces a good doctrine, even if he is about to run into danger from men because of it, ought not to renounce the doctrine, or pretend that he had renounced it, or come to deny it,* yet he himself falls into doing quite the opposite. He knew that if he admitted he was an Epicurean, he would not be worthy of credit in his criticisms of those who in some way introduce a doctrine of providence and who set a God over the universe. But we have heard that there were two Epicureans called Celsus, the earlier one a contemporary of Nero, while our Celsus lived in Hadrian's time and later.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This was proverbial. Cf. Philo, *Quaest. in Gen.* 1, 99; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 11, 24, 3; Cicero, *de Nat. Deor.* 1, 5, 10; Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* 11, 1, 27; Schol. Aristoph. *Nub.* 195; Diog. Laert. VIII, 46; Julian, 452c; Jerome, *Praef. in Ep. ad Galat.* (Migne, P.L. xxvi, 331c); Greg. Nyss. c. *Eunom.* 1, 225 (i. 87 Jaeger). Cf. below, IV, 9.

For the Pythagorean practice, Porphyry, *Vita Pyth.* 37; Clem. Al. *Strom.* v, 59, 1; Aulus Gellius, 1, 9, 3 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Read ἐφιενται with Guiet. For the idea cf. Celsus in VIII, 63; for the soul's affinity with God, Plato, *Timaeus*, 90a; Porphyry, *ad Marcellam*, 16 (Nauck 284, 25 f.): μόνη γὰρ ἀρετὴ τὴν ψυχὴν ἄνω ἔλκει καὶ πρὸς τὸ συγγενές. Iamblichus, *de Myst.* 1, 15 (Parthey 46, 14) where the divine element in us is roused by prayer and ἐφίεται τοῦ ὁμοίου διαφερόντως καὶ συνάπτεται πρὸς αὐτοτελειότητα.

<sup>3</sup> See the Introduction, p. xxiv *supra*.

9. After this he urges us to *follow reason and a rational guide in accepting doctrines* on the ground that *anyone who believes people without so doing is certain to be deceived*.<sup>1</sup> And he compares those who believe without rational thought to the *begging priests of Cybele and soothsayers, and to worshippers of Mithras and Sabazius, and whatever else one might meet, apparitions of Hecate or of some other daemon or daemons*.<sup>2</sup> For just as among them scoundrels frequently take advantage of the lack of education of gullible people and lead them wherever they wish, so also, he says, *this happens among the Christians*. He says that *some do not even want to give or to receive a reason for what they believe, and use such expressions as 'Do not ask questions; just believe', and 'Thy faith will save thee'*.<sup>3</sup> And he affirms that they say: *'The wisdom in the world is an evil, and foolishness a good thing.'* My answer to this is that if every man could abandon the business of life and devote his time to philosophy, no other course ought to be followed but this alone. For in Christianity, if I make no vulgar boasting, there will be found to be no less profound study of the writings that are believed; we explain the obscure utterances of the prophets, and the parables in the gospels, and innumerable other events or laws which have a symbolical meaning. However, if this is impossible, since, partly owing to the necessities of life and partly owing to human weakness, very few people are enthusiastic about rational thought, what better way of helping the multitude could be found other than that given to the nations by Jesus?

Moreover, concerning the multitude of believers who have renounced the great flood of evil in which they formerly used to wallow, we ask this question—is it better that those who believe without thought should somehow have been made reformed characters and be helped by the belief that they are punished for sin and rewarded for good works, or that we should not allow them to be converted with simple faith until they might devote themselves to the study of rational arguments? For obviously all but a very few would fail to obtain the help which they have derived from simple belief, but would remain living a very evil life. Therefore whatever other proof there may be that a doctrine so beneficial to mankind could not have come to human life apart from divine providence this consideration must also be enumerated with the rest. A religious man will not suppose that even a physician concerned with bodies, who restores many people to

<sup>1</sup> For philosophy as the only safe guide Bader compares Plutarch, *de Is. et Os.* 67–8 (378).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, pp. 120 f.; Plutarch, *de Superstitione*, 3 (166A). For the begging priests cf. A. D. Nock, *Conversion* (1933), pp. 82f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Galen's remark: 'If I had in mind people who taught their pupils in the same way as the followers of Moses and Christ teach theirs—for they order them to accept everything on faith—I should not have given you a definition' (R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (1949), pp. 15, 48–56). Celsus in VI, 11–12.

health, comes to live among cities and nations without divine providence;<sup>1</sup> for no benefit comes to mankind without God's action. If a man who has healed the bodies of many or improved their condition does not cure people without divine providence, how much more must that be true of him who cured, converted, and improved the souls of many, and attached them to the supreme God, and taught them to refer every action to the standard of His pleasure, and to avoid anything that is displeasing to Him, down to the most insignificant of words or deeds or even of casual thoughts?

10. As this matter of faith is so much talked of, I have to reply that we accept it as useful for the multitude, and that we admittedly teach those who cannot abandon everything and pursue a study of rational argument to believe without thinking out their reasons. But, even if they do not admit it, in practice others do the same. What man who is urged to study philosophy and throws himself into some school of philosophers at random or because he has met a philosopher of that school, comes to do this for any reason except that he has faith that this school is better? He does not wait to hear the arguments of all the philosophers and of the different schools, and the refutation of one and the proof of another, when in this way he chooses to be a Stoic, or a Platonist, or a Peripatetic, or an Epicurean, or a follower of some such philosophical school. Even though they do not want to admit it, it is by an unreasoning impulse that people come to the practice of, say, Stoicism and abandon the rest; or Platonism, because they despise the others as of lesser significance;<sup>2</sup> or Peripateticism, because it corresponds best to human needs and sensibly admits the value of the good things of human life more than other systems. And some, who at their first encounter were alarmed at the argument about providence based on the earthly circumstances of bad and good men,<sup>3</sup> have too hastily concluded that providence does not exist, and have adopted the opinion of Epicurus and Celsus.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1, 26 below; Dio Chrys. *Orat.* xxxii, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Read τοὺς λοιπούς, ἢ τὸν Πλατωνικόν, ὑπερφηρονήσαντες ὡς ταπεινότερων τῶν ἄλλων, ἢ τὸν . . . κτλ. with codex B of Φ, Wendland, Winter, and K. tr.

<sup>3</sup> Cf., for example, Sextus Empiricus, *P.H.* 1, 32: 'When anyone argues that providence exists from the order of the heavenly bodies, we oppose him with the argument that frequently the good suffer evil while the wicked prosper, and by this reasoning we conclude that providence does not exist.' For the argument of this chapter, cf. Galen, *de Ordine Libr. Suor.* 1 (xix, 50 Kühn): 'People admire this or that particular physician or philosopher without proper study of their subject and without a training in scientific demonstration, with the help of which they would be able to distinguish between false and true arguments; some do this because their fathers, others because their teachers, others because their friends were either empirics or dogmatics or methodics, or simply because a representative of a particular school was admired in their native city. The same applies to the philosophical schools: different people have for different reasons become Platonists, Aristotelians, Stoics, or Epicureans' (trans. Walzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 19f.); Greg. Thaum. *Paneg.* xiii, 154 ff.

11. If, as my argument has shown, belief is inevitable in following a particular individual among those who have founded sects among the Greeks or the barbarians, why should we not far more believe in the supreme God and in him who teaches that we ought to worship Him alone, but to pay no attention to the rest, either as being non-existent, or, if they do exist, as being worthy of honour but certainly not of worship and adoration? In respect of these matters a man who not only believes, but also uses reason in considering these questions, will declare the proofs that suggest themselves to him which he may discover as the result of an exhaustive inquiry. Why is it not more reasonable, seeing that all human acts depend on faith, to believe in God rather than in them? Who goes on a voyage, or marries, or begets children, or casts seeds into the ground, unless he believes that things will turn out for the better, although it is possible that the opposite may happen—as it sometimes does?<sup>1</sup> But nevertheless the faith that things will turn out for the better and as they wish makes all men take risks, even where the result is not certain and where things might turn out differently. Now if it is hope and the faith that the future will be better which maintain life in every action where the result is uncertain, is it not more reasonable for a man to trust in God than in the outcome of a sea voyage or of seed sown in the earth or of marriage to a wife or any other human activity? For he puts his faith in the God who created all these things, and in him who with exceptional greatness of mind and divine magnanimity ventured to commend this doctrine to people in all parts of the world, and who incurred great risks and a death supposed to be disgraceful, which he endured for the sake of mankind; and he taught those who were persuaded to obey his teaching at the beginning boldly to travel everywhere in the world for the salvation of men through all dangers and continual expectation of death.

12. Then Celsus goes on to speak in these very words: *If they would be willing to answer my questions, which I do not put as one who is trying to understand their beliefs (for I know them all), all would be well. But if they will not consent but say, as they usually do, 'Do not ask questions', and so on, then it will be necessary to teach them,*<sup>2</sup> he says, *the nature of the doctrines which they affirm, and the source from which they came. . . etc.* In reply to his claim, *For I know them all*, which he very boastfully dared to make, I have to say that if he had read the prophets especially, which are full of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Philo, *de Praem. et Poen.* 11 ἐλπὶς, ἡ πηγὴ τῶν βίωων; Maximus Tyr. 1, 5; xxix, 3; Theophilus, *ad Autol.* 1, 8; Arnobius, II, 8. Origen's four examples, sailing, sowing seeds, marrying, and begetting children, are commonplace, and go back to Clitomachus, leader of the New Academy. Cf. Cicero, *Lucullus*, 109, and the remarks of R. M. Grant in *H.T.R.* XLIII (1950), p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> Taking αὐτοὺς as object of διδάσκειν, cf. Wifstrand, *Wahre Lehre*, p. 402.

admitted obscurities and of sayings of which the meaning is not clear to the multitude, and if he had read the parables of the gospels and the rest of the Bible, the law, the history of the Jews, and the utterances of the apostles, and if he had read with an open mind and a desire to enter into the meaning of the words, he would not have boasted in this way nor have said: *For I know them all*. Not even we, who have spent much time in the study of these books, would say, 'I know them all'. For we have a love for the truth.<sup>1</sup> None of us would say, 'I know all the doctrines of Epicurus', or would be so bold as to assert that he knew all the doctrines of Plato, since there are so many different interpretations even among those who expound them. Who is so bold as to say, 'I know all the Stoic or all the Peripatetic doctrines'? But perhaps after hearing the claim *I know them all* from some vulgar blockheads who were unaware of their own ignorance, he imagined that after he had been taught by such teachers he knew everything. He seems to me to have done something of this sort: he is like a man who went to stay in Egypt, where the Egyptian wise men who have studied their traditional writings give profound philosophical interpretations of what they regard as divine, while the common people hear certain myths of which they are proud, although they do not understand the meaning; and he imagined that he knew all the doctrines of the Egyptians after learning from their common people without having had conversation with any of the priests or having learnt from any of them the secret teachings of the Egyptians. What I have said about the Egyptian wise men and common people can also be seen in the case of the Persians; among them there are mysteries which are explained rationally by the learned men among them, but which are taken in their external significance by rather superficial minds and by the common people among them. The same may be said of the Syrians and Indians, and of all who have both myths and interpretative writings.

13. Celsus asserted that many Christians say *Wisdom in this life is evil, but foolishness is good*. My reply is that he misrepresents Christianity, since he has not quoted the actual words as they are in Paul, which read as follows: 'If any man among you think himself to be wise, let him become foolish in this world that he may become wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.'<sup>2</sup> The apostle does not say simply: Wisdom is foolishness with God, but 'the wisdom of this world'. And again he does not just say simply, 'If any among you seem to be wise, let him become foolish', but 'let him become foolish in this world that he may become wise'. Accordingly we give the name 'the wisdom of this world'

<sup>1</sup> The phrase occurs also in III, 16; *Ep. ad Africanum*, 6 (xvii, 28 Lomm.).

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. iii. 18-19.

to all philosophy that holds wrong opinions, which according to the scriptures is being brought to nought.<sup>1</sup> We do not call foolishness a good thing without qualification, but only when anyone becomes foolish to this world. It is as if we were to say that Platonism, in believing in the immortality of the soul and what is said about its reincarnation, accepted foolishness because the Stoics ridicule belief in these doctrines, and because the Peripatetics talk of the Platonic ideas as 'twitterings',<sup>2</sup> and because the Epicureans accuse of superstition people who introduce providence and set a God over the universe. Moreover, it is in harmony with scripture to say that it is far better to accept doctrines with reason and wisdom than with mere faith. That it was only in certain circumstances that the Logos wanted the latter, so that he might not allow mankind to be entirely without help, is shown by Paul, the genuine disciple of Jesus, when he said: 'For since in the wisdom of God the world knew not God through wisdom, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.'<sup>3</sup> Obviously these words mean that men ought to have known God in the wisdom of God. But since this did not happen, as an alternative measure it pleased God to save them that believe not simply by foolishness, but by foolishness in so far as that applies to preaching. For it is manifest that the preaching of Jesus Christ as crucified is the foolishness of preaching. Since he understood this Paul says: 'But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the heathen foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.'<sup>4</sup>

14. Thinking that *between many of the nations there is an affinity* in that *they hold the same doctrine*, Celsus names all the nations which he supposes to have held this doctrine originally. But for some unknown reason he misrepresents the Jews alone, and does not include their race in the list with the others; nor does he say of them either that they *took part in labours equal to theirs and had the same notions* or that they *held similar doctrines in many respects*. It is therefore worth while asking him why ever he believed in barbarian and Greek stories about the antiquity of the people whom he mentioned, while it is only this nation whose histories he regards as untrue. If all historians gave an honest account of their respective nations, why are we to disbelieve the prophets of the Jews alone? If *Moses and the prophets wrote much about their own people which is biased in favour of their own doctrine*, why may we not say as much of the compositions of the other nations also? Or are *the Egyptians* reliable authorities when in their histories they speak evil of the Jews? And when the Jews say the same

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. ii. 6.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Anal. Post.* 1, 22 (83a33). Cf. II, 12, below.<sup>3</sup> I Cor. i. 21.<sup>4</sup> I Cor. i. 23-4.