

*Armenian Fragment.**(Frag. iii. of Pitra.)*FROM AN EPISTLE OF ARISTIDES TO
ALL PHILOSOPHERS.

Πάντ' ἔπαθε παθήματα ἀληθινῶ σὺν αὐτοῦ σώματι, ὃ θελήματι Κυρίου καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος δεξάμενος, ἥνωσε τὴν σάρκα¹ ἐαυτῷ² τὴν παρὰ³ παρθένου Ἑβραϊκῆς τῆς ἁγίας Μαρίας ἀρρητῶ καὶ ἀτόμῳ ἐνότητι.

Now with reference to the foregoing passage, we may say at once that the concluding terms are not second-century language at all. On the other hand, the reference to the "Hebrew virgin" is precisely the language of the Apology. Further, the opening words of the fragment, with their allusion to a real passion of a real body, are certainly anti-Docetic, and therefore may be taken as second-century theology. We may compare with them the sentiments of the Ignatian epistles, as for example the letter to the Smyrnaeans (c. ii.), where we read:—

ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα ἔπαθεν δι' ἡμᾶς· καὶ ἀληθῶς ἔπαθεν, ὥς καὶ ἀληθῶς ἀνέστησεν ἐαυτόν· οὐχ ὥσπερ ἄπιστοί τινες λέγουσιν τὸ δοκεῖν αὐτὸν πεπονθέναι.

It does not, therefore, seem as if these words in the opening of the fragment were a translator's invention or addition. They have a second-century ring about them. If so, then the extract is either a translation of a paragraph of the Apology, or of some other tract by the same writer, and probably the latter. We have, however, no means of discriminating further the original form of the sentence from the later accretions. It is, however, by no means impossible that the heading may be correct; that Aristides may have written an epistle or address to Philosophers on the subject of the Christian religion in general, or of the Incarnation in particular.

¹ The same word is used by the translator to render *σῶμα* and *σὰρξ*.

² More exactly *ἐαυτοῦ*: an additional word being necessary in the Armenian in order to give the sense 'conjunctit sibi': but the sense seems to require *ἐαυτῷ*.

³ Or *ἐκ*.

THE APOLOGY OF ARISTIDES, TRANSLATED
FROM THE SYRIAC.

Again, the apology which Aristides the philosopher made before Hadrian the king concerning the worship of God.

[To the Emperor] Caesar Titus Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, from Marcianus Aristides, a philosopher of Athens.

I. I, O king, by the grace of God came into this world; and having contemplated the heavens and the earth and the seas, and beheld the sun and the rest of the orderly creation, I was amazed at the arrangement of the world; and I comprehended that the world and all that is therein are moved by the impulse of another, and I understood that he that moveth them is God, who is hidden in them and concealed from them: and this is well known, that that which moveth is more powerful than that which is moved. And that I should investigate concerning this Mover of all, as to how He exists—for this is evident to me, for He is incomprehensible in His nature—and that I should dispute concerning the steadfastness of His government, so as to comprehend it fully, is not profitable for me; for no one is able perfectly to comprehend it. But I say concerning the Mover of the world, that He is God of all, who made all for the sake of man; and it is evident to me that this is expedient, that one should fear God, and not grieve man.

Now I say that God is not begotten, not made; a constant nature, without beginning and without end; immortal, complete, and incomprehensible: and in saying that He is complete, I mean this; that there is no deficiency in Him, and He stands in need of nought, but everything stands in need of Him: and in saying that He is without beginning, I mean this; that everything which has a beginning has also an end; and that which has an end is dissoluble. He has no name; for everything that has a name is associated with the created; He has no likeness, nor composition of members; for he who possesses this is associated with things

fashioned. He is not male, nor is He female: the heavens do not contain Him; but the heavens and all things visible and invisible are contained in Him. Adversary He has none; for there is none that is more powerful than He; anger and wrath He possesses not, for there is nothing that can stand against 5 Him. Error and forgetfulness are not in His nature, for He is altogether wisdom and understanding, and in Him consists all that consists. He asks no sacrifice and no libation, nor any of the things that are visible; He asks not anything from anyone; but all ask from Him. 10

II. Since then it has been spoken to you by us concerning God, as far as our mind was capable of discoursing concerning Him, let us now come to the race of men, in order that we may know which of them hold any part of that truth concerning which we have spoken, and which of them are in error therefrom. 15

This is plain to you, O king, that there are four races of men in this world; Barbarians and Greeks, Jews and Christians.

Now the Barbarians reckon the head of the race of their religion from Kronos and from Rhea and the rest of their gods: but the Greeks from Helenus, who is said to be from Zeus; and from 20 Helenus was born Aeolus and Xythus, and the rest of the family from Inachus and Phoroneus, and last of all from Danaus the Egyptian and from Kadmus and from Dionysus.

Moreover the Jews reckon the head of their race from Abraham, who begat Isaac, from whom was born Jacob, who 25 begat twelve sons who removed from Syria and settled in Egypt, and there were called the race of the Hebrews by their law-giver: but at last they were named Jews.

The Christians, then, reckon the beginning of their religion from Jesus Christ, who is named the Son of God most High; 30 and it is said that God came down from heaven, and from a Hebrew virgin took and clad Himself with flesh, and in a daughter of man there dwelt the Son of God. This is taught from that Gospel which a little while ago was spoken among them as being preached; wherein if ye also will read, ye will comprehend 35 the power that is upon it. This Jesus, then, was born of the tribe of the Hebrews; and He had twelve disciples, in order that a certain dispensation of His might be fulfilled. He was

pierced by the Jews; and He died and was buried; and they say that after three days He rose and ascended to heaven; and then these twelve disciples went forth into the known parts of the world, and taught concerning His greatness with all humility and sobriety; and on this account those also who to-day believe in this preaching are called Christians, who are well known. There are then four races of mankind, as I said before, Barbarians and Greeks, Jews and Christians.

To God then ministers wind, and to angels fire; but to demons water, and to men earth. 10

III. Let us then begin with the Barbarians, and by degrees we will proceed to the rest of the peoples, in order that we may understand which of them hold the truth concerning God, and which of them error.

The Barbarians then, inasmuch as they did not comprehend 15 God, erred with the elements; and they began to serve created things instead of the Creator of them¹, and on this account they made likenesses and they enclosed them in temples; and lo! they worship them and guard them with great precaution, that their gods may not be stolen by robbers; and the Barbarians 20 have not understood that whatsoever watches must be greater than that which is watched; and that whatsoever creates must be greater than that whatever is created: if so be then that their gods are too weak for their own salvation, how will they furnish salvation to mankind? The Barbarians then have erred with a 25 great error in worshipping dead images which profit them not. And it comes to me to wonder also, O king, at their philosophers, how they too have erred and have named gods those likenesses which have been made in honour of the elements; and the wise men have not understood that these very elements are corruptible 30 and dissoluble; for if a little part of the element be dissolved or corrupted, all of it is dissolved and corrupted. If then these elements are dissolved and corrupted, and compelled to be subject to another harder than themselves, and are not in their nature gods, how can they call gods those likenesses which are made 35 in their honour? Great then is the error which their philosophers have brought upon their followers.

¹ Rom. i. 25.

IV. Let us turn then, O king, to the elements themselves, in order that we may shew concerning them that they are not gods, but a creation, corruptible and changeable, which is in the likeness of man¹. But God is incorruptible and unchangeable and invisible, while seeing, turning and changing all things. 5

Those therefore who think concerning earth that it is God have already erred, since it is digged and planted and delved; and since it receives the defilement of the excrement of men and of beasts and of cattle: and since sometimes it becomes what is useless; for if it be burned it becomes dead, for from baked clay there 10 springs nothing: and again, if water be collected on it, it becomes corrupted along with its fruits: and lo! it is trodden on by men and beasts, and it receives the impurity of the blood of the slain; and it is digged and filled with the dead and becomes a repository for bodies: none of which things can that holy and 15 venerable and blessed and incorruptible nature receive. And from this we have perceived that the earth is not God but a creature of God.

V. And in like manner again have those erred who have thought concerning water that it is God. For water was created 20 for the use of man and in many ways it is made subject to him. For it is changed, and receives defilement, and is corrupted, and loses its own nature when cooked with many things, and receives colours which are not its own; being moreover hardened by the cold and mixed and mingled with the excrement of men and beasts 25 and with the blood of the slain: and it is compelled by workmen, by means of the compulsion of channels, to flow and be conducted against its own will, and to come into gardens and other places, so as to cleanse and carry out all the filth of men, and wash away all defilement, and supply man's need of itself. Wherefore 30 it is impossible that water should be God, but it is a work of God and a part of the world.

So too those have erred not a little who thought concerning fire that it is God: for it too was created for the need of men: and in many ways it is made subject to them, in the service of 35 food and in the preparation of ornaments and the other things of

¹ Rom. i. 23.

which your majesty is aware: whilst in many ways it is extinguished and destroyed.

And again those who have thought concerning the blast of winds that it is God, these also have erred: and this is evident to us, that these winds are subject to another, since sometimes 5 their blast is increased and sometimes it is diminished and ceases, according to the commandment of Him who subjects them. Since for the sake of man they were created by God, in order that they might fulfil the needs of trees and fruits and seeds, and that they might transport ships upon the sea; those ships which 10 bring to men their necessary things, from a place where they are found to a place where they are not found; and furnish the different parts of the world. Since then this wind is sometimes increased and sometimes diminished, there is one place in which it does good and another where it does harm, according to the 15 nod of Him who rules it: and even men are able by means of well-known instruments to catch and coerce it that it may fulfil for them the necessities which they demand of it: and over itself it has no power at all; wherefore it is not possible that winds should be called gods, but a work of God. 20

VI. So too those have erred who have thought concerning the sun that he is God. For lo! we see him, that by the necessity of another he is moved and turned and runs his course; and he proceeds from degree to degree, rising and setting every day, in order that he may warm the shoots of plants and shrubs, and 25 may bring forth in the air which is mingled with him every herb which is on the earth. And in calculation the sun has a part with the rest of the stars in his course, and although he is one in his nature, he is mixed with many parts, according to the advantage of the needs of men: and that not according to his own 30 will, but according to the will of Him that ruleth him. Wherefore it is not possible that the sun should be God, but a work of God; and in like manner also the moon and stars.

VII. But those who have thought concerning men of old, that some of them are gods, these have greatly erred: as thou, even 35 thou, O king, art aware, that man consists of the four elements and of soul and spirit, and therefore is he even called World, 40 and apart from any one of these parts he does not exist. He has

beginning and end, and he is born and also suffers corruption. But God, as I have said, has none of this in His nature, but He is unmade and incorruptible. On this account, then, it is impossible that we should represent him as God who is man by nature, one to whom sometimes, when he looketh for joy, grief happens; and for laughter, and weeping befalls him; one that is passionate and jealous, envious and regretful, along with the rest of the other defects: and in many ways more corrupted than the elements or even than the beasts.

And thence, O king, it is right for us to understand the error of the Barbarians, that, whereas they have not investigated concerning the true God, they have fallen away from the truth and have gone after the desire of their own mind, in serving elements subject to dissolution, and dead images: and on account of their error they do not perceive who is the true God.

VIII. Let us return now to the Greeks in order that we may know what opinion they have concerning the true God.

The Greeks then because they are wiser than the Barbarians have erred even more than the Barbarians, in that they have introduced many gods that are made; and some of them they have represented as male and some of them as female; and in such a way that some of their gods were found to be adulterers and murderers, and jealous and envious, and angry and passionate, and murderers of fathers, and thieves and plunderers. And they say that some of them were lame and maimed; and some of them wizards, and some of them utterly mad; and some of them played on harps; and some of them wandered on mountains: and some of them died outright; and some were struck by lightning, and some were made subject to men, and some went off in flight, and some were stolen by men; and lo! some of them were wept and bewailed by men; and some, they say, went down to Hades; and some were sorely wounded, and some were changed into the likeness of beasts in order that they might commit adultery with the race of mortal women; and some of them have been reviled for sleeping with males: and some of them, they say, were in wedlock with their mothers and sisters and daughters; and they say of their gods that they committed adultery with the daughters of men, and from them was born a certain race which was also

mortal. And of some of their goddesses they say that they contended about beauty and came for judgment before men. The Greeks, then, O king, have brought forward what is wicked, ridiculous and foolish concerning their gods and themselves; in that they called such like persons gods, who are no gods: and hence men have taken occasion to commit adultery and fornication, and to plunder and do everything that is wicked and hateful and abominable. For if those who are called their gods have done all those things that are written above, how much more shall men do them who believe in those who have done these things! and from the wickedness of this error, lo! there have happened to men frequent wars and mighty famines, and bitter captivity and deprivation of all things: and lo! they endure them, and all these things befall them from this cause alone: and when they endure them they do not perceive in their conscience that because of their error these things happen to them. 15

IX. Now let us come to the history of these their gods in order that we may prove accurately concerning all those things which we have said above.

Before everything else the Greeks introduce as a god Kronos, which is interpreted Chiun; and the worshippers of this deity sacrifice to him their children: and some of them they burn while yet living. Concerning him they say that he took him Rhea to wife; and from her he begat many sons; from whom he begat also Dios, who is called Zeus; and at the last he went mad and, for fear of an oracle which was told him, began to eat his children. And from him Zeus was stolen away, and he did not perceive it: and at the last Zeus bound him and cut off his genitals and cast them in the sea; whence, as they say in the fable, was born Aphrodite, who is called Astera: and he cast Kronos bound into darkness. Great then is the error and scorn which the Greeks have introduced concerning the head of their gods, in that they have said all these things about him, O king. It is not possible that God should be bound or amputated; otherwise it is a great misfortune. 25

And after Kronos they introduce another god, Zeus; and they say concerning this one, that he received the headship and became king of all the gods; and they say concerning him that he was changed into cattle and everything else, in order that he might 35

commit adultery with mortal women, and might raise up to himself children from them. Since at one time they say he was changed into a bull on account of his passion for Europa and for Pasiphae; and again he was changed into the likeness of gold on account of his passion for Danae: and into a swan, through his 5 passion for Leda; and into a man through his passion for Antiope; and into lightning on account of his passion for the Moon: so that from these he begat many children: for they say that from Antiope he begat Zethus and Amphion; and from the Moon, Dionysus; from Alkmene, Herakles; and from Leto, Apollo and 10 Artemis; and from Danae, Perseus; and from Leda, Castor and Polydeuces and Helene; and from Mnemosyne he begat nine daughters, those whom he called the Muses; and from Europa, 15 Minos and Rhadamanthus and Sarpedon. But last of all he was changed into the likeness of an eagle on account of his passion for 15 Ganymede the shepherd.

Because of these stories, O king, much evil has befallen the race of men who are at this present day, since they imitate their gods, and commit adultery, and are defiled with their mothers and sisters, and in sleeping with males: and some of them have 20 dared to kill even their fathers. For if he, who is said to be the head and king of their gods, has done these things, how much more shall his worshippers imitate him! And great is the madness which the Greeks have introduced into their history concerning him: for it is not possible that a god should commit 25 adultery or fornication, or should approach to sleep with males, or that he should be a parricide; otherwise he is much worse than a destructive demon.

X. And again they introduce another god, Hephaestus; and they say of him that he is lame and wearing a cap on his head, and 30 holding in his hand tongs and hammer; and working in brass in order that therefrom he may find his needed sustenance. Is then this god so much in need? Whereas it is impossible for a god to be needy or lame: otherwise he is very weak.

And again they introduce another god and call him Hermes; 35 and they say that he is a thief, loving avarice and coveting gains, 3. and a magician and maimed and an athlete and an interpreter of words: whereas it is impossible for a god to be a magician, or

avaricious, or maimed, or coveting anything that is not his, or an athlete: and if it be found to be otherwise, he is of no use.

And after him they introduce another god, Asclepius; and they say that he is a physician and prepares medicines and bandages in order that he may satisfy his need of sustenance. Is ⁵ then this god in need? And he at last was struck by lightning by Zeus, on account of Tyndareus the Lacedemonian; and so he died. If then Asclepius was a god, and when struck by lightning was unable to help himself, how is it that he was able to help others? Whereas it is an impossible thing that the divine nature ¹⁰ should be in need, or that it should be struck by lightning.

And again they introduce another god and call him Ares, and they say that he is a warrior and jealous, and covets sheep and things which do not belong to him, and acquires possessions through his weapons; and of him they say that at last he com- ¹⁵ mitted adultery with Aphrodite and was bound by a tiny boy Eros, and by Hephaestus the husband of Aphrodite: whereas it is ^{ma} impossible that a god should be a warrior or a prisoner or an adulterer.

And again they say of Dionysus that he too is a god, who ²⁰ celebrates festivals by night and teaches drunkenness, and carries off women that do not belong to him: and at the last they say that he went mad and left his female attendants and fled to the wilderness; and in this madness of his he ate serpents; and at the last he was killed by Titan. If then Dionysus was a god, ²⁵ and when slain was not able to help himself; how is it that he was able to help others?

Herakles, too, they introduce, and they say of him that he is a god, a hater of things hateful, a tyrant and a warrior, and a slayer of the wicked: and of him they say that at the last he ³⁰ went mad and slew his children and cast himself into the fire and died. If therefore Herakles be a god and in all these evils was unable to stand up for himself, how was it that others were asking help from him? Whereas it is impossible that a god should be mad or drunken or a slayer of his children, or destroyed by ³⁵ fire.

XI. And after him they introduce another god and call him Apollo: and they say of him that he is jealous and changeable; and

sometimes he holds a bow and a quiver, and sometimes a lyre and a plectrum; and he gives oracles to men, in order that he may receive a reward from them. Is then this god in need of reward? a.
Whereas it is disgraceful that all these things should be found in a god. 5

And after him they introduce Artemis a goddess, the sister of Apollo; and they say that she was a huntress; and she carried a bow and arrows, and went about on mountains leading dogs, either to hunt the deer or the wild boars. Whereas it is disgraceful that a maid should go about by herself on mountains and follow 10
the chase of beasts. And therefore it is not possible that Artemis should be a goddess.

Again they say of Aphrodite that she forsooth is a goddess; and sometimes forsooth she dwells with their gods, and sometimes she commits adultery with men; and sometimes she has Ares for 15
her lover and sometimes Adonis, who is Tammuz: and sometimes forsooth Aphrodite is wailing and weeping for the death of Tammuz: and they say that she went down to Hades in order that she might ransom Adonis from Persephone, who was the daughter of Hades. If then Aphrodite be a goddess and was 20
unable to help her lover in his death, how is she able to help others? And this is a thing impossible to be listened to, that the divine nature should come to weeping and wailing and adultery.

And again they say of Tammuz that he is a god; and he is forsooth a hunter and an adulterer; and they say that he was killed 25
by a blow from a wild boar, and was not able to help himself. b.
And if he was not able to help himself, how is he able to take care of the human race? And this is impossible, that a god should be an adulterer or a hunter or that he should have died by violence. 30

And again they say of Rhea that she forsooth is the mother of their gods; and they say of her that she had at one time a lover Atys, and she was rejoicing in corruptible men; and at the last she established lamentations, and was bewailing her lover Atys. If then the mother of their gods was not able to help her lover 35
and rescue him from death, how is it possible that she should help others? It is disgraceful then that a goddess should lament and weep, and that she should have joy over corruptible beings.

Again they bring forward Kore; and they say that she was a goddess and that she was carried off by Pluto and was not able to help herself. If then she is a goddess and was not able to help herself, how is she able to help others? For a goddess who is carried off is extremely weak. 5

All these things, then, O king, the Greeks have introduced about their gods, and have invented and said concerning them: whence all men have taken occasion to do all wicked and impure things: and thereby the whole earth has been corrupted.

XII. Now the Egyptians, because they are more evil and ignorant than all peoples upon the earth, have erred more than all men. For the worship of the Barbarians and the Greeks did not suffice them, but they introduced also the nature of beasts, and said concerning it that they were gods: and also of the creeping things which are found on the dry land and in the waters, and of 15 the plants and herbs they have said that some of them are gods, and they have become corrupt in all madness and impurity more than all peoples that are upon the earth. For of old time they worshipped Isis; and they say that she forsooth is a goddess, who had forsooth a husband Osiris, her brother; but when forsooth 20 Osiris was killed by his brother Typhon, Isis fled with her son Horus to Byblos in Syria and was there for a certain time until that her son was grown: and he contended with his uncle Typhon and killed him, and thereupon Isis returned and went about with her son Horus, and was seeking for the body of Osiris her lord, 25 and bitterly bewailing his death. If therefore Isis be a goddess, and was not able to help Osiris her brother and lord, how is it possible that she should help others? Whereas it is impossible that the divine nature should be afraid and flee, or weep and wail. Otherwise it is a great misfortune. 30

But of Osiris they say that he is a god, a beneficent one; and he was killed by Typhon and could not help himself; and it is evident that this cannot be said of Deity.

And again they say of Typhon, his brother, that he is a god, 35 a fratricide, and slain by his brother's son and wife since he was unable to help himself. And how can one who does not help himself be a god?

Now because the Egyptians are more ignorant than the rest of

the peoples, these and the like gods did not suffice them, but they also put the name of gods on the beasts which are merely soulless. For some men among them worship the sheep, and others the calf; and some of them the pig, and others the shadfish; and some of them the crocodile, and the hawk, and the cormorant, and the kite, and the vulture, and the eagle, and the crow; some of them worship the cat, and others the fish Shibbuta; some of them the dog, and some of them the serpent, and some the asp, and others the lion, and others garlic, and onions, and thorns, and others the leopard, and the like. 10

And the poor wretches do not perceive with regard to all these things that they are nought; while every day they look upon their gods, who are eaten and destroyed by men, yea even by their own fellows; and some of them being burned, and some of them dying and putrifying and becoming refuse; and they do not understand that they are destroyed in many ways. 15

And accordingly the Egyptians have not understood that the like of these are not gods, since their salvation is not within their own power; and if they are too weak for their own salvation, then as regards the salvation of their worshippers pray whence will they have the power to help them? 20

XIII. The Egyptians then have erred with a great error, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth. But it is a matter of wonder, O king, concerning the Greeks, whereas they excel all the rest of the peoples in their manners and in their reason, how thus they have gone astray after dead idols and senseless images: while they see their gods sawn and polished by their makers, and curtailed and cut and burnt and shaped and transformed into every shape by them. And when they are grown old and fail by the length of time, and are melted and broken in pieces, how is it that they do not understand concerning them that they are not gods? And those who have not ability for their own preservation, how will they be able to take care of men? But even the poets and philosophers among them being in error have introduced concerning them that they are gods, things like these which are made for the honour of God Almighty; and being in error they seek to make them like to God as to whom no man has ever seen to whom He is like; nor is 35

he able to see Him¹; and together with these things they introduce concerning Deity as if it were that deficiency were found with it; in that they say that He accepts sacrifice and asks for burnt-offering and libation and murders of men and temples. But God is not needy, and none of these things is sought for by Him: 5 and it is clear that men are in error in those things that they imagine. But their poets and philosophers introduce and say, *κα* that the nature of all their gods is one; but they have not understood of God our Lord, that while He is one, He is yet in all. They, then, are in error; for if, while the body of man is many in its 10 parts, no member is afraid of its fellow, but whilst it is a composite body, all is on an equality with all: so also God who is one in His nature has a single essence proper to Him, and He is equal in His nature and His essence, nor is He afraid of Himself. If therefore the nature of the gods is one, it is not proper that 15 a god should persecute a god, nor kill nor do him that which is evil.

If then gods were persecuted and transfixed by gods, and some of them were carried off and some were struck by lightning; it is clear that the nature of their gods is not one, and hence it is clear, 20 O king, that that is an error which they speculate about the nature of their gods, and that they reduce them to one nature. If then it is proper that we should admire a god who is visible and does not see, how much more is this worthy of admiration that a man should believe in a nature which is invisible and 25 all-seeing! and if again it is right that a man should investigate the works of an artificer, how much more is it right that he should praise the Maker of the artificer! For behold! while the Greeks have established laws, they have not understood that by their laws they were condemning their gods; for if their laws are *ββ* just, their gods are unjust, who have committed transgression in killing one another and practising sorcery, committing adultery, plundering, stealing and sleeping with males, along with the rest of their other doings. But if their gods excellently and as they describe have done all these things, then the laws of the Greeks 35 are unjust; and they are not laid down according to the will of the gods; and in this the whole world has erred.

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

For as for the histories of their gods, some of them are myths, some of them physical, and some hymns and songs: the hymns and songs, then, are empty words and sound; and as to the physical, if they were done as they say, then they are not gods, since they have done these things and suffered and endured these things: 5 and these myths are flimsy words, altogether devoid of force.

XIV. Let us come now, O king, also to the history of the Jews and let us see what sort of opinion they have concerning God. The Jews then say that God is one, Creator of all and almighty: and that it is not proper for us that anything else should be wor- 10 shipped, but this God only: and in this they appear to be much nearer to the truth than all the peoples, in that they worship God more exceedingly and not His works; and they imitate God by reason of the love which they have for man; for they have compassion on the poor and ransom the captive and bury the dead, and 15 do things of a similar nature to these: things which are acceptable to God and are well-pleasing also to men, things which they have received from their fathers of old. Nevertheless they too have gone astray from accurate knowledge, and they suppose in their minds that they are serving God, but in the methods of their 20 actions their service is to angels and not to God, in that they observe sabbaths and new moons and the passover and the great fast, and the fast, and circumcision, and cleanness of meats: which things not even thus have they perfectly observed.

XV. Now the Christians, O king, by going about and seeking 25 have found the truth, and as we have comprehended from their writings they are nearer to the truth and to exact knowledge than the rest of the peoples. For they know and believe in God, the Maker of heaven and earth, in whom are all things and from whom are all things: He who has no other god as His fellow: from whom 30 they have received those commandments which they have engraved on their minds, which they keep in the hope and expectation of the world to come; so that on this account they do not commit adultery nor fornication, they do not bear false witness, they do not deny a deposit, nor covet what is not theirs: they honour father 35 and mother; they do good to those who are their neighbours, and when they are judges they judge uprightly; and they do not worship idols in the form of man; and whatever they do not

wish that others should do to them, they do not practise towards any one¹, and they do not eat of the meats of idol sacrifices, for they are undefiled: and those who grieve them they comfort, and **12** make them their friends; and they do good to their enemies: and their wives, O king, are pure as virgins, and their daughters **5** modest: and their men abstain from all unlawful wedlock and from all impurity, in the hope of the recompense that is to come in another world: but as for their servants or handmaids, or their children if any of them have any, they persuade them to become Christians for the love that they have towards them; and when **10** they have become so, they call them without distinction brethren: they do not worship strange gods: and they walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them, and they love one another: and from the widows they do not turn away their countenance: and they rescue the orphan from him who does **15** him violence: and he who has gives to him who has not, without grudging; and when they see the stranger they bring him to their dwellings, and rejoice over him as over a true brother; for they do not call brothers those who are after the flesh, but those who are in the spirit and in God: but when one of their poor **20** passes away from the world, and any of them sees him, then he provides for his burial according to his ability; and if they hear that any of their number is imprisoned or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs, and if it is possible that he may be delivered, they deliver him. **25**

And if there is among them a man that is poor and needy, and they have not an abundance of necessities, they fast two or three days that they may supply the needy with their necessary food. And they observe scrupulously the commandments of their Messiah: they live honestly and soberly, as the Lord their God **22** commanded them: every morning and at all hours on account of the goodnesses of God toward them they praise and laud Him: and over their food and over their drink they render Him thanks. And if any righteous person of their number passes away from the world they rejoice and give thanks to God, and they follow his **35** body, as if he were moving from one place to another: and when a child is born to any one of them, they praise God, and if again

¹ Cf. *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, cc. 1—4.

it chance to die in its infancy, they praise God mightily, as for one who has passed through the world without sins. And if again they see that one of their number has died in his iniquity or in his sins, over this one they weep bitterly and sigh, as over one who is about to go to punishment: such is the ordinance of 5 the law of the Christians, O king, and such their conduct.

XVI. As men who know God, they ask from Him petitions which are proper for Him to give and for them to receive: and thus they accomplish the course of their lives. And because they acknowledge the goodnesses of God towards them, lo! on account 10 of them there flows forth the beauty that is in the world. And truly they are of the number of those that have found the truth by going about and seeking it, and as far as we have comprehended, we have understood that they only are near to the knowledge of the truth. 15

But the good deeds which they do, they do not proclaim in the ears of the multitude, and they take care that no one shall perceive them, and hide their gift, as he who has found a treasure and hides it¹. And they labour to become righteous as those that 20 expect to see their Messiah and receive from Him the promises made to them with great glory.

But their sayings and their ordinances, O king, and the glory of their service, and the expectation of their recompense of reward, according to the doing of each one of them, which they expect in another world, thou art able to know from their writings. It 25 sufficeth for us that we have briefly made known to your majesty concerning the conversation and the truth of the Christians. For truly great and wonderful is their teaching to him that is willing to examine and understand it. And truly this people is a new people, and there is something divine mingled with it. Take now 30 their writings and read in them, and lo! ye will find that not of myself have I brought these things forward nor as their advocate have I said them, but as I have read in their writings, these things I firmly believe, and those things also that are to come. And therefore I was constrained to set forth the truth to them that 35 take pleasure therein and seek after the world to come.

And I have no doubt that the world stands by reason of

¹ Matt. xiii. 44.

the intercession of Christians. But the rest of the peoples are deceived and deceivers, rolling themselves before the elements of the world, according as the sight of their understanding is unwilling to pass by them; and they grope as if in the dark, because they are unwilling to know the truth, and like drunken men they stagger and thrust one another and fall down.

XVII. Thus far, O king, it is I that have spoken. For as to what remains, as was said above, there are found in their other writings words which are difficult to speak, or that one should repeat them; things which are not only said, but actually done. 10

The Greeks, then, O king, because they practise foul things in sleeping with males, and with mother and sister and daughter, turn the ridicule of their foulness upon the Christians; but the Christians are honest and pious, and the truth is set before their eyes, and they are long-suffering; and therefore while they know their error and are buffeted by them, they endure and suffer them: and more exceedingly do they pity them as men who are destitute of knowledge: and in their behalf they offer up prayers that they may turn from their error. And when it chances that one of them turns, he is ashamed before the Christians of the deeds that are done by him: and he confesses to God, saying, In ignorance I did these things: and he cleanses his heart, and his sins are forgiven him, because he did them in ignorance in former time, when he was blaspheming and reviling the true knowledge of the Christians. And truly blessed is the race of the Christians, more than all men that are upon the face of the earth. 20

Let the tongues of those now be silenced who talk vanity, and who oppress the Christians, and let them now speak the truth. For it is better that they should worship the true God rather than that they should worship a sound without intelligence; and truly divine is that which is spoken by the mouth of the Christians, and their teaching is the gateway of light. Let all those then approach thereunto who do not know God, and let them receive incorruptible words, those which are so always and from eternity: let them, therefore, anticipate the dread judgment which is to come by Jesus the Messiah upon the whole race of men. 30

The Apology of Aristides the Philosopher is ended.