

AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS

Flavius Josephus

FLAVII JOSEPHI PREFATIO IN LIBRO
DE BELLO IYDAICO INCIPIT FELICITER



VONIAM BELLVM
quod cum populo Romano
gessere iudei omnium maxi-
mum que nostra etas uidit:
queq; auditu percepimus: ciui-
tates cum ciuitatibus gentesue
commisisse cum gentibus: quida
non qd rebus interfuerint sed
uana et incongrua narrantiu
sermone auribus colligentes

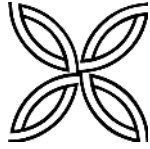
oratorum more perscribunt. Qui uero presto fuerunt aut
Romanorum obsequio aut odio iudeorum contra fidem ee-
ram falsa confirmant. Scriptus autem eorum partim accusa-
tio: partim laudatio continetur: nusq; uero exaequa fides repe-
ritur historie. Idcirco ego statui que retro barbaris antea
misi patria lingua digesta graeca nunc his qui Romano im-
perio reguntur exponere. Iosippus mattheie filius hebreus ge-
nere sacerdos ex hierosolymis qui et initio cum Romanis bel-
lo conflixit: posteaq; gestis quia necessitas exegit interfuit. Na
cum hic ut dixi motus grauissimus exortus esset: Romanum
quidem populum domesticus morbus habebat. Iudeorū autē
qui etate ualidi et ingenio turbulenti erant manu simul ac
pecunia ingentes adeo temporibus insolenter abusi sunt: ut
pro tumultus magnitudine hos possidendarum spes: illos
amittendarum partium orientis metus inuaderet. Quonia
iudei quidem cunctos etiam qui trans euphraten essent ge-
tiles suos secum rebellaturos esse crediderant. Romanos au-

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Published by BoD - Books on Demand, Norderstedt
ISBN: 9783748147879

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"For if indeed Julian had caused all those that were under his dominion to be richer than Midas, and each of the cities greater than Babylon once was, and had also surrounded each of them with a golden wall, but had corrected none of the existing errors respecting divinity, he would have acted in a manner similar to a physician, who receiving a body full of evils in each of its parts, should cure all of them except the eyes."—Liban. Parental, in Julian, p. 285.

INTRODUCTION.

"I HAVE often wished," says Warburton in a letter to Dr. Forster, October 15, 1749, "for a hand capable of collecting all the fragments remaining of Porphyry, Celsus, Hierocles, and Julian, and giving them to us with a just, critical and theological comment, as a defy to infidelity. It is certain we want something more than what their ancient answerers have given us. This would be a very noble work*."

The author of the following Collectanea has partially effected what Dr. Warburton wished

* See Barker's Parriana, vol. ii. p. 48.

to see accomplished; for as he is not a *divine*, he has not attempted in his Notes to confute Celsus, but has confined himself solely to an illustration of his meaning, by a citation of parallel passages in other ancient authors. As the answer, however, of Origen to the arguments of

Celsus is very futile and inefficient, it would be admirable to see some one of the learned divines with which the church at present abounds, leap into the arena, and by vanquishing Celsus, prove that the Christian religion is peculiarly adapted to the present times, and to the interest of the priests by whom it is professed and disseminated.

The Marquis D'Argens published a translation in French, accompanied by the Greek text, of the arguments of the Emperor Julian against the Christians; and as an apology for the present work, I subjoin the following translation of a part of his preliminary discourse, in which he defends that publication.

"It may be that certain half-witted gentleman may reproach me for having brought forward a work composed in former times against the Christians, in the vulgar tongue. To such I might at once simply reply, that the work was preserved by a Father of the Church; but I will go further, and tell them with Father Petau, who gave a Greek edition of the works of Julian, that if those who condemn the authors that have published these works, will temper the ardour of their zeal with reason and judgement, they will think differently, and will distinguish between the good use that may be made of the book, and the bad intentions of the writer.

"Father Petau also judiciously remarks, that if the times were not gone by when dæmons took the advantage of

idolatry to seduce mankind, it would be prudent not to afford any aid, or give the benefit of any invective against Jesus, or the Christian religion to the organs of those dæmons; but since by the blessing of God and the help of the cross, which have brought about our salvation, the monstrous dogmas of Paganism are buried in oblivion, we have nothing to fear from that pest; there is no weighty reason for our rising up against the monuments of Pagan aberration that now remain, and totally destroying them. On the contrary, the same Father Petau says, that it is better to treat them as the ancient Christians treated the images and temples of the gods. At first, in the provinces in which they were in power, they razed them to the very foundations, that nothing might be visible to posterity that could perpetuate impiety, or the sight of which could recall mankind to an abominable worship. But when the same Christians had firmly established their religion, it appeared more rational to them, after destroying the altars and statues of the gods, to preserve the temples, and by purifying them, to make them serviceable for the worship of the true God. The same Christians also, not only discontinued to break the statues and images of the gods, but they took the choicest of them, that were the work of the most celebrated artists, and set them up in public places to ornament their cities, as well as to recall to the memory of those who beheld them, how gross

the blindness* of their ancestors had been, and how powerful the grace that had delivered them from it."

The Marquis d'Argens further observes: "It were to be wished, that Father Petau, having so judiciously considered the works of Julian, had formed an equally correct idea of the person of that Emperor. I cannot discover through what caprice he takes it amiss, that a certain learned Professor** has praised the civil virtues of Julian, and condemned the evidently false calumnies that almost all the ecclesiastical authors have lavished upon him; and amongst the rest Gregory and Cyril, who to the good arguments they have adduced against the false reasoning of Julian, have added insults which ought never to have been used by any defender of truth. They have cruelly

* The Heathens would here reply to Father Petau. Which is

the greater blindness of the two,— ours, in worshipping the

images of deiform processions from the ineffable principle

of things, and who are eternally united to him; or that of the Papists, in worshipping the images of worthless men

** Monsieur de la Bletric.

calumniated this Emperor to favour *their good cause* , and confounded the just, wise, clement, and most courageous prince, with the Pagan philosopher and theologian; when they ought simply to have refuted him with argument, in no case with insult, and still less with calumnies so evidently false, that during fourteen centuries, in which they have been so often repeated, they have never been accredited, nor enabled to assume even an air of truth."

A wise Christian philosopher, La Mothe, Le Vayer, in reflecting on the great virtues with which Julian was endowed, on the contempt he manifested for death, on the firmness with which he consoled those who wept around him, and on his last conversation with Maximus and Priscus on the immortality of the soul, says, "that after such testimonies of a virtue, to which *nothing appears to be wanting but the faith to give its professor a place amongst the blessed* * , we have cause to wonder that

* According to this *wise Christian philosopher* therefore, not only all the confessedly wise and virtuous

Heathens that lived posterior, but those also who lived anterior to the promulgation of the Christian religion, will have no place hereafter among the blessed.

Cyril should have tried to make us believe, that Julian was

a mean and cowardly prince*. Those who judge of men that lived in former ages by those who have lived in more recent times, may feel little surprise at the proceedings of Cyril. It has rarely happened that long animosity and abuse have not been introduced into religious controversies."

After what has been above said of Julian, I deem it necessary to observe, that Father Petau is egregiously mistaken in supposing that Cyril has preserved the whole of that Emperor's arguments against the Christians: and the Marquis D'Argêns is also mistaken when he says, that "the passages of Julian's text which are

* This is by no means wonderful in Cyril, when we consider

that he is, with the strongest reason, suspected of being the cause of the murder of Hypatia, who was one of the brightest ornaments of the Alexandrian school, and who was

not only a prodigy of learning, but also a paragon of beauty.

abridged or omitted, are very few." For Hieronymus in Epist. 83. *Ad Magnum Oratorem Romanum* , testifies that this work consisted of seven books; three of which only Cyril attempted to confute, as is evident from his own

words, [—Greek—] "Julian wrote three books against the holy Evangelists." But as Fabricius observes, (in Biblioth. Græc. tom. vii. p. 89.) in the other four books, he appears to have attacked the remaining books of the Scriptures, i. e. the books of the Old Testament.

With respect, however, to the three books which Cyril has endeavoured to confute, it appears to me, that he has only selected such parts of these books as he thought he could most easily answer. For that he has not given even the substance of these three books, is evident from the words of Julian himself, as recorded by Cyril. For Julian, after certain invectives both against Christ and John, says, "These things, therefore, we shall shortly discuss, when we come particularly to consider

the monstrous deeds and fraudulent machinations of the Evangelists*." There is no particular discussion however of these in any part of the extracts preserved by Cyril.

That the work, indeed, of Julian against the Christians was of considerable extent, is evident from the testimony of his contemporary, Libanius; who, in his admirable funeral oration on this most extraordinary man, has the following remarkable passage: "But when the winter had extended the nights, Julian, besides many other beautiful works, attacked the books which make a man of Palestine to be a God, and the son of God; and in *a long contest*, and with strenuous arguments, evinced that what is said in these writings is ridiculous and nugatory. And in the