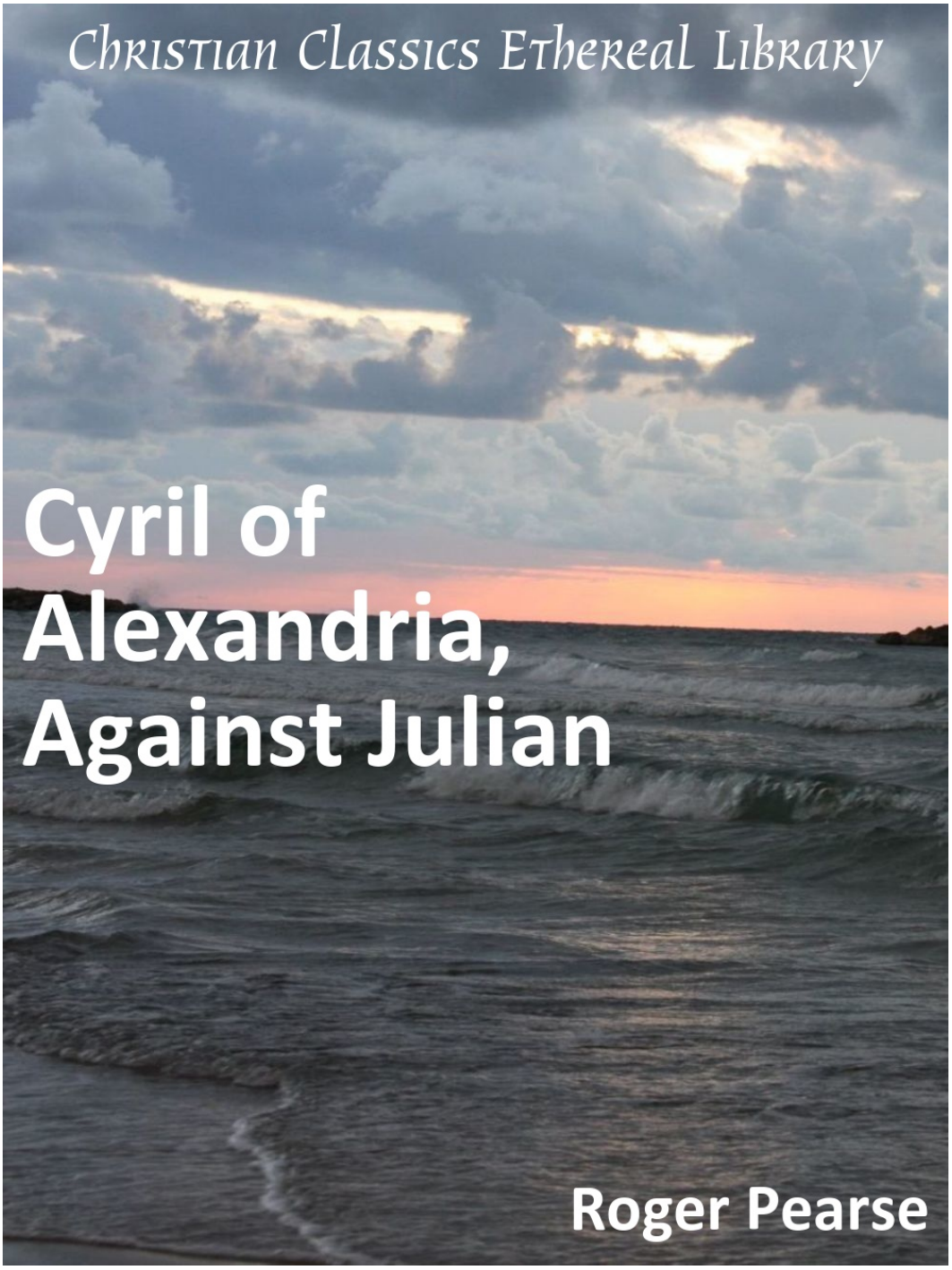

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Roger Pearse



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Cyril of Alexandria, Against Julian (2006) Prefatory Address

Address of the blessed Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria, to the very pious emperor Theodosius, devoted to Christ.

The exceptional success of your holy principate, which deserves fame but discourages praise, your incomparable provision for piety, are the heritage from On High which you echo and which you have preserved, unconquered, from the traits of envy, thanks to a skill in public affairs which you got from your father and also your grandfather, as can clearly been seen in this field. Also I propose to apply to your own person the words of our Saviour, who said: "A city on a hill cannot be hidden"; isn't what is on the heights not always, on the same basis, the same thing as that which is seen?

However what could equal Your Serenity? Nothing in the world, since the glory of your sceptre has reached the supreme limits by illuminating the whole universe with the glow of your perfect administration, while your leniency and your piety towards Christ delight Heaven — I mean the rational powers which reign in its heights. So great indeed is the admiration that you receive in these two connections that, having here and there equal and rival virtues, you have placed yourself beyond praise in all its forms. The votive offerings that others devote to you, Emperor Theodosius devoted to Christ, are the trophies of victories, crowns, thanksgivings and all other ways of honouring, not without reason, the imperial power.

2. As for us, that destiny has given to sacred service, we had the duty to offer you a work composed with the greatest care to the glory of God: your inclinations, your practice and the authentic wishes of your heart have indeed always carried you to applaud that glory, to hold execrable those who, like drunken men, insult it in one way or another, to put them in the row of your worst enemies, to gratify on the other hand with every kind of favour those who choose to glorify God in thought and word. I would willingly consider these excellent provisions as a proof of holiness, in perfect suitability to the glorious heights which you occupy. In a psalm to Christ the Saviour of the world, David, the inspired prophet exclaimed: "Didn't I hate those who hate you, Lord, and was I not consumed toward your enemies? I made myself hate them with a perfect hatred, they became my own enemies!" These words are fully justified: indeed one can give as a shining proof of his attachment to your person the combat which he ardently carries out against those who chose, I do not know through what blindness, not to love you; in the same way, one could express all the authenticity of his love for Christ by impetuously attacking those who have discredited Christianity, with on the lips, almost like a cry, these words of the Scripture inspired by God: "I am filled with a jealous zeal for the Lord!"

It is necessary for me to say now what kind of work I am offering you here.

3. Forgive me for having resolved to speak not only against a king, but also for the glory of Christ, the great King, who reigns with his Father over the world; it is with him alone that it is true to say: "Through me kings reign", because he is the "Lord of glory" in heaven and on earth. It necessarily follows that the champions of the divine teachings - us, in fact - given this office by Christ, must oppose to those who intend to defile his glory the arguments able to plead his cause, to appear sound to readers, to be a more useful aid for those whose heart is easily led astray and is inclined to yield to difficulties, and for those on the other hand who are well established in the faith to be a kind of stick able to support them in the strengthening of this faith and to maintain undimmed the tradition of orthodoxy.

However who is it that has entered into war against the glory of Christ? They are legion, those who at various periods have let themselves go at this foolishnes, driven by the perversity of the devil; but none as went far as Julian, who damaged the prestige of the Empire by refusing to recognize Christ, dispenser of royalty and power. Before his accession to the throne, he was counted among the believers: he had even been admitted to Holy Baptism and had studied the Holy Scriptures.

4. But some sinister characters, followers of superstition, entered I do not know how into connections with him and sowed in him the maxims of apostasy; then, allied with Satan in this design, they led him towards the practices of the Greeks and transformed into a servant of impure demons one who had been raised in holy churches and monasteries: "bad company corrupts good upbringing", as the very wise Paul says. However, I affirm that those who wish to preserve a solid thought, and who keep in their spirit, like an invaluable pearl, the tradition of the true faith, do not have to offer to the peddlers of superstition any occasion to insinuate themselves, in any case to speak to them freely. Is it not written: "You will be holy with the holy, irreproachable with the irreproachable, chosen with the chosen, and you will outwit the cheat"? The eloquence with which he was gifted the all-powerful Julian used against our common Saviour Christ; he composed three books against the holy gospels and against the very pure Christian religion, he used them to shake many spirits and to cause them uncommon wrongs. Indeed, the light-minded and easily seduced fall easily into his sights, and constitute a welcome amusement for the demonic powers; but not spirits strengthened in the faith which do not let themselves be disturbed sometimes: they believe that Julian knows the holy and divine Scriptures, since he accumulates in his own works without otherwise knowing well what it says!... a number of testimonies that he borrows from them.

5. Very many followers of superstition, when they meet Christians, overpower them with any kind of sarcastic remarks, and rely on the works of Julian to attack us, which they proclaim to be of an incomparable effectiveness, adding that there never was a learned man on our side able to refute them, or even show them at fault; also, at the instigation of more than one person, and full of confidence once again in the word of God: "Get under way, and

I will open your mouth!", I put myself to the duty of rebutting this Greek eyebrow raised against the glory of Christ, to help to the extent of my abilities those which have been deceived, in order to convict of error and of ignorance of the Scriptures the man who has accused our common Saviour Christ.

I dedicate my work on this subject to Your Greatness devoted to Christ and very august: may God always keep him, guarantee success against his enemies in an inimitable felicity, place the whole universe at his feet, grant to him to transmit his august power to the sons of his sons, with the approval of Christ, by whom and with whom glory to God the Father and to the Holy Ghost, for all the centuries! Amen.

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Cyril of Alexandria, Against Julian. Book 2 (beginning)

Book II

1. We thought that it was by no means unjustified, that it was even useful and necessary to say before all what is the chronological sequence of the characters, and also what idea each has of God: therefore we have carried out with much precision the exposition of these details.

We could be reproached for this by saying: "Why then, having undertaken to defend Christian doctrines and taking in mind to oppose a victorious argumentation to the blasphemies of Julian, did you not decide to engage from the start in that way? Why on the contrary have you diverted the energy which began your exposition into a different goal, to launch into genealogies and to undertake a study of Hebraic and Greek doctrines?"

So let us remove the objections that have been made to us about this choice, by affirming that we intentionally directed our matter towards this digression. Indeed, (Julian), following the example of the Babylonian Rhapsaces, doesn't hesitate to utter in unrestrained language his mocking remarks against the glory of God, and after tossing impious vociferations against our holy religion he quotes the wise ones of Greece unceasingly, crowns their condemnable opinions with all possible praise, desperate to attack the crowned teachings of the Church, to smile at the books of Moses and to put in the dock all these holy people; therefore we were fully justified in accumulating, before passing to the refutation, material which enables us to show in a clear way that the works of the greatest of all, Moses, were prior to those of the wise Greeks, and, moreover, that the Christian faith as it has been transmitted, appears incomparably superior to their dogmatic positions. It was thus, and not differently, that next books could avoid too long digressions and avoid appearing to deviate sometimes very far from the the subject. But enough now on this point.

2. It is now necessary to come to (Julian's) own book. We will reproduce his text word for word, and will oppose our own arguments to his lies in the appropriate order, because we realize that it is necessary to firmly neutralize them. But, as I said, from his open mouth without reserve he spreads every kind of calumny against our common Saviour Christ, and pours against him ill-sounding remarks: I will abstain from responding with similar details, and, advising the wise party to ignore that in his words which risks dirtying the spirit by simple contact, I will endeavour to combat this (method of) 'combat', by denouncing on all occasions his habit of scoffing which speaks wrongly and irrelevantly without ever being able to arrive at saying a true thing.

It also should be known that in his first book he handles a great mass of ideas and does not cease turning and turning over the same arguments in every direction; some developments which are found at the beginning of his work, he also advances in the body of the book and at the end: he thus reveals a kind of disorder in the articulation of his discussion, and, fatally, those who want to argue against what he says seem constantly to be repeating

themselves instead of finishing them once for all. We will thus divide his text according to an appropriate classification, we will gather his ideas by categories and will face each of them not on several occasions, but only once, the with appropriate explanations and following the rules of the art (of speaking). Thus, at the beginning of his book against us, he says:

JULIAN

> It is, I think, expedient to set forth to all mankind the reasons by which I was convinced that the fabrication of the Galilaeans is a fiction of men composed by wickedness. Though it has in it nothing divine, by making full use of that part of the soul which loves fable and is childish and foolish, it has induced men to believe that the monstrous tale is truth.

CYRIL

3. By 'Galilaeans', he means the Holy Apostles, I think, and by a 'fantastic account' the writings of Moses, the predictions of the holy saints and their declarations inspired by God. However, without his knowledge --- let us say rather: not without intervention of the divinity --- he has made this idea the basis of his own superstition!

In fact there are two Galilees, one in Judaea, the other on the borders of the Phoenician country; and it is written indeed in the Gospels about our common Saviour Christ that it is while walking on the edge of the Sea of Galilee, of Lake Tiberias, that he recruited his disciples. However God said by means of one of the holy prophets: "What are you to me, Tyre and Sidon, and you Galilee, entirely populated with foreigners?" In the same way the divine Isaiah exclaims: "Country of Zabulon, land of Nephtalim, and all you others who live by the edge of the sea, Galilee of the Gentiles! The people sitting in shadow saw a great light..."

So in Judaea, one cannot just imagine the presence of Galilaeans, since there are also all the Gentiles there: 'Galilee of the Gentiles', says Isaiah. It cannot well or clearly be seen which adversaries the book of Julian aims at in all suitability and veracity: is it us, or himself in company with the believers in the stupid superstition that he loves? Because this is also Galilaean! Well indeed, it can't be doubted for one moment that the direction of the expressions employed by Julian agrees with the nonsense of the Greeks.

4. Where indeed to find all such an apparatus of fables, those vain words, this tasteless and irresponsible jumble of fads of every kind, if not among them and them only, who, twisting their subtle inventions, try to give to falsehood the colours of truth? So strong, so widespread among them is the turpitude that the elite of their spirits, the men cracked to philosophize extremely appropriately on the world which surrounded them, have raised loud cries against the undivine transports of their poets, and affirmed openly that they should abandon their charlatanism. In fact, Plato does not approve those poems, i.e. the homeric poems, which display the gods and goddesses convicted of libidinous passions,

abused by quite human cupidities, and in addition prone to tears, deploring the death of those of their blood and breaking out like pansies in 'Woe is me!' because they want to save someone from death and are unable to do so, humbling themselves on the contrary before the fates, and yielding to Destiny, apparently more powerful than the Master of the gods, he that they call 'supreme Zeus'!

But I will not delay in saying all that I could still say on this subject; not wanting to appear to allow myself to be diverted from what is suitable, I will return to the point which my subject designates.

5. If there is a plot, it is a plot of the Greeks: it is they who undertook to use the fantastic to guarantee the truth, and not in all simplicity of spirit, but indeed with impious intentions and the satisfaction of wrongdoing! It is they who gathered against the inexpressible glory of all-powerful God this hateful 'fiction', which set up this 'deception', like some trap aimed at simple souls.

They have in effect mislaid the whole earth by pretending that the sky and the elements in general were God. As the very wise Paul writes: "While calling themselves wise, they fell into madness, and altered the glory of imperishable God by giving him the appearance of perishable man, birds, quadrupeds, and animals."

However, to run with his ideas, we will not throw against others the criticisms which he formulated and will indeed let them attack the Holy Apostles, even the very wise Moses himself and the holy prophets; but when he comes to the bar, will he clearly show what is this 'fiction implemented by malice', of what nature is this 'fantastic account' about which he speaks, in what consists the 'fondness for a fable, the puerile side' of the Christian religion! Did Moses write for us tales, when he professed one God by nature and in truth, unbegotten, eternal, imperishable, without quantity, invisible, immutable, imperceptible, God who is life and who gives life, who is science and power, creator, King and Lord of the universe? Did he deviate from the truth, the word of the holy prophets, who stick step by step to the doctrines of Moses? Will we find a teaching different in the holy Apostles? Certainly not!

6. And then, how can he affirm that the beliefs of Galilaeans do not have in them anything divine, that they are in addition hazardous fables, monstrous fictions? Who would refuse to admit that there can nothing better for men than to know clearly and without error the Craftsman and Lord of the world, one in nature and in truth? Our adversaries themselves, I know, would affirm that the most beautiful remarkable part of philosophy is contemplative philosophy: thanks to it, the spirits which their wisdom considers the best even to see go to great pains, and as much as is possible for men to do, to grasp the divine nature. Since he says that he himself is persuaded of this, would he teach us from where and from whom he obtains this certainty? Because finally it is not necessary that he flatters himself to be the only one with knowledge. If he was convinced of it himself, if that is enough for him to show without possible dispute ⊠ as at least he thinks and affirms --- that Christianity is not worth

anything, I will not hesitate to say that this is pure drivel in him, and that he just amuses himself to attack us alone! We will not submit ourselves to such a hostile judge! If on the other hand he considers that the declarations of the critics against anyone must be founded in truth and without lies, then, that he does not say that this is just his conviction; he argues with facts!

However it is indeed he himself, and not us, who he must hand over to justice for the invention of fables, and he is extremely likely to be convicted! What he said will persuade some of us: let us let him speak:

JULIAN

> 7. Now since I intend to treat of all their first dogmas, as they call them, I wish to say in the first place that if my readers desire to try to refute me they must proceed as if they were in a court of law and not drag in irrelevant matter, or, as the saying is, bring counter-charges until they have defended their own views. For thus it will be better and clearer if, when they wish to censure any views of mine, they undertake that as a separate task, but when they are defending themselves against my censure, they bring no counter-charges.

CYRIL

So it is necessary for those who you put on trial to be dumb? You require that the defendant be condemned without being able to break silence, and, without saying a word about your arguments, agrees to confirm the charge against himself! However, to refuse us the right to say anything of your theses is the act of a man who fears the controversy and is not unaware of the unpleasant weakness of his position. If our man, in examining the Christian religion, does not approve it on all points and decrees the crown of the supreme honours to the Greek superstition, I admit that he treats both equally; but if he takes pleasure in the speeches which he allows against us and gives the palm to his erroneous designs while opposing to us, as higher than ours, the Greek religion, how can he ask us to keep silence on and not to make any allusion to this religion, when, in our desire to defend the cause of our own beliefs, it is of that subject precisely that we speak?

8. If, renouncing the right to attack what you write, I had adopted the intention to mention only Greek realities, I could affirm: "His book on this subject is acceptable, and remains within the limits of probability"; but when would we defend ourselves, when we make a point of answering each one of its declarations, how does he still have the right to reproach us for our efforts to plead the cause of our religion while exposing the infamous impiety of the Greeks? Colours can be seen more clearly when there is contrast. "The light is seen in darkness", it is written, and in the same way, I believe, the beauty attached to the

virtues appears to simple souls only through the ugliness of their opposites. What inclines to me to give to the Good the palm of victory is the hideousness of the Evil: and for this reason (Julian) has indeed reason to fear the arguments of his own camp, and refuses shamefully the right to produce it on the day, going so far as to impose silence on those which he puts on trial in this lawsuit! Here now is how he opposes other objections to us:

JULIAN

> 9. It is worth while to recall in a few words whence and how we first arrived at a conception of God; next to compare what is said about the divine among the Hellenes and Hebrews; and finally to enquire of those who are neither Hellenes nor Jews, but belong to the sect of the Galilaeans, why they preferred the belief of the Jews to ours; and what, further, can be the reason why they do not even adhere to the Jewish beliefs but have abandoned them also and followed a way of their own. For they have not accepted a single admirable or important doctrine of those that are held either by us Hellenes or by the Hebrews who derived them from Moses; but from both religions they have gathered what has been engrafted like powers of evil, as it were, on these nations----atheism from the Jewish levity, and a sordid and slovenly way of living from our indolence and vulgarity; and they desire that this should be called the noblest worship of the gods.

CYRIL

The same man who poured out his smear against us to the readers, that if they wanted to contradict him, they must "must proceed as if they were in a court of law and not drag in irrelevant matter, or, as the saying is, bring counter-charges" promptly sets himself to compare the views of the Greeks and the Hebrews on the divine! But this technique of comparing and opposing, at what does it aim? What can be Julian's aim, when he brings together the disagreements between the Hebraic or Christian beliefs and the Greek ones?

10. We can't pretend that he is giving up his accusation, and his need to smear, in order to submit himself to the equitable judgement of his readers, so far as to want to take from them the definition of the best and the worst! In his position, it seems, the only way to find partisans for his ideas about the divinity is to abuse the Christian religion by giving it the worst of it in a confrontation with Greek religion. But such a defeat is impossible for those who know the weakness of error and the force of truth. But we must be on our guard: in telling the legislators to impose silence on us, and to prohibit the least remark about his own cause when we speak about ours, he falls victim to his own prohibitions.

Since he cross-examines us, and wants to know what on earth made us give up the Greek religion for that of the Hebrews, well then, let's ask him back the same question! "Why have

you yourself given up the Christian religion, and run away from the truth to embrace a lie? Why did you stupidly give preference to the most appalling superstition -- I mean that of idol-worshippers -- over a precise and certain teaching, and then think that you decided well when you have in fact drawn on yourself the final infamy? Does he want to know the real reason which made us give the Greek religion in order to hold in honour that of the Hebrews? We will borrow his own words to reply to him. Here's what he actually writes:

JULIAN

> 11. Now it is true that the Greeks invented their myths about the gods, incredible and monstrous stories. For they said that Kronos swallowed his children and then vomited them forth; and they even told of lawless unions, how Zeus had intercourse with his mother, and after having a child by her, married his own daughter, or rather did not even marry her, but simply deflowered her and then handed her over in marriage to another. Then too there is the legend that Dionysus was rent asunder and his limbs joined together again.... This is the sort of thing described in the myths of the Greeks!

CYRIL

What a defense to present! So what's the point of making a lot of noise and pretending to correct us when we have almost kicked out of existence the babbling of the Greeks, so ugly and improbable, and accorded preference to the truth? The divine Moses and after him the chorus of the holy prophets, the Apostles and the Evangelists, they sing the glory of God, one by nature and in truth; they invite us to imitate them by ripping away the myths from ourselves --- all the unbelievable forms and sleazy ideas -- and involving us in a way of life which attracts admiration. Nothing of what they say is invented, nothing in their ideas demands an incredible explanation. It is a fact that our beliefs agree with the preaching of Moses and with those of the holy prophets, and that the direction of the evangelical and apostolic teaching coincides with the ideas of our predecessors: at the proper time we will give some plain proofs of this.

12. But since (Julian) asserts -- on what head I don't know! ... -- that there is nothing serious or useful in our beliefs, well! let him prove it! Surely he isn't going to leave his assertion bare and without proof? Because anyway, how can there NOT be something serious in our beliefs? Don't we find precision and meticulousness in how Christians talk about God and the creation of the world? Don't the holy scriptures supply us with impeccable and irreproachable morality? Moreover, how can we not be struck by this obvious truth, that no other way, to my knowledge, is able to rightly address the supreme philosophy? Whether it is contemplative or even practical, our philosophical reflection can claim every kind of praise, and the followers of Greek wisdom themselves admire it. It is thus not true

that "the Hebraic doctrines taught us atheism" -- that's exactly what he wrote! --- what is true to say, is that the Scripture inspired by God has enabled us to condemn Greek ignorance. Moreover atheism is rather more a description of their beliefs, which do not know the God who is one by nature and in truth: how isn't this evidence on both sides? He also claims that "we took with Greek unconcern to a way of dissolute and nonchalant life", by calling our custom to eat of all without prohibition and to abstain from no food the "careless insouciance" of the Greeks. So these people present as the supreme act of piety, and compare it to the perfection of all virtues, the refusal to consume this or that food!

13. Well! how can they make these things the criterion of purity? Everything comes from God; is perforce good which has its Being from kindness, and he that is most holy and pure could not have created anything that would soil us. And in fact what effect could a food have on those who consume it? What sort of stain could it introduce in them? I believe that what we need to condemn is that which is likely to contaminate someone -- and, very generally, the things that can produce such an effect are the things that we must condemn; adulteries, fornications, scandalmongerings, lies, smears, greed, etc. But the Greeks -- who didn't take any notice of vice of this sort, however -- affect temperance at the table, sometimes renouncing this meat or that, without denying themselves any extravagance! Further, they enjoy honouring sovereign Zeus by voluntarily giving themselves the same appetites as his, and they honour the sovereignty of Aphrodite.

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

(Julian) reproaches us for innumerable things, but mainly he has a go at the most wise Moses, by attacking his writings without moderation. He affirms that when composing the book about the creation of the world, everything he said was untrue and that he was satisfied just to gather old fairystories, that he paid no attention to things that seemed to deserve full attention, and finally that he just wrote poor centos, while imagining that he was saying things which were wise and good to hear. Yet Julian is paralysed with amazement before the ideas of the learned Greeks in this field, and, more than very other, he crowns with acclamations and applause the doctrines of Plato.

14. He throws about insults immoderately, but still let's pass over that for the moment! On the other hand, I will try to establish, as much as I can, that he is badly wrong to take up such grand airs in connection with Greek chatterings.

It is necessary, I believe, to present afresh, by extracting them from the works of the Greeks, the various doctrines which they have judged good to profess about the creation of the world, and to oppose the cosmogony of Moses to them: the readers will thus see the verbose subtlety and drivel of these thinkers, as well as the pure source of truth which is in the writings of Moses.

Plutarch, who had some fame in his own time, speaks thus about the universe in book 2 of his collection of *Theories on Nature*: "Pythagoras was the first to name the mass of the universe the 'Cosmos', according to the order which rules in it. Thales and those who hold his doctrines profess that the universe is unique; Democritus, Epicurus and his master Metrodorus say that there is an infinity of worlds within infinity, completely by chance; Empedocles that the circle of the sun defines the limits of the cosmos; Seleucus believes in an unlimited universe, while for Diogenes the Whole is infinite, but the universe is limited. The Stoics set out a difference between the Whole and the universe: the Whole is that which includes the infinite vacuum, while the universe is the cosmos without the vacuum - so that the universe and the cosmos are one and the same thing."

15. Later the same author continues thus about the form of the cosmos: "The Stoics believe that it is spherical, others conical, others still ovoid. Epicurus opines that some worlds are spherical, and others of a different shape." On the question of knowing if the universe has or not a soul, Plutarch expresses himself thus, again by giving the theories of the Greek philosophers: "In general all have claimed that the universe has a soul and is governed by providence; but Democritus, Epicurus and those who hold to ideas about the atoms and the vacuum deny it a soul and assert that it is governed not by providence but by an irrational nature. For Aristotle, it is completely excluded that the universe has a soul, reason or thought, or even that it is governed by providence: in fact there are actually celestial regions with these qualities, because they contain spheres endowed with soul and life, while the regions close to the ground are stripped of it; they take part in an established order, but by accident and not by nature."

Enough on this chapter. But as these thinkers had it in mind to work out at the end of it all whether the cosmos was or was not perishable by nature, they also gave their conclusions on this point: Pythagoras and the stoics held that the universe, created by God, was however corruptible insofar as its own nature went; indeed, perceptible by the senses because likewise corporeal, it was nevertheless to be preserved from destruction thanks to providence and to the safeguard exerted by God. For Epicurus, the universe is perishable because it is also subjected to birth, like an animal or a plant. For Xenophanes, it has no birth but is eternal and imperishable. Aristotle regards the sublunary part of the universe as subjected to external influences: it is in these areas that terrestrial things are perishable.

16. Readers, now you have heard and understood what drivel all this is! Opposing their opinions one to another, vociferating this or that, mixed up anyhow, without nuances, self-reflection, just at their pleasure; how can this avoid the impression that they are just guessing at the truth rather than knowing it? Indeed, some prefer just one universe, others a plurality; some of them believe that this universe is subject to creation, but others are opposed totally to this and opine on the contrary that the universe is imperishable and was not created; some say it is governed by a divine providence, others do without providence and allot the

harmonious movements of the elements to automatic mechanisms and accidents; some say that the universe has a soul, others deny that it has a soul or a spirit. In short you could imagine that their theories on each detail are just tossed together, like mixed drinks!

But our man has put Plato apart from the others, and he especially likes to linger over his doctrines. However I will say at once that Plato and Pythagoras offer more reasonable ideas about God and the cosmos than the others, because they collected their teaching or rather their knowledge during their stays in Egypt, where the very wise Moses is held in great regard, and where his doctrines are held in reverence and admiration. It is however claimed that Plato contradicted himself in his opinions, and that Aristotle, who was his disciple, not chose to adhere to the ideas of his Master, but to attack him thoroughly and to contradict him! Porphyry tells us that in expressing his ideas on the sky, Plato professed that the material part of it was composed of the four elements, the bond between them being a soul. "Also," Porphyry continues, "it is still today of a mixed nature, and it has received its name by misuse of terminology".

17. Porphyry speaks here, I believe, as an etymologist, and affirms that the sky is called 'ouranos' because it is visible [in Greek: ' *oratos*']: i.e. the sky was so-called because it is 'seen'. Aristotle had a different opinion on this subject ---- and how could he not, since he does not regard the sky as a compound, still less containing four elements, but considers it like a fifth type of body, independent of the first four and without anything in common with them? Plato himself, professes that the world has a soul and that it is a living being endowed with intelligence; he subordinates it to providence. But his disciple, to return to him, did not think so. He rejects completely the idea that the universe has a soul, is intelligent, or is governed by providence. Under one scheme, it is defined as created and corruptible by nature at least; the other treats the idea of birth as ignorant, and says on the contrary that it is imperishable and uncreated. Another divergence: the skilful and illustrious Plato defines three principles of Everything: God, matter and Idea; God is a creator, matter is substance, Idea is the model of any thing created. Aristotle, once again, is opposed to him, without any point of agreement. To start with, he refuses to regard Idea as a principle, in his thought and writings, and supposes two principles: God and matter. Still let us say that if Plato supports the theory that there are three principles which make up Everything, God, matter and Idea, he also introduces a fourth which he names the 'universal soul'. Moreover, after having said that the matter is uncreated, he claims that it is thereafter subjected to creation; as for the definition of Idea, after having presented it as a substance itself, he starts to battle against his own theories, since he affirms that it exists in the thought of God, and that it thus does not have a separate existence, i.e. subsistence.

18. So which one do we give our approval to, when we seek the truth, when we seek to start along on the irreproachable way from which every error is banished? Which of the thinkers quoted can we declare innocent of the wrong of telling a lie? Which do we reward

as not having stumbled in some detail? Or rather how can we grant a right to teach others, to those who have traveled so far from the truth that they disagree not only with each other but even with themselves?

The very wise Julian approves and admires this state of affairs! He scoffs at the writings of Moses and, throwing reason aside, he dares to oppose those of Plato to them, while speaking as follows:

JULIAN

At this point of our study, if you please, we will compare the utterance of Plato. Observe then what this philosopher says about the creator, and what words he makes him speak at the time of the generation of the universe, in order that we may compare the cosmogony of Plato with that of Moses. Thus we can perceive who was the better and who more worthy of God, Plato the idolater, or he of whom the Scripture says that God spoke with him face to face:

> "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was invisible and without form, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters. And God called the firmament Heaven. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass for fodder, and the fruit tree yielding fruit. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven that they may be for a light upon the earth. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to rule over the day and over the night."

19. In all this, you observe, Moses does not say that the deep was created by God, or the darkness or the waters. And yet, after saying concerning light that God ordered it to be, and it was, surely he ought to have gone on to speak of night also, and the deep and the waters. But of them he says not a word to imply that they were not already existing at all, though he often mentions them. Furthermore, he does not mention the birth or creation of the angels or in what manner they were brought into being, but deals only with the heavenly and earthly bodies. It follows that, according to Moses, God is the creator of nothing that is incorporeal, but is only the disposer of matter that already existed. For the words, "And

the earth was invisible and without form" can only mean that he regards the wet and dry substance as the original matter and that he introduces God as the disposer of this matter.

CYRIL

About Moses there might be many things to say and lengthy expositions made to he who wants to safeguard our reverence for him. He heard God say to him without ambiguity, "I know you out of all humanity, and you have found grace in my eyes!" The manifold virtue that was in him, and the power of the miracles that he worked in Egypt, make a shining demonstration. Indeed he was shown submitted to God almighty, and assisted him in the revolt which He brought about in his servants against the blindness of the Egyptians. What kind of man Plato was, even in the absence of direct testimony, is proclaimed enough by his passage from Athens in Sicily. It is claimed that, not appreciating his flatteries, Dionysius sold him, inflicting on him, as if he wasn't a free man, the most suitable punishment for a slave. But let us give up this argument for a moment, to return to the main subject.

20. The divine Moses does not appear before our eyes as one who composed doubtful stories, nor one who launched himself out on this road from simple ambition. He had in mind primarily to contribute to making lives led better. And in fact he did not attempt to discourse subtly on the nature of the things, by speaking about what the first principles are named, or about the elements which proceed from it; these things are, in my opinion, too obscure, and inaccessible to some minds. His goal was to form the spirits of his contemporaries with the doctrines of the truth: because they were being misled and had taken to worshipping each according to his imagination. Their extreme ignorance made them ignore the one God, God by nature, and to worship his creations. Some thought that the sky was god, others the disc of the sun; there were even some wretched enough to allot the glory of the supreme nature to the moon, the stars, the earth, to plants, to the watery element, birds, or to brute animals! They had come to this, and such a terrible sickness had affected all the inhabitants of the earth, when Moses came to their help and revealed himself as the initiator into knowledge of great value for all. He proclaimed clearly that there exists by nature only one Creator of the universe, and radically distinguished Him from all other realities which He had merely brought into being and existence. Considering what was useful, and as clearly as possible, neglecting every excessively subtle point, he restricted himself to deal only with that which was strictly essential.

21. How was it useful to him to say what is the nature of the waters, and how they were present at the beginning, or to probe the deeps and the nature of the heavens, to detour into the mode of existence of the angels? It would be difficult for anyone to cover such subjects, which I think that no one understands anyway! Would anyone even be able to do it (thanks to a knowledge lent by God, who had been there tell him), or been able to understand a so subtle speech - or rather one so inaccessible to the spirit? In fact, we find among men, at the time when the book of the very wise Moses was written, an ignorance which exceeds even

that of the Greeks. That which should have made possible for those people to understand fully the glory of God was lost, it is obvious from the account, in the pit of the deepest stupidity. As the Scripture inspired by God says, the men of that time should have had some idea of the Creator and maker of the universe from the beauty of things created. But they reached such a degree of wrong thinking that the things that should have led them to the knowledge of the truth shows that they were disposed instead to follow a lie. The very wise Paul bears a witness worthy of trust to this idea by writing, "Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their linking and their senseless minds were darkened."

22. This declaration could touch those who invented the vulgar superstitions, coarse and completely unreasonable; the men, for example, to which as I said the book of Moses was addressed. They are revealed as filled up full of stupidity, as we will realize easily by studying the body of doctrines of their successors.

Plutarch, an extremely subtle man, wrote on this subject in book I of his collection of *Theories on nature*:

> "See from where they drew their idea of God: unceasingly the sun, the moon and the other stars, following courses which pass under the earth, rise with always the same colors and identical dimensions, at the same places."

And further in the same book:

> "The concept of God is defined thus: an intelligent and fiery breath, lacking form but changing at will and making themselves resemble any thing. Men, in the beginning, conceived an idea like this starting from the beauty of the spectacle which they had before their eyes, because no beautiful thing is born randomly and fortuitously; it needs art to create it!"

I will add to this quotation that which Hermes Trismegistes has written *To his spirit* (that's the title of the book):

> "Thus, do you say, God is invisible? What a heap of blasphemies! Who is more visible than Him? If He created, it is so that this is seen in everything. The excellence of God, his virtue, it is to be visible in everything!"

23. We will find agreement on this point from the accuser of our pious religion, Julian! He professes that the knowledge of God is not taught, that man acquires it by himself; here what he writes:

JULIAN

> Our first proof that this is not learned, that it is innate to mankind is the devotion to the divine, a general characteristic of mankind, in private life and in public life, in the individual and in the community. In fact we have faith in something divine, however vague. But to give specific details on this something is a difficult thing for anyone, and even those who know it cannot do so fully.

And further:

> To this idea, common to all mankind, is added another: we all have a nature so dependent on the heavens and the gods that are seen there that, even if someone imagines a different god to ours, he always assigns him the heavens as his residence: it is not that he banishes him from earth; but he so to speak establishes the King of the All in the heavens as in the most honourable place of all, and conceives of him as overseeing from there the affairs of this world.

CYRIL

So we see how those pagans who can't endure the crasser errors (worthy of charlatans, and if I might say so, of serfs) and who have abandoned the popular way of looking at things, have not been entirely deprived of the true concept of God. They have worked out what must be the superiority of power of Him who can bring so vast and wonderful a creation under the control of harmonious laws.

24. As for the rest under discussion here, they didn't recognise God through his creation. They were lured away, losing all human common sense. Not content just to worship the heavens, the earth, the moon and the others stars, they also installed in sacred enclosures representations (of them) in varied forms. They engraved there the silhouettes, not only of men, but even of unintelligent animals, of birds and other beasts, and they gave these idols the titles of 'gods' and 'saviours'!

How can we not admire the wisdom of Moses? He concealed from the men of that time everything that was complicated, deep, difficult to assimilate, in order to reveal to them instead what would enable them to recover sane ideas, and something which had the virtue to put them on the right road to an irreproachable teaching -- I mean a teaching of an all-powerful God. In the same way we would congratulate for very good reasons the schoolmaster who puts himself at the intellectual level of his pupils, in order to lead them by the hand, step by step, towards discovering sacred truths, without putting to them, at the very beginning, any too elaborate ideas, or any very hard to grasp. At the same time we would refuse

to recognise Moses as worthy of praise, who acted in the same way? But Julian, if Moses doesn't seem to you to have said anything worth hearing, do you want us to look at the teaching which is dearest to you? Let's see rely as best we can on the meticulous *Theogony* of Hesiod!

25. This poet indeed pretends to hear the voice of the gods and makes as if he were possessed by the Muses (as if that were a significant or desirable thing!)

"Tell me
(he writes) how
at first the gods
and the earth
were born,
The rivers, the
infinite sea
which swells
and foams,
The sparklings
stars, and the
immense sky
over all."

Further, he tells of the birth of chaos and night, without saying how it occurred:

"First the
earth gave
birth to the
starry sky, its
equal,
Able to entirely
cover it..."

After revealing that the sky was the son of the earth, he adds that the latter, married to the sky, gave birth to the seas, then

"Koeos,
Krios, Hyper-
ion, Japet..."

and also Theia, Rheia, Themis and Mnemosyne. He adds Phoebus to this list, 'golden-crowned', as he calls him, then Tethys. In his opinion, the last of all these children was

Kronos. On top of this he piles up a complete hotchpotch of whimsical and incoherent stories.

Perhaps Julian will claim that Hesiod has made up all these fairy-tales as a poet does: in fact maybe he blushes at the fables of Hesiod! But then why did these take some of it from the hierophant Moses, who composed a clear and accurate work, based on real facts? In fact he affirmed that God created the sky and the earth, the sun and the moon, the stars, light, animals which fly and those which swim, various brute beasts, the splendour of vegetation, edible fruit and the grass of the meadows.

26. See how the text of Moses very wisely cuts short the error which the ancients fell into: don't they name the heavens Zeus, the earth Demeter, the sun Apollo, and the moon 'the noisy goddess with the rod of gold', i.e. Artemis? In a word, allotting according to their imagination a share of glory to each creature of God, they adored these creatures as divinities.

However the description made by Moses of the creation of the world was clear, easily comprehensible, without anything lacking in its great exactitude. And that's what we're going to have to show. "In the beginning," he writes, "God created the heavens and the earth." So he denies that matter shared with God the time before the beginning, eternity; or that it was uncreated, as some say. He doesn't present something that didn't exist at one time as coinciding with and coexistant with the eternal; he doesn't confuse the temporary, something which was brought into existence with difficulty, with that which is from time immemorial; something that changes to something which is always itself; nor something which is corruptible with that which is incorruptible! On the contrary, he makes creation happen in a moment, the principle that refers to things brought into existence, because starting from nothing it was brought to be what it is according to the divine will. What he certainly does not say, is that matter existed already, had already been invented, and that God limited himself to being its director and workman, giving form to what was amorphous, and only imposing on matter different qualities, dimensions and volumes. On the contrary he says that, thanks to a secret and unutterable power, in the beginning God brought into being what was not and did not exist in any way whatever!

27. As for the way in which he made creation happen, we do not have the means to say. I affirm that it is beyond any way of expression known to us: how indeed could what exceeds understanding be explained? In my opinion, the approach imagined by the supreme Being and the way that leads to an understanding of his enterprise will be always as inaccessible to our human condition as we are by nature lower than this Being himself. When Moses said, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth", understand that he condenses and summarizes in some way all the details in a single word, when he describes the genesis of all creation. Then, he attempts to say somehow how this creation was put in order and how all the things created were assigned the role in life which they have.

Moses also states that that God created through the all-powerful Word: in fact his creator-Word of the universe is God himself and proceeds from God by nature. "God said," Moses continues, "Let there be a firmament!" and this firmament instantaneously becomes real by the operation of the Word, and God gives it the name of 'heaven'. "God said: Let the dry land appear!" and the waters gather in a single body. God said moreover: 'Let the sun be!' and it was; and so for the moon, the stars, the day, the terrestrial and aquatic animals, and the birds. But by nature the elements themselves cannot draw from their own resources the possibility of escaping corruption, on the contrary, they need the hand of He that maintains them in good condition: this is the sense of the words of Moses: "the breath of God was moving over the waters." Indeed the breath of God vivifies anything, because He is life also by nature, as He proceeds from the life of the Father; everything needs Him, and there is no other means for anything to obtain existence in order to be what it is.

28. So contemplate, as I have just said, the firmament firmly established by the Word and the firm ground emerging after the gathering of the waters in a single body; contemplate the green earth full of grass and trees, and the vital forces included in them which makes possible for them to conceal their transitory nature with the virtue of eternity, to last and remain; see the luminaries of the firmament, created by God only for the purpose of lighting what is on earth, to mark the moments of time, the days, the years! Moses adds that the earth accepted the order to give rise to the brute animals, the Creator on his side distributing to each its form, size and conditions of existence.

And when everything in the world had finally been created, when nothing for lacking to supply the needs of man, then, and only then, did the Creator begin to think of the way in which He was going to realise man himself. Because the creation of man, unlike the other creative acts, could not be improvised. The supreme being, in the conception of some and actually, is just grandeur and perfection -- some even say that it is the loss of any spirit, any language, any admiration: however He decided to form the animal in His own image, as much as could be made. Also, having every reason to ensure that this, which must be in His image and resemblance, namely man, did not appear weak, contemptible or different enough from the other animals, He chose to create him only after serious reflection.

29. However, it will be said without inaccuracy, that nothing could escape the divine spirit, since He knows everything indeed before it is born; why then did God reflect, even though He knew in advance the nature of man? The incomparable Moses, as I said, affirms that it was in conformity with the divine economy that man was to some extent honoured by the deliberation of the Creator; he shows that his creation was not done quite simply, might one say, not just like any other: everything happens as if God had taken a particular care of this action. The expression is undoubtedly forced --- but I grant that it appears quite sensible; we affirm that the man is most important of the animals, and was made to resemble He that created him.

The irresistible will of God brought into existence the whole of creation: it is not difficult, I think, to convince ourselves of this, even if we only read what Julian's Masters of Superstition wrote. All of them believed that it was right to think and say that everything was somehow created by God, spiritual realities or physical realities, invisible things or visible things. They were unanimous in confessing that everything is in the hands of the King and Lord of the universe; Plato even ascribes these words to him:

> "Gods of the gods, works of which I am the Creator and the Father..."
>
> [**Extract from the *Timaeus*; see ch. 33 below**].

But we have already quoted the Greeks on this point, and I want to avoid repetition. I will however mention the words of Hermes Trismegistus in his book *To Asclepius*.

30. This says: "Osiris exclaimed: Then, O very great Good Genius, how did all the earth appear? And the great Good Genius answered: According to a preconceived plan and, as I said, by draining; the body of water received from the Lord the order to draw itself together, the whole earth appeared, muddy and shaken by tremors; the sun then began to shine, spreading its heat without pause, and made the earth dry, which stood within water, surrounded by water." Another passage reads: "the Creator and Lord of the universe shouted: Let the earth be, let a firmament appear! and all at once the earth was, the first element of creation. " So much for the earth; about the sun Hermes speaks as follows: "Osiris said: Thrice great Good Genius, from where did this large sun appear? and the other answered: Osiris, do you wish us to relate the birth of the sun, the way in which it appeared? It appeared by the providence of the supreme Master! The creation of the sun by the supreme Master was done by the operation of his holy and creative Word."

In a similar way, Hermes writes in book I of his *Detailed Commentary to Tat*: "the Lord of the universe shouted at once by his holy, spiritual and creative Word: Let the sun be! and, at the very moment he said it, the fire which proceeds from an ascended nature --- I understand by this, the unmixed fire, the brightest, most effective and fertile that may be --- was attracted to Nature thanks to the breath which animated it, and was gathered by his care towards the high parts, far from water."

31. Everything was created on the orders of God and by the operation of the creative Word: that, man must think, and it is in conformity with the truth to say it. But how, and by what means it was so, God alone knows!

God distributes to each thing created this or that type of being according to His good pleasure. He determines the mode of existence of each. To be convinced of this, it is only necessary to listen to Moses: "Let there be a firmament! and it was so", and again: "Let the waters gather in one place and let the dry ground appear!" Such formulas determine the exact nature of each thing which is brought into being.

However, once again, Hermes Trismegistus the Greek raises the subject; he puts into his work God saying to the creatures:

> "I will impose to you as an obligation, you who are subject to me, this commandment which was given to you by my Word; make it your law!"

Indeed, as I have just said it, the Creator allotted a natural law to each creature, and those appear, at the discretion of God, to have received some arbitrary type of existence, or to have not received it.

This would be the direct and sincere way to present things, but Julian is dazzled beyond reason by the views of Plato and writes:

JULIAN

> Now hear what Plato says about the universe : "Now the whole heaven or the universe,----or whatever other name would be most acceptable to it, so let it be named by us,----did it exist eternally, having no beginning, or did it come into being, and had some beginning? It has come into being, because it can be seen and handled and has a body. All such things are things we can touch, and such things can be understood by thought based on using our senses."

And further on

> "So, according to reason and probability, we must say that this universe is an animal possessing a soul and intelligence, and in very truth, it owes its beginning to the providence of God."

CYRIL

32. We see then clearly what he -- who, for Julian is the "divine and very wise Plato" -- says: the whole world -- his words -- is submitted to begin sometime, to have a beginning. It can be handled, seen, and has a body, and can be understood by thought based on using our senses, and was created by the providence of God!

Julian depends entirely on Platonic tricks of speech, and he spins crowns of praise unceasingly to Plato. But he was mistaken just like Plato; none of his ideas is beyond criticism, and it could be said that he turns around with any wind. We'll go without delay and highlight an example, thanks to a new quotation of his, here:

JULIAN

Let us compare one thing with another, and no more: what kind of creation does the God of Moses do, what kind that of Plato? "God said: Let us create man in our image and our resemblance; and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the animals, and of all the earth, and all the animals which walk on the earth. And God created man, He created him in the image of God; male and female He created them, and God blesses them, saying: Grow and multiply, fill up the ground, bring it under control, rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, over all the beasts and all the earth."

33. Listen now to the speech which Plato gives to the Creator of the universe: "Gods of the gods, the works of which I am the Creator and Father will be indissoluble as long as it be my will; because if all that was made can be unmake, to want to unmake what was well arranged and which is in good condition is the deed of the malicious! Also, since you were created, let you be neither immortal nor very indestructible: however, you will not be destroyed, you will not fall under the blow of a mortal destiny, since your lot is to depend on my will, a bond stronger and more sovereign still than those which bound you to your birth. However learn the instructions that I give you. There remain still three mortal races to be created; as long as they do not exist, the heavens will be imperfect, because it will not contain all the races of living beings. However, if I created them myself and communicated life to them, they would be like gods; so in order that they are just mortals and that this All is truly the All, devote yourselves according to your nature to the creation of living beings, by imitating my power as I showed it at the time of your creation. And, those of them whom it is advisable for them to bear the same name as the immortals, which is called 'divine' and which guides those among them who always agree to obey justice, and to you others, I will give you the seed and the principle. For the remainder, mixing the mortal with the immortal, manufacture and generate living beings, give them food to make them grow, and at their death receive them back again!"

CYRIL

34. So this brave man, full of ardour in his attacks against us, derides the creation of man --- i.e. that which the incomparable Moses has revealed --- and regards as negligible the idea that human nature is created with the image and resemblance of God!

But what sensible person would disagree that this is one of those ideas which best constitute an embellishment? Is there anything better than to say that we are marked with the

divine image? And don't we affirm that the divine substance is that which is most elevated, most sublime in the refulgence of its inexpressible glory, that this truly constitutes the whole of the forms and beauties of virtue? Who would not be struck with the obviousness of what I have just said? So why does Julian sneer at such exceptional realities? Why does he deride that right to dominate the universe with which the thinking and reasoning animal, the one most similar to God of all those which populate the earth, i.e. man, was honoured?

Moreover nature itself agrees with the accounts of Moses; but Julian makes no argument from probabilities, and purely and simply denies this view of things, holding only to the words of Plato! He also expresses his admiration, and that in a quite ill-considered way, before the harangue which the philosopher made up, I don't know how, and in which the supreme God is supposed to address himself to created 'divinities' who do not deserve such a name.

35. It is necessary, I think, also to answer him on this point.

If Plato is inventing some fiction and, as is the habit of poets, lends to the character of God the words which he considers appropriate to him, he badly missed the mark, and we could sharply scold him for not knowing how to handle a prosopopy appropriately! If on the other hand he claims to have heard the voice of God, then to hell with his drivel! It is impious to claim that God the master of the universe allowed false divinities to share a glory which is his, and his alone, since He said: "I will not give my glory to another, nor my virtues to graven images!"

Come! in few words let's oppose the truth to the writings of Plato, as follows.

I wish indeed that we could agree that the spiritual powers On High, born of God, were honoured with the name of 'god', since we say that there are in heaven those who bear the names of 'gods' and 'lords'; and besides we ourselves received the honour of such a title, when God spoke thus to us:

> "I said: You are gods, and you are all the sons of the Almighty."

But, in this case, there is an explanation which is essential, and this declaration of God on this subject could be well the most obvious proof of his benevolence.

In fact, when the Creator of the world had made the thinking and reasonable creature, according to His own image and His own semblance, in His great kindness He honoured it with the name of 'god': and there was nothing wrong with this, since we also are accustomed to giving, say for example to a portrait of a man, this same name of 'man'!

36. Therefore the thinking and reasonable creature, because God holds it in greater regard than those lacking reason and thought, seems to have received in part a higher glory since the denomination of 'god' haloed it with gold; in any case, absolutely no other creature was named 'god'. In fact, like the universe, the sky is not a living being in the true sense of the expression, it is not even endowed with a soul.

Even if none of our writers went so far as to guarantee these positions, it would be enough to support them, in the absence of others considered 'sages', to refer to the disciple of Plato in person, Aristotle. This last said, as we have already affirmed, that the universe is in no way endowed with a soul, nor reason, nor thought. In these cirumstances, the force of truth has prevented Julian from claiming that the universe --- or the Whole, as it could be, to employ the proper term of Plato --- is endowed at all with a soul or even thought, since there are in his camp, as I said, a group of those who touch him more closely on this point than his most resolute contradictors!

It is not likely that God gave the mission of creation to gods completely stripped of soul or thought: this arises from the nature of the problem itself, if it is subjected to suitable examination. Who can imagine the Creator of the world entrusting to other divinities the creation of the three races? Would one speak of hesitation on his side, or of total contempt for our destiny? Such attitudes are in my opinion completely foreign to the supreme Essence!

37. Because, if the Creator is good, how could he express hesitation towards some task?

> "It was --- Plato also affirms this --- actually a kindness; however a good being does not nourish ill will towards nothing."

As for claiming that God showed scorn, that would amount to allotting vanity and attributing arrogance to Him.

However, how could he allow himself to reign over beings whom he judged as unworthy for him to create? Or how is it that he takes pleasure from our worship if he couldn't be bothered to create us in the first place?

That He demands that we honour Him, that He requires obedience and understands that human nature is like his in every kind of virtue, it would be the easiest thing in the world for me to bring a thousand veracious testimonies drawn from the inspired Scripture. But as Julian grants especially his confidence to those of his own kind, I recall that Porphyry wrote in book II of his work *On Abstinence from animal flesh*:

> "Let us also therefore sacrifice, but let us sacrifice as appropriate, to God who rules the whole universe, as a sage has said. No material offerings, no clouds of incense, no formulas of consecration! Because there is no material body which does not appear from the start impure with respect to the immaterial one. Therefore the word itself, when it passes by words, is inappropriate for God, nor the interior word, when soiled by the evil of the soul: let us adore him through the purity of silence, the purity of thoughts which we form on him! Thus uniting ourselves to God and assimilating ourselves to him, we must offer to him the holy sacrifice of our intellect, which will be at the same time a hymn to his glory and the path of our safety. However it is in the absence of passions and the contemplation of God that achieves this sacrifice."

38. So God wants us to honour him, and that by the holiness of our life, we will conform ourselves to him on the spiritual level, by engraving his beauty in our souls.

But then, tell me Julian, how can he demand this attitude of us, if he has almost abandoned us to other creators, and stripped us of the privilege of being made by him which he gave to all other creatures? What leads him to provide for things here below if they are, as Plato says, given as playthings to other divinities?

Because he exercises his providence, and his care and benevolence extend to the smallest things; to learn this we can listen to one who knew God as his father:

> "Are not two sparrows sold for an as? However not one of them will fall to the ground without the consent of our Father."

Perhaps Julian will declare the formula inadmissible because false --- because he contorts himself furiously against God! --- but will this receive a good reception from people of his group, I mean people as deceived as him? Thus Alexander, the disciple of Aristotle, has written in his treatise *On Providence*:

> "To say that God refuses to grant his providence to things here below, is to go resolutely against the concept of God: because one needs a certain ill will and a nature completely perverted not to do good when one can do it; both one and the other ideas are foreign to God, in him is found neither both nor either of them. So it remains that God can and will exercise his providence on the things here below; however it is obvious that he exercises this providence if he can and wishes to do so. Nothing then, among things fortuitious, could in good logic exist without the divine decision and will."

39. Some claim that Plato himself shared this thesis, and it is public knowledge that Zeno of Citium and the Stoics assert it. So from their testimony it results that human things

are the object of providence on the part of the Almighty, the single and natural God of the universe. --- "And then, will someone say, what can we conclude from that?" --- well, it is appropriate for a God, exercising of his own wish his providence, not to deprive the human race of his most precious gift, which is to be created by Him, and not to see the job allotted to creators themselves created and which are divine only in name and not by any other measure --- if it is true that it will always be repugnant to the divine glory to allow others the power to create and invite nothing-beings to do it. Because it is impious to claim that the appropriate and privileged character of the divine and unutterable nature can belong naturally to such or such of the creatures which it created. In fact these features are indeed appropriate only to the divine nature and to it alone, and display its glory to a supreme degree. Inaccessible to a creature --- I mentioned this above --- are the exclusive privileges of being single and supreme, and we affirm that one of these privileges is to be able to act as creator and to bring beings from nothing into existence. Under these conditions, how could a nature resulting from birth and creation, destined inevitably for corruption by the same laws which are its being, hold the active role of God?

40. In fact, if to create is regarded as a form of knowledge in God, one cannot present as irrational the gift of the creative capacity made by God to his creature: doesn't it sometimes happen to us that we create things starting from something already made, while using suitable know-how? If on the other hand, as I said, the fact of creating in the way that God does constitutes an ability and capacity pertaining only to an exceptional nature, and exceeds the measure of a creature, why do those people belittle the privilege of the supreme nature, and grant according to their good pleasure to beings created and promised to corruption? After which, persuaded that they have in their heads an idea of genius, they denature instead the words of God, by claiming that the Uncreated has confided to created beings the power to bring into existence what is specific to him only. --- OK, they say, but then it follows that a thing created by God should be stronger than death and corruption! --- Thus, friends, it is from jealousy towards certain beings that the Creator refused to give them the best part, that on the contrary He condemned them to a worse, one could say, by not being willing to create them! Apparently, He has avoided the fate which prohibited Him from creating mortal beings --- perhaps even He was unaware of this fate completely?

If they claim that God was in ignorance, the creature knows more than Him: the creators, they affirm themselves, were perishable beings! If on the other hand, giving up this position, they accept that God knew, how then would a good being refuse to do what he knows to be good? Because in the end it is quite true that the immortal one is preferable to the mortal!

[To be continued]

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