

pel the prisoner to cease from wails and laments, lest justice should be warped by pity. But God, as it seems, is guided in His judgments not by truth, but by flattery."

Most insolent is the way in which the Christian priests speak of the pagan teachers and philosophers. They say to their dupes: "Do not listen to your father or your tutor, but to us. They talk nonsense; they are dotards, so stuffed up with idle prejudices that they neither know nor do anything right. We alone know how one ought to live. Listen to us, and you will be happy and your house will prosper."

Yes! Persecution is the only way to deal with these misguided fanatics. The very helplessness and defencelessness of the Christians against the heathen law is a proof that Jesus is not a God who can save. The police are everywhere after His followers, hunting them out. The martyrs are suffering not for conscience, but out of sheer obstinacy. Give up, then, "this impostor," this dead man," and listen to common sense. Christ is not God. Nor are we idolators, as you say, for our statues only represent God, as the pro-consuls represent Caesar. It is right to show them honor. True, God is to be worshipped above all, but He permits and requires that due and reasonable honor be paid to His agents, just as Caesar expects men to reverence his own majesty in the person of his pro-consuls.

And so, Celsus concludes with an almost pathetic exhortation to the injured Christians to have pity on their country, to rally round Caesar's eagles against the common foe, to swear by the genius of the Emperor as the dispenser of all temporal blessings, as the God of all the spiritual. It cannot at all be supposed that the Empire will abandon its tried and ancient faith for a barbarous novelty such as is Christianity. "He who thinks this knows nothing." If you were to convert the whole Empire we would all be ruined, and you with us. Your God could not protect us. Why, He does not protect you, for the police are daily bringing you to book. And if unity were to be established in religion your Christ will have to leave His exclusive throne and take a place on equal terms with the other gods of Rome. Hence, give up your life apart, join us, kiss hands to the deities of Empire, join our feasts and sing a hymn to Athena, the bright goddess of the sun.

Such was the attack of the pagan philosopher Celsus. It is typical; it is modern in its mentality. There were other remarkable attacks of the same kind, but I cannot do more than mention one or two of them here.

Lucian, a Syrian philosopher of the early second century, who travelled everywhere, in a work of fiction which has come down, represented Christians in an odious light. They are foolish, superstitious; their mutual love and charity are but artful sectarianism. Their well-known contempt for death is but childish obstinacy. "These poor men believe that their souls and bodies will afterwards be immortal, hence they frequently present themselves to torture."

Early in the third century a pagan philosopher named Porphyry, down in Sicily, wrote an attack on Christianity in 15 books which the heathens regarded as a divine book. It is on the lines of Celsus, and the rationalists of the Continent are not able even in our day to improve much on it.

Another kind of attack took its rise from Roman literary circles. Instead of disparaging the character of Christ, these writers were compelled to admire it. Hence they took the line of opposing to Christ similar characters belonging to paganism, and thus they would try to get for paganism the lustre shed on the Christian religion by its Founder. Numbers of such lives were written as rivals to Christ. As a rule, the New Testament was the model followed. Two such lives—that of the philosopher Pythagoras and of the wandering teacher Apollonius of Tyana—are the most remarkable and successful of these attempts. They try to go better than Christ of the Gospel narrative, especially in the narrative of His Passion and Death, in which the pagans saw weakness unbecoming a God. The humility and low lines of the Saviour was a scandal to them. These works suggest the compromise the Roman authorities would make with Christianity. The terms are better than those of Celsus. Let there be one supreme ruler in heaven, and one on earth—the Emperor. One transcendental God for higher minds, for the mob the lower gods suffice; Christ to be accepted as an inspired teacher on the same footing as the pagans Pythagoras and Apollonius.

How far these works attacking the Christian Faith influenced the public mind it is hard to say. It was polemical, ephemeral literature, and most of it has perished. Christian writers in their replies regarded these works as shallow and creating no real intellectual difficulty to the Christian system. Thus Origen, in his reply,

moves along a plane altogether superior to Celsus. It is like the reply of a trained apologist of the Faith to the vapourings of a pot-house philosopher. Anyhow, this transient heathen literature gives us the intellectual view of its day regarding Christianity—a view, scornful, hostile, or indifferent, but gradually changing to one of moderate admiration which would place Jesus amongst the philosophers deified for their virtue and wisdom.

INSTITUTE OF NOTRE DAME DES MISSIONS.

A member of the *Tablet* staff has just received an interesting letter, under date Deal, Kent, England (where the Mother House is situated), January 29, from the Very Reverend Mother M. St. Pacome, wherein the writer incidentally remarks: "Considering the demands for missionary Sisters, we would need a great many more in order to satisfy them all. We received lately a most distressing appeal for Sisters for the Philippine Islands, but our Indian mission-field is so wide that it takes all our laborers to cope, even feebly, with the work, and it will be some time before we shall be able to help in the former missions." Referring to the result of the General Chapter recently held, Reverend Mother-General says: "No doubt you have heard Mother M. St. Genevieve, whom you know so well, was named Mother Burser. However, she returned to West Australia for about 12 months before taking up her work in England." The Very Rev. Mother-General sends kind remembrances to her many friends in New Zealand.

AN OLD WOMAN'S PRAYER.

(For the *N.Z. Tablet*.)

The rain has come and washed the skies
Until they look to my old eyes
Like some small boy that lifts his face,
Wiped clean, in state of grace,
And fingers, sure of praise—
I know the children's ways.
I lie here dying quietly,
Glad, save that heaven frightens me.
What will I do when that great Kingdom come?
I cannot sing, for I was ever dumb—
Nor yet help Mary with her household cares,
I am too weak. They say that there are stairs,
What I would like, what I would most desire,
Is just a quiet corner by the fire,
With some old saints for company,
Not high ones, commoners like me—
And one thing more, how shall I see my Lord?
Not seated at His feasting-board,
Princes and Powers on left and right,
And I too far away for sight—
Not as from Thabor mountain stepping down,
The morning clinging to His lids, the rainbow folded in
His gown,
For I am wrinkled, plain, and grey,
His glory might not glance my way—
Nor would I have Him suffering among those stunted
little trees,
For I would be too old and numb to help Him in His
agonies,
Too shy to part the bramble boughs,
To wipe the sweat from His dear brows.
But could I meet Him small and young,
With little lisping, stammering tongue,
Chasing the butterflies and birds,
With little foolish words,
Too small to understand my sin,
Too white to think of blot within,
Too sweet to mind that I am old,
How glad I'd run His hand to hold!

—E.D.

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