

and condenses; but with all the gaps, broken links, and sundered joints, we feel, after we have gone through the pages of Origen, that we may practically and substantially reconstruct the work of Celsus. Its transcendent value for us is that, one hundred and forty years after the death of Jesus, it gives us the first picture of Christianity in relation to the thought and life of that age, drawn by a highly-cultured Greek, with a mind deeply saturated with the Platonic spirit, and standing as the conservator of existing institutions. And the interest is greatly increased from the fact that, in developing his argument, Celsus has surprisingly anticipated a vast deal of modern criticism and modern thought.

Within the last twenty-five years there has been a revival of interest in the study of Celsus, and in the works of Pelagand, Keim, and Baur he has for the first time had justice done to him. If we look at the conception of this heathen writer which prevails in most ecclesiastical authors, it is that of a flippant, sophistical, shallow Pagan who ventured to raise his voice against Christianity, and who was effectually silenced by the overmastering reply of Origen. It is to a totally different conception of him that we here invite attention. Perhaps nothing will do more to dispel the traditional view than by stepping into the background and letting Celsus come to the front. Only the reader must remember that this man stands, not on a Christian platform, but amid the grand temples of the Pagan world, looking down upon the snarl of Christian sects and seeing with alarm the spread of influences which threaten to undermine the ancient religion. To understand Celsus at all, we must put ourselves in his place. Reading to-day his sharp and acid criticism, his withering sarcasm directed against Christianity, it might seem as if this man were a bold and trenchant radical, striking at the root of all religion. Nothing could be more false. Celsus is not an iconoclast; he is a conservative. He is not an Epicurean, who has given up all belief in God and Providence; he is not like Lucian, a man of the world who could satirize the myths of Paganism, and thus place weapons in the hands of Christians against the Polytheists. To Celsus, it is the Christians who are the image-breakers; it is the Christians who are Atheists, refusing to worship longer in the temples; it is the Christians who are materialists, substituting for a pure spiritual conception of God the gross anthropomorphism of the Hebrews and deifying a human being; it is the Christians who are flooding the world with silly superstitions, and who by their secret societies, their exclusiveness, their refusal to take up arms in behalf of the emperor, are threatening the life of the State. There is something deeply interesting, and also deeply pathetic, in the picture of this cultivated Greek, who, like Theodore Parker, combines vast powers of sarcasm with the deepest reverence, taking up his pen to resist a new and powerful form of intellectual and political disorder, and making an affectionate appeal for the preservation of what he deemed the established order of the world.

The work of Celsus may be divided into four parts: 1. A brief intro-