

THE
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ART. I.—MODERN MATERIALISM.

THE conditions of our nature incline us to materialism. There may be embodied spirits whose corporeal frame-work is so ethereal, and whose pursuits are so spiritual, that they may not be conscious of their material organs; but man, subjected to incessant calls by the wants of his decaying body, absorbed in secular pursuits, and consumed with worldly anxieties, is in danger of passing life without reflecting that he has a soul. When we consider that the tendency of our philosophy concurs with that of our nature, we can but think that materialism would be generally prevalent were it not for the counteracting influence of our religious belief. It is more general than many suppose. The gainsayers are upon us in swarms; not merely the vulgar but the refined. Dr. Lawrence, a distinguished physician of the last age, and the writer of the article *Man* in one of our best encyclopedias, (Rees's,) says, that the notion of an immaterial soul is opposed to the evidence of anatomy and physiology. French physiologists generally take the same view. Dr. Elliotson, a high living authority in medicine and phrenology, and a believer in the Christian Scriptures, declares that "the doctrine of mind, independently of matter, indicates a want of modern knowledge, and involves us in endless absurdity;" that God cannot create beings irrespective of matter, and that those who believe in the existence of the soul "are usually rank, malicious hypocrites and Pharisees."

Many who adopt the creed of these gentlemen are restrained by prudential considerations from professing it, while thousands admit their premises without perceiving the conclusions which logically follow. It is the fashion to cast science and literature in a material mold; nor is even theology an exception. Matter is becoming the idol in the temple of modern thought. It may not be improper to

not large and expensive establishments to dazzle to blindness, but we do need and ought to have a few patient, persevering, wise Christian ministers scattered over the territory of New-Mexico, and along the banks of the Rio Grande, sapping, and mining, and blasting for the overthrow of Romanism and the Americanization of the Mexicans.

Where are the Churches making preparations for the future additions from Mexico, from Central America and the West India Islands? Is the American Church ready for her part of the work of our country's world mission? Where are our missionary institutes, an immediate need of the Church, in which our young men can acquire the modern languages to fit them for the vast foreign fields of American missions? The miraculous gift of tongues is almost as necessary to prepare the American Church for her circumstances, as it was for the apostles on the day of Pentecost? And we might almost suppose that the Church was waiting for such a miraculous dispensation.

In obedience to the providence of God, we ought to apply ourselves to the work before us. In view of the signs of the times indicating future enlargement, we ought to lay our plans commensurate with the probabilities of the case, lest God take away our heritage from us. Whatever may be the result of the American government, whether it will hold together or not, under the expansion anticipated, Christianity, pushing its conquest coequal with it, and under it, is designed to fill the whole earth. It is no longer dependent upon civil government. Its conquests hereafter will be maintained. May its triumph and establishment in the western world be accomplished by the American Churches!

ART. VIII.—THE OLDEST OPPOSITION TO CHRISTIANITY, AND ITS DEFENSE.

The Evidences of Christianity, as exhibited in the Writings of its Apologists down to Augustine. Hulsean Prize Essay. By W. J. BOLTON, Professor at Cambridge. Reprinted at Boston: Gould & Lincoln. 1854.

THE work of Professor Bolton, though not characterized either by eminent learning or ability, gives a tolerably complete view, more so than any other book in the English language, of the literary conflict of Christianity with its earliest opponents, and the rise of apologetic literature. This conflict is one of the most interesting and instructive chapters in the history of the ante-Nicene and Nicene age. It shows that most of the objections of modern infidelity against Christianity have been anticipated by a Celsus, Lucian, Porphyry,

and others, in the second and third centuries, and ably and successfully refuted by Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, and other apologists of that age. Its faithful exhibition, therefore, is well calculated to destroy confidence in infidelity, and to strengthen faith in the inherent eternal truth of our holy religion.

Without any further reference to Bolton, and pursuing a very different plan, we shall present first the various kinds of attack made upon Christianity in the first three centuries, and then trace the origin and principal arguments of apologetic divinity, or the scientific defense of the Christian religion.

I. OPPOSITION TO CHRISTIANITY.

1. JEWISH OPPOSITION.

When Christianity first made its appearance in the world it found as little favor with the representatives of literature and art as with emperors, princes, and statesmen. In this point of view, also, it was not of the world, and was compelled to force its way through the greatest difficulties; yet it proved at last the mother of an intellectual and moral culture far in advance of the Græco-Roman, capable of endless progress, and full of the vigor of perpetual youth.

The hostility of the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees to the Gospel is familiar from the New Testament. Josephus mentions Jesus once in his Archæology, but in terms so favorable as to agree ill with his Jewish position, and thus to be, at least in their present form, open to critical suspicion. The attacks of the later Jews upon Christianity are essentially mere repetitions of those recorded in the Gospels; denial of the Messiahship of Jesus, and horrible vituperation of his confessors. We learn their character best from the Dialogue of Justin with the Jew Trypho. The *ἀντιλογία Παπίσκου καὶ Ἰάσωνος*, which has been once unjustly attributed to the Jewish Christian, Aristo of Pella, is lost.

2. TACITUS AND PLINY.

The Græco-Roman writers of the first century, and some of the second, as Seneca, the elder Pliny, and even the mild and noble Plutarch, either from ignorance or contempt, never allude to Christianity at all. Tacitus and the younger Pliny, cotemporaries and friends of the Emperor Trajan, are the first to notice it; and they speak of it only incidentally, and with stoical disdain and antipathy, as an "*exitiabilis superstitio*," "*prava et immodica superstitio*," "*inflexibilis obstinatio*." These celebrated, and in their way altogether estimable Roman authors thus, from manifest ignorance, saw in the Christians nothing but superstitious fanatics, and put

them on a level with the hated Jews; Tacitus, in fact, reproaching them also with the "*odium generis humani*." This will afford some idea of the immense obstacles which the new religion encountered in public opinion, especially in the cultivated circles of the Roman empire. The Christian apologies of the second century also show that the most malicious and gratuitous slanders against the Christians were circulated among the common people, even charges of incest and cannibalism,* which may have arisen in part from a misapprehension of the intimate brotherly love of the Christians, and their nightly celebration of the holy supper.

3. CELSUS.

The direct assault upon Christianity, by works devoted to the purpose, began about the middle of the second century, and was very ably conducted by a Grecian philosopher, Celsus, otherwise unknown; according to Origen, an Epicurean, and a friend of Lucian.

Celsus, with all his affected or real contempt for the new religion, considered it important enough to be opposed by an extended work, entitled, "A True Discourse," of which Origen has preserved considerable fragments in his refutation. These represent their author as an eclectic philosopher of varied culture, skilled in dialectics, and somewhat read in the writings of the apostles, and even in the Old Testament. He speaks now in the frivolous style of an Epicurean, now in the earnest and dignified tone of a Platonist. At one time he advocates the popular heathen religion, as, for instance, its doctrine of demons; at another time he rises above the polytheistic notions to a pantheistic or skeptical view. He employs all the aids which the culture of his age afforded, all the weapons of learning, common-sense, wit, sarcasm, and dramatic animation of style, to disprove Christianity; and he anticipates most of the arguments and sophisms of the deists and naturalists of later times. Still his book is, on the whole, a very superficial, loose, and light-minded work, and gives striking proof of the inability of the natural reason to understand the Christian truth. It has no savor of humility, no sense of the corruption of human nature and man's need of redemption; and it could, therefore, not in the slightest degree appreciate the glory of the Redeemer and of his work.

Celsus first introduces a Jew, who accuses the mother of Jesus of adultery with a soldier named Panthera,† adduces the denial of

* *Οιδιπόδειοι μίξεις, incesti concubitus; and θυσεία δείπνα, Thyestæ epulæ.*

† Πάνθηρ, *panthera*, here, and in the Talmud, where Jesus is likewise called רשע בן פנדרר, is used, like the Latin *lupa*, as a type of ravenous lust, hence as a symbolical name for *μοιχεία*.

Peter, the treachery of Judas, and the death of Jesus, as contradictions of his pretended divinity, and makes the resurrection an imposture. Then Celsus himself begins the attack, and begins it by combating the whole idea of the supernatural, which forms the common foundation of Judaism and Christianity. The controversy between Jews and Christians appears to him as foolish as the strife about the shadow of an ass. The Jews believed, as well as the Christians, in the prophecies of a Redeemer of the world, and thus differed from them only in that they still expected the Messiah's coming. But then, to what purpose should God come down to earth at all, or send another down? He knows beforehand what is going on among men. And such a descent involves a change, a transition from the good to the evil, from the lovely to the hateful, from the happy to the miserable, which is undesirable, and indeed impossible for the Divine nature. In another place he says, God troubles himself no more about men than about monkeys and flies. Celsus thus denies the whole idea of revelation, now in pantheistic style, now in the levity of Epicurean deism; and thereby, at the same time, abandons the ground of the popular heathen religion. In his view Christianity has no rational foundation at all, but is supported by the imaginary terrors of future punishment. Particularly offensive to him are the promises of the Gospel to the poor and miserable, and the doctrines of forgiveness of sins and regeneration, and of the resurrection of the body. This last he scoffingly calls a hope of worms, but not of rational souls. The appeal to the omnipotence of God he thinks does not help the matter, because God can do nothing improper and unnatural. He reproaches the Christians with ignorance, obstinacy, agitation, innovation, division, and sectarianism, which they inherit mostly from their fathers, the Jews. They are all uncultivated, mean, superstitious people—mechanics, slaves, women, and children. The great mass of them he regarded as unquestionably deceived. But where there are deceived, there must be also deceivers; and this leads us to the last result of this polemical sophistry. Celsus declared the first disciples of Jesus to be deceivers of the worst kind, a band of sorcerers, who fabricated and circulated the miraculous stories of the Gospels, particularly that of the resurrection of Jesus, but betrayed themselves by contradictions. The originator of the imposture, however, is Jesus himself, who learned the magical art in Egypt, and afterward made a great noise with it in his native country. But here this philosophical and critical sophistry virtually acknowledges its bankruptcy. The hypothesis of deception is the very last one to offer in explanation of a phenomenon so important as Christianity

was, even in that day. The greater and more permanent the deception, the more mysterious and unaccountable it must appear to reason.

4. LUCIAN.

About the same period the rhetorician Lucian, (born at Samosata, in Syria, about 130, died in Egypt or Greece about 200,) the Voltaire of Grecian literature, attacked the Christian religion with the same light weapons of wit and ridicule with which, in his numerous elegantly written works, he assailed the old popular faith and worship, the mystic fanaticism imported from the East, the low vulgar life of the Stoics and Cynics of that day, and most of the existing manners and customs of the distracted period of the empire. An Epicurean worldling and infidel, as he was, could see in Christianity only one of the many vagaries and follies of mankind; in the miracles only jugglery; in the belief of immortality an empty dream; and in the contempt of death and the brotherly love of the Christians, to which he was constrained to testify, a silly enthusiasm.

Thus he represents the matter in a historical romance on the life and death of Peregrinus Proteus, a cotemporary Cynic philosopher, whom he makes the basis of his satire upon Christianity, and especially upon Cynicism. Peregrinus is here presented as a perfectly contemptible man, who after the commonest and grossest crimes, adultery, sodomy, and parricide, joins the credulous Christians in Palestine, cunningly imposes on them, soon rises to the highest repute among them, and becoming one of the confessors in prison, is loaded with presents by them, in fact almost worshiped as a god, but is afterward excommunicated for eating some forbidden food, (probably meat of the idolatrous sacrifices,) then casts himself into the arms of the Cynics, travels about everywhere in the filthiest style of that sect, and at last, about the year 165, in frantic thirst for fame, plunges into the flames of a funeral pile before the assembled populace of the town of Olympia for the triumph of philosophy. Perhaps this fiction of the self-burning was meant for a parody on the Christian martyrdom, possibly of Polycarp, who about that time suffered death by fire at Smyrna.

Lucian treats the Christians rather with a compassionate smile than with hatred. He nowhere urges persecution. He never calls Christ an impostor, as Celsus does, but a "crucified *sophist*;" a term which he uses as often in a good sense as in the bad. But then, in the end, both the Christian and the heathen religions amount, in his view, to imposture; only, in his Epicurean indifferentism, he

considers it not worth the trouble to trace such phenomena to their ultimate ground, and attempt a philosophical explanation.

The merely negative position of this clever mocker of all religions injured heathenism more than Christianity, but could not be long maintained against either. The religious element is far too deeply seated in the essence of human nature. Epicureanism and skepticism made way in their turn for Platonism, and for faith or superstition. Heathenism made a vigorous effort to regenerate itself, in order to hold its ground against the steady advance of Christianity. But the old religion itself could not help feeling more and more the silent influence of the new.

5. THE NEW PLATONISTS.

More earnest and dignified, but for this very reason more lasting and dangerous, was the opposition which proceeded directly and indirectly from Neo-Platonism. This system presents the last phase, the evening red, so to speak, of the Grecian philosophy; a fruitless effort of dying heathenism to revive itself against the irresistible progress of Christianity in its freshness and vigor. It was a pantheistic eclecticism, and a philosophico-religious syncretism, which sought to reconcile Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy with Oriental religion and theosophy, polytheism with monotheism, superstition with culture, and to hold as with convulsive grasp, the old popular faith in a refined and idealized form. Some scattered Christian ideas, also, were unconsciously let in; Christianity already filled the atmosphere of the age too much to be wholly shut out. As might be expected, this compound of philosophy and religion was an extravagant, fantastic, heterogeneous affair, like its cotemporary Gnosticism, which differed from it by formally recognizing Christianity in its syncretism. Most of the Neo-Platonists, Jamblichus in particular, were as much hierophants and theurgists as philosophers, devoted themselves to divination and magic, and boasted of divine inspirations and visions. Their literature is not an original, healthy, natural product, but an abnormal aftergrowth.

In a time of inward distraction and dissolution the human mind hunts up old and obsolete systems and notions, or resorts to magical and theurgic arts. Superstition follows on the heels of unbelief, and atheism often stands closely connected with the fear of ghosts and the worship of demons. The enlightened emperor Augustus was troubled if he put on his left shoe first in the morning, instead of the right; and the accomplished elder Pliny wore amulets as protection from thunder and lightning. In their day the long-forgotten Pythagoreanism was conjured from the grave and idealized.

Sorcerers like Simon Magus, Elymas, Alexander of Abonoteichos, and Apollonius of Tyana, (A. D. 96,) found great favor even with the higher classes, who laughed at the fables of the gods. Men turned wishfully, especially toward the mysterious East, the land of primitive wisdom and religion. The Syrian cultus was sought out, and all sorts of religions, all the sense and all the nonsense of antiquity, found rendezvous in Rome. Even a succession of Roman emperors, from Septimus Severus, at the close of the second century, to Alexander Severus, embraced this religious syncretism, which, instead of supporting the old Roman state religion, helped to undermine it.

After the beginning of the third century this tendency found philosophical expression, and took a reformatory turn in Neo-Platonism. The magic power which was thought able to reanimate all these various elements and reduce them to harmony, and to put deep meaning into the old mythology, was the philosophy of the divine Plato, which in truth possessed essentially a mystical character, and was used also by learned Jews, like Philo, and by Christians like Origen, in their idolizing efforts and their arbitrary allegorical expositions of offensive passages of the Bible. In this view we may find among heathen writers a sort of forerunner of the Neo-Platonists in the pious and noble-minded Platonist, Plutarch of Bœotia, (129,) who likewise saw a deeper sense in the myths of the popular polytheistic faith, and in general, in his comparative biographies, and his admirable moral treatises, looks at the fairest and noblest side of the Græco-Roman antiquity, yet often wanders off into the trackless region of fancy

The proper founder of Neo-Platonism was Ammonius Saccas, of Alexandria, who was born of Christian parents, but apostatized, and died in the year 243. His more distinguished pupil, Plotinus, also an Egyptian, (270,) developed the Neo-Platonic ideas in systematic form, and gave them firm foothold and wide currency, particularly in Rome, where he taught philosophy. The system was propagated by his pupil, Porphyry, of Tyre, (304,) who likewise taught in Rome, by Jamblichus, of Chalcis, in Cœlo-Syria, (333,) and by Proclus, of Constantinople, (485.) It supplanted the popular religion among the educated classes of later heathendom, and held its ground until the end of the fifth century, when it perished of its own internal falsehoods and contradictions.

From its affinity for the ideal, the supernatural, and the mystical, this system, like the original Platonism, might become for many philosophical minds a bridge to faith; and so it was even to Augustine, whom it delivered from the bondage of scepticism, and

filled with a burning thirst for truth and wisdom. But it could also work against Christianity. Neo-Platonism was, in fact, a direct attempt of the more intelligent and earnest heathenism to rally all its nobler energies, especially the forces of Hellenic philosophy and Oriental mysticism, and to found a universal religion, a pagan counterpart to the Christian. Plotinus, in his opposition to Gnosticism, assailed also, though not expressly, the Christian element it contained. On their syncretistic principles the Neo-Platonists could indeed reverence Christ as a great sage and a hero of virtue, but not as Son of God. They ranked the wise men of heathendom with him. The Emperor Alexander Severus gave Orpheus and Apollonius of Tyana a place in his *lararium* by the side of the bust of Jesus; and the rhetorician Philostratus, about the year 230, idealized the life of the pagan magician and soothsayer Apollonius, and made him out a religious reformer and a worker of miracles. With the same secret polemical aim Porphyry and Jamblichus embellished the life of Pythagoras, and set him forth as the highest model of wisdom, even a divine being incarnate, a Christ of heathenism.

6. PORPHYRY.

One of the Neo-Platonists, however, made also a direct attack upon Christianity, and was, in the eyes of the Church fathers, its bitterest and most dangerous enemy. Toward the end of the third century, Porphyry wrote an extended work against the Christians, in fifteen books, which called forth numerous refutations from the most eminent Church teachers of the time, particularly from Methodius of Tyre, Eusebius of Cæsarea, and Apollonarius of Laodicea. In 435 all the copies were burned by order of the emperor, and we know the work now only from fragments in the fathers. According to these specimens, Porphyry attacked especially the sacred books of the Christians with more knowledge than Celsus. He endeavored, with keen criticism, to point out contradictions between the Old Testament and the New, and among the apostles themselves, and thus to refute the divinity of the writings. He represented the prophecies of Daniel as *vaticinia post eventum*, and censured the allegorical interpretation of Origen, by which transcendental mysteries were foisted into the writings of Moses, contrary to their clear sense. He took advantage, above all, of the collision between Paul and Peter at Antioch, (Gal. ii.) to reproach the former with a contentious spirit, the latter with error, and to infer from the whole, that the doctrine of such apostles must rest on lies and frauds. Even Jesus himself he charged with equivocation

and inconsistency, on account of his conduct in John vii, 8, compared with verse 14.

Still Porphyry would not wholly reject Christianity. Like many rationalists of more recent times, he distinguished the original pure doctrine of Jesus from the second-handed, adulterated doctrine of the apostles. In another work* he says we must not calumniate Christ, but only pity those who worship him as God. "That pious soul, exalted to heaven, is become, by a sort of fate, an occasion of delusion to those souls from whom fortune withholds the gifts of the gods and the knowledge of the eternal Zeus." Still more remarkable in this view is a letter to his wife Marcella, which A. Mai published at Milan in 1816, in the unfounded opinion that Marcella was a Christian. In the course of this letter Porphyry remarks, that what is born of the flesh is flesh; that by faith, love, and hope we raise ourselves to the Deity; that evil is the fault of man; that God is holy; that the most acceptable sacrifice to him is a pure heart; that the wise man is at once a temple of God and a priest in that temple. For these and other such evidently Christian ideas and phrases, he no doubt had a sense of his own, which materially differed from their proper Scriptural meaning. But such things show how Christianity in that day exerted, even upon its opponents, a power to which heathenism was forced to yield an unwilling assent.

7. HIEROCLES.

The last literary antagonist of Christianity in our period is Hierocles, who, while governor of Bithynia, and afterward of Alexandria, under Dioclesian, persecuted that religion also with the sword, and exposed Christian maidens to a worse fate than death. His "Truth-loving Words to the Christians" has been destroyed, like Porphyry's work, by the mistaken zeal of the later emperors, and is known to us only through the answer of Eusebius of Cæsarea. It appears to have merely repeated the objections of Celsus and Porphyry, and to have drawn a comparison between Christ and the Apollonius of Philostratus, which resulted in favor of the latter. "The Christians," says he, "consider Jesus a God, on account of some insignificant miracles falsely colored up by his apostles; but the heathens far more justly declare the greater wonder-worker Apollonius, as well as an Aristeas and Pythagoras, simply a favorite of the gods and a benefactor of men."

8. SUMMARY OF OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIANITY.

In general the leading arguments of the Judaism and heathenism of this period against the new religion are the following:

* *Περὶ τῆς ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας.*

1. Against CHRIST: his illegitimate birth; his association with poor, unlettered fishermen, and rude publicans; his form of a servant, and his ignominious death. But the opposition to him gradually ceased; while Celsus called him a downright impostor, the Syncretists and Neo-Platonists were disposed to regard him as at least a distinguished sage.

2. Against CHRISTIANITY: its novelty; its barbarian origin; its want of a national basis; the alleged absurdity of some of its facts and doctrines, particularly of regeneration and the resurrection; contradictions between the Old and New Testaments, among the Gospels, and between Paul and Peter; the demand for a blind, irrational faith.

3. Against the CHRISTIANS: atheism, or hatred of the gods; the worship of a crucified malefactor; poverty, and want of culture and standing; desire of innovation; division and sectarianism; want of patriotism; gloomy seriousness; superstition and fanaticism; and sometimes even unnatural crimes, like those related in the pagan mythology, of Œdipus and his mother, Jocaste, (*concupitus Œdipodei*,) and of Thyestes and Atreus, (*epulæ Thyestæ*.) Perhaps some Gnostic sects ran into scandalous excesses; but as against the Christians in general, this last charge was so clearly unfounded, that it is not noticed even by Celsus and Lucian. The senseless accusation that they worshiped an ass's head, may have arisen, as Tertullian already intimates,* from a story of Tacitus, respecting some Jews, who were once directed by a wild ass to fresh water, and thus relieved from the torture of thirst; and it is worth mentioning only to show how passionate and blind was the opposition which Christianity in this period of persecution had to contend.

II. THE DEFENSE OF CHRISTIANITY.

These assaults of argument and calumny called forth in the second century the Christian apologetic literature, the vindication of Christianity by the pen, against the Jewish zealot, the Grecian philosopher, and the Roman statesman. The Christians were, indeed, from the first "ready always to give an answer to every man that asked them a reason of the hope that was in them." But when heathenism took the field against them, not only with fire and sword, but with argument and slander besides, they had to add to their simple practical testimony a theoretical self-defense. The Christian apology against non-Christian opponents, and the contro-

* Apologeticus c. 16: *Somniastis caput asinum esse deum nostrum. Hanc Cornelius Tacitus suspicionem ejusmodi dei inseruit, etc.*

versial efforts against Christian errorists, are the two oldest branches of theological science.

The apologetic literature began to appear under the reign of Hadrian, and continued to grow till the end of our period. Most of the Church teachers took part in this labor of their day. The first apologies, by Quadratus, Aristides, and Aristo, addressed to the Emperor Hadrian, and the similar works of Melito of Sardis, Claudius Apollinaris of Hierapolis, and Miltiades, who lived under Marcus Aurelius, are either entirely lost, or preserved only in fragments. But the valuable apologetical works of the Greek philosopher and martyr, Justin, (166,) we possess. After him come, in the Greek Church, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, and Hermias, in the last half of the second century, and Origen, the ablest of all, in the first half of the third. The most important Latin apologists are Tertullian, (about 220,) Minucius Felix, (between 220 and 230; according to some, between 161 and 180,) and the later Arnobius; all of North Africa.

Here at once appears a characteristic difference between the Greek and the Latin minds. The Greek apologies are more learned and philosophical, the Latin more practical and juridical in their matter and style. The former labor to prove the truth of Christianity, and its adaptedness to the intellectual wants of man; the latter plead for its legal right to exist, and exhibit mainly its moral excellency and salutary effect upon society. The Latin also are, in general, more rigidly opposed to heathenism, while the Greek recognize in the Grecian philosophy a certain affinity to the Christian religion.

The apologies are addressed in some cases to the emperors (Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius) and the provincial governors, in others to the intelligent public. Their first object was to soften the temper of the authorities and people toward Christianity and its professors by refuting the false charges against them. It may be doubted whether they ever reached the hands of the emperors; at all events the persecution continued. Conversion commonly proceeds from the heart and will, and from the understanding and from knowledge. No doubt, however, these writings contributed to dissipate prejudice among honest and susceptible heathens, and to induce more favorable views of the new religion.

Yet the chief service of this literature was, to strengthen believers and advance theological knowledge. It brought the Church to a deeper and clearer sense of the peculiar nature of the Christian religion, and prepared her thenceforth to vindicate it before the tribunal of reason and philosophy; while Judaism and heathenism

proved themselves powerless in the combat, and were driven to the weapons of falsehood and vituperation. The sophisms and mockeries of a Celsus and a Lucian have none but a historical interest; the apologies of Justin and the Apologeticus of Tertullian, rich with indestructible truth and glowing piety, are read with pleasure and edification to this day.

The apologists do not confine themselves to the defensive, but carry the war aggressively into the territory of Judaism and heathenism. They complete their work by positively demonstrating that Christianity is the Divine religion and the only true religion for all mankind.

1. THE ARGUMENT AGAINST JUDAISM.

In regard to the controversy with Judaism, we have two principal sources, the Dialogue of Justin Martyr with the Jew Trypho,* based, it appears, on real interviews of Justin with Trypho; and Tertullian's work against the Jews.†

1. The *defensive* apology answered the Jewish objections thus :

(a.) Against the charge that Christianity is an apostasy from the Mosaic law, it was held that the Mosaic law was only a temporary institution for the Jewish nation, and the Old Testament itself points to its own dissolution, and the establishment of a new covenant;‡ that Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, and women, who could not be circumcised, were yet saved.

(b.) Against the assertion that the servant-form of Jesus of Nazareth, and his death by the cross, contradicted the Old Testament idea of the Messiah, it was urged that the appearance of the Messiah is to be regarded as twofold, first, in the form of a servant, afterward in glory; and that the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and the prophecies of David in Psalm xxii, and of Isaiah in chapter liii, themselves point to the sufferings of Christ as his way to glory.

(c.) To the objection that the Divinity of Jesus contradicts the unity of God and is blasphemy, it was replied that the Christians believe likewise in only one God; that the Old Testament itself makes a distinction in the Divine nature; that the plural expression: "Let us make man,"§ the appearance of the three men at Mamre,|| of whom one was confessedly God,¶ yet distinct from the Creator,** indicate this; and that all theophanies, (which in Justin's view

* *Διάλογος πρὸς Τρύφωνα Ἰουδαίου.*

† *Adversus Judæos.* Also Cyprian's *Testimonia adv. Judæos.*

‡ Isa. li, 4 sq.; lv, 3 sqq.; Jer. xxxi, 31 sqq. § Gen. i, 26: comp. iii. 22.

|| Gen. xviii, 1 sqq. ¶ xxi, 12: ∞ xix, 24.

are all Christophanies,) and the Messianic Psalms,* which ascribe Divine dignity to the Messiah, show the same.

2. The *aggressive* apology, or polemic theology, urges as evidence against Judaism :

(a.) First and mainly, that the prophecies and types of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus Christ and his Church. Justin finds all the outlines of the Gospel history predicted in the Old Testament; the Davidic descent of Jesus, for example, in Isa. xi, 1; the birth from a virgin in chapter vii, 14; the birth at Bethlehem in Micah v, 1; the flight into Egypt in Hosea xi, 1, (rather than Psalm xxii, 10?) the appearance of the Baptist in Isaiah xl, 1-17, Malachi iv, 5; the heavenly voice at the baptism of Jesus in Psalm ii, 7; the temptation in the wilderness under the type of Jacob's wrestling in Genesis xxxii, 24 sqq.; the miracles of our Lord in Isaiah xxxv, 5; his sufferings and the several circumstances of his crucifixion in Isaiah liii and Psalm xxii. In this effort, however, Justin wanders also, according to the taste of his uncritical age, into arbitrary fancies and allegorical conceits; as when he makes the two goats, of which one carried away the sins into the wilderness, and the other was sacrificed, types of the first and second advents of Christ; and sees in the twelve bells on the robe of the high priest a type of the twelve apostles, whose sound goeth forth into all the world.†

(b.) The destruction of Jerusalem, in which Judaism, according to the express prediction of Jesus, was condemned by God himself, and Christianity was gloriously vindicated.

2. THE ARGUMENT AGAINST HEATHENISM.

1. The various objections and accusations of heathens, which we have collected above, were founded for the most part on ignorance or hatred, and in many cases contradicted themselves; so that we need to notice here but a few.

(a.) The attack upon the *miraculous* in the evangelical history the apologists could meet by pointing to the similar element in the heathen mythology; of course proposing this merely in the way of *argumentum ad hominem*, to deprive the opposition of the right to object. For the credibility of the miraculous accounts in the Gospels, particularly that of the resurrection of Jesus, Origen appealed to the integrity and piety of the narrators, to the publicity of the death of Jesus, and to the effects of that event.

(b.) The *novelty* and *late appearance* of Christianity were justified

* Psa. cx, 1 sqq; xlv, 7 sqq; lxxii, 2-19, and others.

† Psa. xix, 4; comp. Rom. x, 18.

by the need of historical preparation, in which the human race should be divinely trained for Christ; but more frequently it was urged, also, that Christianity existed in the counsel of God from eternity, and had its unconscious votaries, especially among the pious Jews, long before the advent of Christ. By claiming the Mosaic records, the apologists had greatly the advantage, as regards antiquity, over any form of paganism, and could carry their religion, in its preparatory state, even beyond the flood, and up to the very gates of paradise. Justin and Tatian make much account of the fact that Moses is much older than the Greek philosophers, poets, and legislators. Athenagoras turns the tables, and shows that the very names of the heathen gods are modern, and their statues creations of yesterday. Clement of Alexandria calls the Greek philosophers thieves and robbers, because they stole portions of truth from the Hebrew prophets and adulterated them. Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and others, raise the same charge of plagiarism.

(c.) The doctrine of the *resurrection* of the body, so peculiarly offensive to the heathen and Gnostic understanding, was supported, as to its possibility, by reference to the omnipotence of God, and to the creation of the world and of man; and its propriety and reasonableness were argued from the Divine image in man, from the high destiny of the body to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, and from its intimate connection with the soul, as well as from the righteousness and goodness of God. The argument from analogy was also very generally used, but often without proper discrimination. Thus Theophilus alludes to the decline and return of the seasons, the alternations of day and night, the renewal of the waning and waxing moon, the growth of seeds and fruits. Tertullian expresses his surprise that anybody should deny the possibility and probability of the resurrection, in view of the mystery of our birth and the daily occurrences of surrounding nature. "All things," he says, "are preserved by dissolution, renewed by perishing; and shall man, the lord of all this universe of creatures which die and rise again, himself die only to perish forever?"*

(d.) The charge of *immoral conduct* and *secret vice* the apologists might repel with just indignation, since the New Testament contains the purest and noblest morality, and the general conduct of Christians compared most favorably with that of the heathens. "Shame! shame!" they justly cried, "to roll upon the innocent what you are openly guilty of, and what belongs to you and your

* Apolog., c. 43. Comp. his special tract, *De resurrectione ramis*, c. 12, where he defends the doctrine more fully against the Gnostics, and their radical misconception of the nature and import of the body.

gods!" Origen says, in the preface to the first book against Celsus: "When false witness was brought against our blessed Saviour, the spotless Jesus, he held his peace, and when he was accused returned no answer, being fully persuaded that the tenor of his life and conversation among the Jews was the best apology that could possibly be made in his behalf. . . . And even now he preserves the same silence, and makes no other answer than the unblemished lives of his sincere followers; they are his most cheerful and successful advocates, and have so loud a voice that they drown the clamors of the most zealous and bigoted adversaries."

2. To their defense the Christians, with the rising consciousness of victory, added direct arguments against heathenism, which were practically sustained by its dissolution in the following period.

(a.) The popular religion of the heathens, particularly the doctrine of the gods, is unworthy, contradictory, absurd, immoral, and pernicious. The apologists and most of the early Church teachers looked upon the heathen gods, not as mere imaginations or personified powers of nature, and deifications of distinguished men, but as demons or fallen angels. They took this view from the Septuagint version of Psalm xcvi, 5,* and from the immorality of those deities, which was charged to demons, (even sexual intercourse with the daughters of men, according to Gen. vi, 2.) "What sad fates," says Minucius Felix, "what lies, ridiculous things, and weaknesses we read of the pretended gods! Even their form, how pitiable it is! Vulcan limps, Mercury has wings to his feet, Pan is hoofed, Saturn in fetters, and Janus has two faces, as if he walked backward. . . . Sometimes Hercules is a hostler, Apollo a cowherd, and Neptune Laomedon's mason, cheated of his wages. Then we have the thunder of Jove and the arms of Æneas forged on the same anvil, (as if thunder and lightning did not exist before Jove was born in Crete;) the adultery of Mars and Venus; the lewdness of Jupiter with Ganymede, all of which were invented for the gods to authorize men in their wickedness." "Which of the poets," asks Tertullian, "does not calumniate your gods? One sets Apollo to keep sheep; another hires out Neptune to build a wall; Pindar declares Æsculapius was deservedly scathed for his avarice in exercising the art of medicine to a bad purpose; while the writers of tragedy and comedy alike take for their subjects the crimes or the miseries of the deities. Nor are the philosophers behindhand in this respect. Out of pure contempt, they would swear by an oak, a goat, a dog; Diogenes turned Hercules into ridicule; and the Roman Cynic, Varro, introduces three hundred Joves without heads." From the

* Πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἔθνῶν δαιμόνια.

stage abuses the sarcastic African father selects, partly from his own former observation, those of Diana being flogged, the reading of Jupiter's will after his decease, and the three half-starved Herculeses! Justin brings up the infanticide of Saturn, the parricide, the anger, and the adultery of Jupiter, the drunkenness of Bacchus, the voluptuousness of Venus, and appeals to the judgment of the better heathens, who were ashamed of these scandalous histories of the gods; to Plato, for example, who for this reason banishes Homer from his ideal state. Those myths which had some resemblance to the Old Testament prophecies or the Gospel history, Justin regards as caricatures of the truth, framed by demons by abuse of Scripture. The story of Bacchus, for instance, rests, in his fanciful view, on Gen. xlix, 10 sq.; the myth of the birth of Perseus from a virgin, on Isa. vii, 14; that of the wandering of Hercules on Psalm xix, 6; the fiction of the miracles of Æsculapius on Isaiah xxxv. 1 sqq. Origen asks Celsus why it is that he can discover profound mysteries in those strange and senseless accidents which have befallen his gods and goddesses, showing them to be polluted with crimes, and doing many shameful things; while Moses, who says nothing derogatory to the character of God, angel, or man, is treated as an impostor. He challenges any one to compare Moses and his laws with the best Greek authors; and yet Moses was as far inferior to Christ as he was superior to the greatest of heathen sages and poets.

(b.) The Greek philosophy, which rises above the popular beliefs, is not suited to the masses, cannot meet the religious want, and confutes itself by its manifold contradictions. Socrates, the wisest of all the philosophers, himself acknowledged that he knew nothing. On Divine and human things Justin finds the philosophers at variance among themselves: with Thales water is the ultimate principle of all things; with Anaximander, the infinite; with Anaximenes, air; with Heraclitus, fire; with Pythagoras, number. Even Plato not seldom contradicts himself: now supposing three fundamental causes, (God, matter, and ideas;) now four, (adding the world-soul;) now he considers matter as unbegotten, now as begotten; at one time he ascribes substantiality to ideas, at another makes them mere forms of thought, etc. Who, then, he concludes, would intrust to the philosopher the salvation of his soul?

(c.) But on the other hand the Greek apologists recognized also elements of truth in the Hellenic literature, especially in the Platonic and Stoic philosophy, and saw in them, as in the law and the prophecies of Judaism, a preparation of the way for Christianity. Justin attributes all the good in heathenism to the divine Logos,

who, even before his incarnation, scattered the seeds of truth, and incited susceptible spirits to a holy walk. Thus there were Christians before Christianity; and among these he expressly reckons Socrates and Heraclitus. Besides, he supposed that Pythagoras, Plato, and other educated Greeks, in their journeys to the East, became acquainted with the Old Testament writings, and drew from them the doctrine of the unity of God, and other like truths, though they in various ways misunderstood them, and adulterated them with Pagan errors. This view of a certain affinity between the Grecian philosophy and Christianity, as an argument in favor of the new religion, was afterward further developed by the Alexandrian fathers, Clement and Origen.

III. THE POSITIVE APOLOGY.

The Christian apology completed itself in the positive demonstration of the divinity of the new religion, which was at the same time the best refutation of both the old ones. As early as this period the strongest historical and philosophical arguments for Christianity were brought forward, or at least indicated, though in connection with many untenable adjuncts.

1. The great argument, not only with Jews, but with heathens also, was the PROPHECIES; since the knowledge of future events can come only from God. The first appeal of the apologist was, of course, to the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. But even a Clement of Alexandria, and, with more caution, an Origen, a Eusebius, and St. Augustine, employed also, without hesitation, apocryphal prophecies, especially the Sibylline oracles, a medley of ancient heathen, Jewish, and in part Christian fictions about a golden age, the coming of Christ, the fortunes of Rome, and the end of the world.* And, indeed, this was not all error and pious fraud. Through all heathenism there runs, in truth, a dim unconscious presentiment and longing hope of Christianity. Think of the fourth Eclogue of Virgil, with its predictions of the "virgo" and "nova progenis" from heaven, and the "puer," with whom, after the blotting out of sin and the killing of the serpent, a golden age of peace was to begin.

2. The TYPES. These, too, were found not in the Old Testament only, but in the whole range of nature. Justin saw everywhere, in

* Comp. Dr. FRIEDLIEB: *Die Sibyllinischen Weissagungen vollständig gesammelt, mit Kritischem Commentare und metrischer Uebersetzung*, Leipz., 1852. We have at present twelve books of *χρησμοὶ σιβυλλιακοὶ* in Greek hexameters, and some fragments.

the tree of life in Eden, in Jacob's ladder, in the rods of Moses and Aaron, nay, in every sailing ship, in the wave-cutting oar, in the plow, in the human countenance, in the human form with outstretched arms, in banners and trophies, the sacred form of the cross, and thus a prefiguration of the mystery of redemption through the crucifixion of the Lord.

3. The MIRACLES of Jesus and the apostles, with those which continued to be wrought in the name of Jesus, according to the express testimony of the fathers, by their cotemporaries. But as the heathen also appealed to miraculous deeds and appearances in favor of their religion, Justin, Arnobius, and particularly Origen, fixed certain criteria, such as the moral purity of the worker, and his intention to glorify God and benefit man, for distinguishing the true miracles from satanic juggleries. "There might have been some ground," he says, "for the comparison which Celsus makes between Jesus and certain wandering magicians, if there had appeared in the latter the slightest tendency to beget in persons a true fear of God, and so to regulate their actions in prospect of the day of judgment. But they attempt nothing of the sort. Yea, they themselves are guilty of the most grievous crimes; whereas the Saviour would have his hearers to be convinced by the native beauty of religion and the holy lives of its teachers, rather than by even the miracles they wrought."

The subject of *post*-apostolic miracles is surrounded by much greater difficulties in the absence of inspired testimony, and in most cases even of ordinary eye and ear witnesses. There is an antecedent probability that the power of working miracles was not suddenly and abruptly, but gradually withdrawn, as the necessity of such outward and extraordinary attestation of the Divine origin of Christianity diminished and gave way to the natural operation of truth and moral suasion. Hence Augustine, in the fourth century, says: "Since the establishment of the Church God does not wish to perpetuate miracles even to our day, lest the mind should put its trust in visible signs, or grow cold at the sight of common marvels." But it is impossible to fix the precise termination, either at the death of the apostles or their immediate disciples, or the conversion of the Roman empire, or the extinction of the Arian heresy, or any subsequent era, and to sift carefully in each particular case the truth from legendary fiction. It is remarkable that the genuine writings of the ante-Nicene Church are more free from miraculous and superstitious elements than the annals of the middle ages, and especially of monasticism. Most of the statements of the apologists are couched in general terms, and refer to extraordinary cures from

demoniacal possession, which probably includes, in the language of that age, cases of madness, deep melancholy, epilepsy, and other diseases, by the invocation of the name of Jesus. Justin Martyr speaks of such cures as a frequent occurrence in Rome and all over the world, and Origen appeals to his own personal observation; but speaks in another place of the scarcity of miracles, so as to suggest the gradual cessation theory, as held by Dr. Neander, Bishop Kaye, and others. Tertullian attributed many, if not most of the conversions of his day to supernatural dreams and visions, as does also Origen, although with more caution. But in such psychological phenomena it is exceedingly difficult to draw the line of demarkation between natural and supernatural causes, and between providential interpositions and miracles proper. The strongest passage on this subject is found in Irenæus, who, in contending against the heretics, mentions, besides prophecies and miraculous cures of demoniacs, even the raising the dead among cotemporary* events taking place in the Catholic Church. But he specifies no particular case or name; and it should be remembered, also, that his youth bordered yet almost on the Johannean age.

4. The MORAL EFFECT of Christianity upon the heart and life of its professors. The Christian religion has not only taught the purest and sublimest code of morals ever known among men, but actually exhibited it in the life, sufferings, and death of its Founder and true followers. All the apologists, from the author of the Epistle to Diognetus down to Origen, Cyprian, and Augustine, bring out in strong colors the infinite superiority of Christian ethics over the heathen, and their testimony is fully corroborated by the practical fruits of the Church. "They think us senseless," says Justin, "because we worship this Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, as God next to the Father. But they would not say so if they knew the mystery of the cross. By its fruits they may know it. We who once lived in debauchery now study chastity; we who dealt in sorceries have consecrated ourselves to the good, the increate God; we who loved money and possessions above all things else, now devote our property freely to the general good, and give to every needy one; we who fought and killed each other now pray for our enemies; those who persecute us in hatred we kindly try to appease, in the hope that they may share the same blessings which we enjoy."†

5. The RAPID SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY by purely moral means,

* Adv. hæc. I. 31, § 2, and I. 32, § 4: ἡδὴ δὲ καὶ νεκροὶ ἠγέρθησαν καὶ παρέμειναν οὖν ἡμῖν ἱκανοὶς ἔτεσι. These two passages can hardly be explained, with Heumann and Neander, as referring merely to cases of apparent death.

† Apol. I. c. 13 and 14, (p. 35 sq. ed Otto.)

and in spite of the greatest external obstacles, yea, the bitter persecution of Jews and Gentiles. Origen makes good use of this argument against Celsus, and thinks that so great a success as Christianity met among Greeks and barbarians, learned and unlearned persons, in so short a time, without any force or other worldly means, and in view of the united opposition of emperors, senate, governors, generals, priests, and people, can only be rationally accounted for on the ground of an extraordinary providence of God and the Divine nature of Christ.

6. The REASONABLENESS of Christianity, its agreement with the intellectual wants of man, and with all the true and the beautiful in the Greek philosophy and poesy. All who had lived rationally before Christ were, in the opinion of Justin, really, though unconsciously, already Christians. Thus all that is Christian is rational, and all that is truly rational is Christian. Yet on the other hand, of course, Christianity is supra-rational, not irrational.

7. The ADAPTATION of Christianity to THE DEEPEST NEEDS OF HUMAN NATURE, which it alone can meet. Here belongs Tertullian's appeal to the "*testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ*;" his profound thought that the human soul is, in its inmost essence and instinct, predestined for Christianity, and can find rest and peace in that alone. The soul, says he, though confined in the prison of the body, though perverted by bad training, though weakened by lusts and passions, though given to the service of false gods, still no sooner awakes from its intoxication and its dreams, and recovers its health, than it calls upon God by the one name due to him: "Great God! good God!" and then looks, not to the capitol, but to heaven; for it knows the abode of the living God, from whom it proceeds.* This deep longing of the human soul for the living God in Christ, Augustine, in whom Tertullian's spirit returned purified and enriched, afterward expressed in the grand sentence: "Thou, O God, hast made us for thee; and our heart is restless till it rests in thee."†

* Tert. Apolog. c. 17. Compare the beautiful passage in *De testim. animæ*, c. 2: Si enim animæ aut divina aut a Deo data est, sine dubio datorem suum novit, et si novit, utique et timet. . . . O testimonium veritatis quæ apud ipsa dæmonia testem efficit Christianorum.

† August. Confess., l. i, c. 1: Fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in Te.