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## CELSUS: THE FIRST PAGAN CRITIC OF CHRISTIANITY, AND HIS ANTICIPATION OF MODERN THOUGHT.

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### III. *Conclusion.*

BUT if Celsus uses the critical or rationalistic method, it is not as an end, but as a weapon. He was about to follow it with an ethical appeal. Far more than the pressure of the scientific spirit did he feel the pressure of the social revolution and the political danger. He sees the rise of what he regards as a secret organization without any national character, without unity in itself, a hodge-podge of quarrelling sects. It had its origin among a lot of Galilean fishermen. It is distinguished by arrogance and ignorance. It is hostile to the temples and symbols of the ancient religion. It defies man; it is a hot-bed of superstition. It is the Salvation Army of his day, and Celsus does not see any salvation in it. Viewed from the lofty height of Platonism, it is atheistic and materialistic. As Pelagaud, comparing it with our own time, has said, Celsus might have adopted for his treatise the title used by a modern writer, "Atheism and the Social Peril." If it sounds strange to us to hear him stigmatize Christians as atheists or non-theists, we may cool our indignation by reflecting that Christians in their controversies with each other have visited similar reproaches upon the heads of their opponents. But, standing in the position in which he did, it is not strange that this Pagan should have been blinded a little by the mote in his own eye. He looked upon Christianity as an American Christian may look at Mormonism, as something which religiously and politically is opposed to the genius of American institutions, as a deluded lot of ignorant people setting up a hierarchy of their own. But he hopes that they will listen to the voice of reason.

His eloquent appeal to the Christians in behalf of the established order of government and religion is most completely given in the seventh and eighth books of Origen's reply. Previously Celsus has stood in sharp antagonism to the Christians. But now his tone is one of reconciliation. His apology for Pagan idolatry is that which a cultivated man would make. He shows that the Christians are unreasonable in their opposition to images, which are after all only symbols.

"For who, unless he be utterly childish in his simplicity, can take these for gods and not for offerings consecrated to the service of the gods or images representing