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ONESIMUS

Edwin Abbott
Onesimus

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Onesimus / Memoirs of a disciple of St. Paul:*

Содержание

THE FIRST BOOK	5
§ 1. OF MY CHILDHOOD	5
§ 2. HOW I FIRST SAW THE HOLY APOSTLE PAULUS	8
§ 3. OF THE STRANGER, AND OF DIOSDOTUS THE PRIEST OF ZEUS	12
§ 4. HOW WE GREW UP AT LYSTRA	16
§ 5. HOW AMMIANE DIED AND MY BROTHER AND I WERE SOLD FOR SLAVES	18
§ 6. OF THE DEATH OF CHRESTUS	22
§ 7. OF MY LIFE IN THE ERGASTULUM	28
§ 8. HOW I WAS SOLD TO PHILEMON OF COLOSSÆ	33
THE SECOND BOOK	37
§ 1. HOW I RETURNED TO THE WORSHIP OF FALSE GODS	37
§ 2. HOW SOME OF PHILEMON'S FRIENDS AVOWED A BELIEF IN ONE GOD	40
§ 3. HOW NICOSTRATUS URGED THAT, WITHOUT THE BELIEF IN THE GODS, THE LIFE OF MAN WOULD BE VOID OF PLEASURE	43

§ 4. HOW PHILEMON, FALLING SICK, INCLINED TO SUPERSTITION	48
§ 5. HOW I ACCOMPANIED PHILEMON TO PERGAMUS	55
§ 6. HOW I WENT DOWN INTO THE CAVE OF TROPHONIUS	58
§ 7. HOW ARTEMIDORUS SPOKE AGAINST THE BELIEF IN GODS	64
§ 8. HOW I JOURNEYED WITH PHILEMON TO ANTIOCH IN SYRIA	71
THE THIRD BOOK	77
§ 1. OF MY FIRST THOUGHTS CONCERNING THE CHRISTIANS	77
§ 2. OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHRISTIANS	81
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	89

Edwin Abbott Abbott Onesimus / Memoirs of a disciple of St. Paul

THE FIRST BOOK

§ 1. OF MY CHILDHOOD

In the last year of the Emperor Tiberius I and my twin-brother Chrestus were found lying in one cradle, exposed with a great number of other babes upon the steps of the temple of Asclepius, in Pergamus, a city of Bithynia. Sign or token of our parents, whether they were free-born or slave, there was none; but only a little silver seal hung round my neck, and on the seal these words in Greek characters, I LOVE THEE, and on my brother Chrestus another of the same fashion, bearing the inscription, TRUST ME. Many a time during the days of my wanderings have I spoken reproachfully in my heart, saying that our parents gave us small cause for trust, and that it was poor love to send out into the rough world two innocent babes with no other equipment against evil than these slight toys. But the hand of the Lord was in it, to turn this evil into good in the end.

Ammiane the wife of Menneas was the name of our new mother. Her own son Ammias was but lately dead; and that which drew her kind heart to us more than to any other among so large a multitude of poor babes there pitifully lying on the temple steps, was that in my brother Chrestus she seemed to discern a likeness to her lost one.

Menneas took us, together with Ammiane, to his house in Lystra, a city of Lycaonia, where was the better part of his estate; and soon afterwards he died. But his widow the good Ammiane, to whom old Menneas had left all his possessions, treated us as if we had been her own children, and taught us to call her mother; and we had no thought but she was our mother indeed. Yet as there had been no formal adoption of us according to law, we were still in the eyes of the law not free, but slaves; for so runs the law, that whosoever is exposed as a child and saved and reared, becomes the slave of them that rear him. For our enfranchisement had been first delayed, and then forgotten in the sickness and death of Menneas; and by that time we were so established in the household that none questioned but we had been enfranchised, and all thought of it was laid aside. Therefore, according to the law we were still Ammiane's slaves, and not her sons, and in danger to be sold whenever our dear foster-mother might die. But of all this neither I nor my brother Chrestus knew anything; but we rejoiced in the love of her whom we called mother; and all the household loved us for her sake, and some for our own. And so the days rolled on in happiness till I had come

to my tenth year.

§ 2. HOW I FIRST SAW THE HOLY APOSTLE PAULUS

It was in the spring, as I remember, of the fifth year of the Emperor Claudius that I first saw the Holy Apostle, whom I saw not again till many years had passed away; and though I was at that time but a child of ten years or thereabouts, yet every circumstance of it is imprinted upon my memory. It was the cool of the evening, and I was without the wall, hard by the Iconian gate, on one of the smaller hills that look down upon the town, a little to the north of the Iconian road. Hermas, our herdsman, was playing upon his pipe some song to the god Pan, and the goats were gambolling around him. But I—being wholly taken up with teaching a little kid to dance to the sound of the music—paid no heed to the chidings of our nurse Trophime, who would have had me go back with her to the city because it was now near sundown. So lifting up her eyes and seeing some dromedaries and a dust on the Iconian road, “Look, dear child,” said she, “yonder come merchants from Iconium; if, therefore, thou wilt go with me without delay, thou wilt see their stores of pretty things, and perchance Ammiane will buy thee somewhat.”

Hearing this, I willingly ran down with her to the city gate; and arriving thither before the travellers, I waited till they should enter. But when they were now nigh, I perceived that they were no merchants, and I would have turned away. Yet I did not, for

somewhat in the face of one of the travellers held me fast, I know not how, so that I fixed my gaze on him perforce, even as a bird fascinated by a serpent; and indeed I thought myself to be bewitched and spat thrice; but yet I stood still gazing upon him. At that time he was not yet bald, he had a clear complexion, a nose hooked and somewhat large; he was short of stature, and as he walked he bent his head a little forward, as if not able to discern things clearly; his eyebrows were shaggy and met together; but what most moved me was the glance of his eyes which were of a penetrating brightness, as though they would pierce through the outside of things even to the innermost substance.

When the travellers were entered into the city, I stood still in wonder, as one who had seen a dream, betwixt sleeping and waking. But soon, coming to myself again, I chid my nurse that she had drawn me away from the flocks by stratagem and I persuaded her to return for some short space, that I might continue my sport. But my heart was no longer in it, and presently, it being now sunset, I came down with Trophime to go into the town. Scarce were we come within the gates when we perceived a great concourse of the people near to the market; and running thither we entered with the rest into a courtyard and there found a great multitude assembled, and the travellers, in the gallery above, discoursing to them. What touched me (as being a child) more than all the words that were spoken, was the marvellous stillness of the multitude, who all listened as if the

speech were about matters of life or death, so that herdsmen and ploughmen and litter-bearers and water-carriers and others of the lowest and meanest sort; coming into the courtyard with shouts and scoffings, no sooner passed into the circle of the hearers than they were at once subdued and tamed like the rest; among whom, most earnestly listening, as I noted, was a poor creature, part demented and part buffoon, whom, having been lame for thirty years and more, we were wont to call "lame Xanthias." This man, when the traveller had made an end of his discourse, said some words that I could not clearly understand; whereupon he that had been speaking came straightway down from the gallery and drew nigh to the lame man, and fixing his eyes upon him he took him by the hand. If there had been a silence before, there was a tenfold silence now, even such a silence as one seemed to feel in one's flesh. But the stranger first lifted up his eyes to heaven and then gazing fixedly on the lame man he cried in a loud voice, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk;" and behold, Xanthias,—this man who had been thirty years lame,—rose and walked and leaped, and wept aloud praising and magnifying God. Then there was a great shouting, and all rushed forth into the market place, some crying "a miracle," "a miracle," others holding up Xanthias in their arms to show him unto the people, others magnifying the new god whom the strangers had revealed to us, others crying out that the strangers themselves were gods, namely Zeus and Hermes, come down from heaven as they had come down in the old days; and saying these things,

some sped away to the priest wishing to offer sacrifice to the strangers. But suddenly there was a deep silence again, and we perceived that the traveller, he I mean who had healed Xanthias, was once more speaking to the people. What he said I could not clearly understand, being more busy with noting his countenance than the meaning of his words; but I gathered so much, that he said that he and his companion were not gods but men, and that indeed there was One God above (not many gods) who gave all good gifts to mankind and who now called all men to come unto him. When he had made an end of speaking, the women pressed close to him with their babes and children that he might touch them; and so it was that Trophime pushed me forward with the rest. Then he laid his hands on me and looking kindly on me asked Trophime whether I was a native of these parts and who was my father. What Trophime replied I did not hear, except that my father was now dead; but the stranger looked on me more lovingly than before and said, "The Lord be unto thee as a Father, little one;" and laying his hands on me a second time he blessed me.

§ 3. OF THE STRANGER, AND OF DIOSDOTUS THE PRIEST OF ZEUS

When we were come home to Ammiane, I spoke freely to her as I was wont, concerning all that I had heard and seen; and I asked her which of the two she judged to be the wiser and the mightier, the hook-nosed prophet—for so I called the stranger—or Diosdotus. Now Diosdotus was the priest of the city, a man of noble birth and very wealthy, having rebuilt the baths at his own expense after the earthquake, as also his father before him had rebuilt the amphitheatre. He was also tall of stature and of a gracious and commanding carriage. Yet now I could not help making comparison between him and the stranger of mean presence and short stature; bethinking myself that Diosdotus had lived for thirty years in the same city as poor lame Xanthias and yet had suffered him to be still lame, whereas the strange prophet had healed him on the very day of his first coming in. However Ammiane laughed and chid me for my question, saying that I did ill to compare an obscure vagrant soothsayer with the high priest of Zeus; for that there were many travelling priests of Cybele and Sabazius and jugglers and necromancers that would work signs and wonders in the eyes of the common people, and all for a drachma or two; but Diosdotus was none of these, nor to be mentioned along with them. Nevertheless, when the report came in from all sides that the lame man was wholly cured, she said

she would send for Xanthias, as soon as might be, that she might see him and learn the truth of the matter, and what charms or herbs the stranger had used. But about the fourth or fifth day afterwards—my foster-mother having in the meanwhile, upon one cause or other, delayed to send for Xanthias, but many rumors coming daily to our ears of the great wonders which the magician was working—word was brought that the stranger had been slain; others said that he had ascended to the sky, others that he had been swallowed up in the earth; but all agreed that he was not now in the city. Then we found that there had been a great conflict in the Jews' quarter; for certain Jews had come over from Lystra to Iconium pursuing after the enchanter (so they called him) and accusing him of many grievous crimes. Now it happened to be a time of drought, and the rain, which had begun to fall on the day that the stranger came to Lystra, ceased on that same day, about the time of his entering in, and fell no more for six or seven days, though all the crops were perishing for want of it. So the Jews said that this plague was fallen upon the city of Lystra because we gave shelter to an accursed necromancer; and having persuaded the people they stoned him. But his body could not be found; wherefore the people were the more persuaded that he was a necromancer, insomuch that all now (except Xanthias and a very few others) believed him to be no prophet but an evil-doer and a deceiver of the people.

But on the very day after these things the sun was darkened, and still no rain fell; and on the third day after the stoning of the

stranger, came a great plague of locusts so thick together that they lay two inches deep in the racecourse; and not many days after that, came the shock of an earthquake; and ten houses in the Jews' quarter were wholly thrown down (besides others sorely shaken and shattered), insomuch that some fourscore of the Jews were slain, and their synagogue was utterly destroyed. Upon this the people began to change their minds again, and some made bold to say that the god of the new prophet had sent these evils; and so the city was divided, and part held that the stranger was a deceiver and an enchanter, but part that he was a teacher of the true God and a prophet. At last when the customary sacrifices seemed of no avail, but the drought still endured, and by intervals there came ever and anon shocks of earthquake, it seemed good that there should be a solemn procession of all the city to avert the wrath of the gods, one for Pessinuntian Cybele, the other for Asphalian Poseidon and the third for Zeus Panhemerius. This last far surpassed the other two in splendor, and amidst the whole procession most of all to be admired was Diosdotus the chief priest, himself most like to a god, clad in white linen with a purple border, and a garland on his head, and attended by the inferior priests, and by ministers bearing incense and scattering flowers and perfumes; and after them, the white oxen with their horns gilt for the sacrifice, and then the choir of boys, with laurel branches in their hands, singing, to the accompaniment of the lyre, the hymn which had been chosen by Onomarchus, the secretary of the senate. Beholding all this splendor (exceeding anything I had

ever before witnessed) I inclined now to prefer Diosdotus to the strange prophet; and all the more because Ammiane was clearly on the side of the former. Moreover on the second day after the procession there fell rain in abundance. So all the people now turned to magnify Zeus Panhemerius; and the drought and the earthquake were forgotten, and with them the memory of the stranger faded away.

Yet in my dreams sometimes, both then and for many months afterwards, methought I saw the strange prophet who had healed Xanthias, standing over against Diosdotus and contending against him; and I heard his voice again and again in the darkness, saying, "The Lord be unto thee as a father."

§ 4. HOW WE GREW UP AT LYSTRA

Six or seven years passed smoothly away for me and my brother Chrestus. Our dear mother Ammiane caused us to be taught singing and dancing, as well as riding and the exercises of the gymnasium; and partly because of our beauty and partly because we were regarded as the adopted children of one whom all the citizens loved and honored (for there are still extant inscriptions in Lystra praising our benefactress and calling her the MOTHER OF THE CITY, on account of her many gifts and benefactions to the people of Lystra) we were chosen among the choir of boys who were to sing songs year by year in honor of Apollo and Ephesian Artemis in accordance with the recent decree of the senate; and in all our riding-lessons and wrestling-lessons we took part with the well-born youth of the city; for all knew that Ammiane intended us to be her heirs after her death. But in my fourteenth year it happened that, while seeking for a goat that had strayed in the mountains, I missed my footing and fell down a steep place, where I was taken up for dead; and Hermas brought me home wounded well-nigh to death with two deep gashes on my forehead and left cheek. In a short space I was recovered of my wounds; but I was grievously disfigured with the scars upon my face, and when I went with my brother, as I was wont, to the choir-master, he plainly told me that I was no longer fit to dance nor sing with the choir, for the god required comely

youths to minister to him. Hereat I was sore vexed, and yet more when I perceived (or thought that I perceived) that in the palæstra also and in the riding-school I was no longer so welcome as of old; for some openly jested at my disfigurement, and others, who had before courted my company, now avoided me; at least so I thought, misconstruing perhaps and aggravating little slights, in my discontent. However it was, I became morose and lost my former cheerfulness; for the world seemed changed and turned against me. But the kind Ammiane, discerning what was amiss with me, persuaded me to apply myself to letters; and she bought for us one Zeno, a Greek, to be our tutor. Now Chrestus, being the leader of the choir and the favorite in the palæstra, by reason of these distractions cared less for learning; but I, withdrawing myself from my former pursuits and devoting myself to letters, made good progress in my new studies, so that I soon became skilful at transcribing Greek characters; and I took a great delight in the reading of Euripides and others of the Greek play-writers, but most of all in the poetry of Homer. And in these pursuits I continued till my sixteenth year, finding pleasure in many things but most of all in the love of my beautiful brother Chrestus.

§ 5. HOW AMMIANE DIED AND MY BROTHER AND I WERE SOLD FOR SLAVES

But now indeed our trouble was at hand. For toward the end of my sixteenth year, our dear foster-mother died, and whether it was that she had made no will, or that the will had been stolen or lost, certain it was that no will could be found. It was commonly said, in the household, that a will had been made and deposited with one Tertullus, a banker of Iconium, but that he had destroyed the will, being persuaded by Nicander of Tyana, the heir-at-law, and the two witnesses being both dead. Diosdotus the high-priest of Zeus affirmed that Ammiane had deposited a will with him fourteen years ago in the presence of two witnesses, immediately after the death of her husband, but that she had received it back in the presence of the same witnesses, two years afterwards, and had deposited no other will in its place. Whatever the truth may have been, when Nicander arrived on the second day from Tyana, there was none to dispute his claim; so, though he was known by all to be hateful to Ammiane and had not set foot on her threshold for fifteen years, he now took upon himself to give orders for the funeral and to dispose all things according to his pleasure. Hereupon arose a great wailing and lamentation among the household, that is to say

all that were old enough to know what it was to be a slave. For many of them had looked to be made free by Ammiane's will; and to some she had in express terms promised freedom: and others, who had not been long with us, knowing the kindness of their mistress, expected that they should not be sold, or that after four or five years of service they should be made free. For so much as this was customary with all the wealthy townspeople of Lystra, those at least that had large possessions in land and many household slaves; and how much more might have been expected from one who had been publicly praised as the "mother of the city!" But now all these hopes were dashed to the ground; and all were at the mercy of a new master, of whom we knew nothing by hearsay except that he hated our dear mistress, and from our own knowledge we had begun to suspect that he was greedy, cruel, violent and tyrannous.

For a few hours Chrestus and I remained weeping bitterly in the room where we were wont to sit with Zeno; but when Nicander entered and, in answer to his question why we wept, we made answer that we were weeping for our mother, he reviled us as beggarly brats, slaves seeking to escape from our condition; and spurning us from the chamber bade us be gone at once to the slaves' apartments. Going thither we found all faces full of sorrow; yet none so sorrowful as not to be able to spare some little further sorrow for our case; all pointing to us and exclaiming at our ill fortune because yesterday we had been free and heirs to great possessions, but now we were slaves and a second time

motherless.

I suppose that our cruel master foresaw that some of the friends of Ammiane would, in all likelihood, interfere in our behalf, if not by appeal to the courts of law, at all events by offering to purchase us from him; for he gave command that on that very day, immediately after the performance of the funeral rites, we should be sent to his estate at Tyana. A miserable procession was that, wherein Chrestus and I walked for the last time together, following our dear Ammiane to the grave! The whole household filled the air with lamentations, for themselves even more than for their mistress, so that there was little need of the hired mourners.

But when all was over, and the funeral line moved back homeward, Chrestus and I for a short space turned quietly aside and betook ourselves to a new-made tomb cut in the side of one of the hills that look down upon the city; and there we sat down and wept and poured forth all our sorrows in one another's arms, beseeching the gods to have mercy upon us. For we began to see that we could expect no pity from Nicander, and that he would not hesitate to sell us and to part us asunder if he could thereby make more profit from us; and our hearts swelled to bursting at the thought that we, who had never been divided, should now perchance be parted, each to live lonely and desolate to our life's end. As we wept, we looked down upon our dear home. The fields beneath us had been the fields of Ammiane; we could call by name the sheep and goats that were leaping and

bleating in the valley at our feet; the temples in which we had worshipped, the shining roofs of the houses of many well-known friends—all reminded us of past happy days, happy most of all because we had enjoyed them together. At last we rose up to go down to our new life of slavery. But because our minds misgave us that we should be parted on the morrow, we determined to take our last farewell there alone, and not in the presence of Nicander, nor before the eyes of the household slaves. And Chrestus said that we should interchange some token, whereby we might recognize each other in days to come, if ever the gods should bring us together again. So we took from off our necks the charms which we had always worn from our infancy, and I received from Chrestus his seal with the inscription TRUST ME, and he mine with the words I LOVE THEE. Then we bade one another farewell, no longer able to constrain ourselves, but with piercing cries falling each on the other's neck and weeping and calling on Ammiane to help us because the gods helped us not; and then, drying our tears, without another word we went down into Lystra. Here Nicander, rating us for our delay, gave command that we should be at once placed on separate camels and set out for Tyana.

§ 6. OF THE DEATH OF CHRESTUS

On the third day after we were come to Tyana, being summoned to the presence of Nicander, we found with him certain of Ammiane's household slaves, and by the side of our master a smooth-faced Greek from Delos who seemed to be inspecting and appraising the slaves; who, looking at my scar, laughed and said that he should not need to ask Nicander to name a price for me; but he praised the beauty of Chrestus and caused him to be stripped and to walk up and down the room, and to sing and to go through the steps of two or three dancing-measures; and finally he declared with an oath that he was more beautiful than Nireus, and that he would buy him at Nicander's price. When we heard this, we both of us fell down at the feet of Nicander and of the slave-dealer, beseeching them in the name of their parents and their brothers also, if they had any, that at least they would not part us, but that the Greek might buy us both; and at the same time I told the slave-dealer that I could read and write Greek easily and rapidly, so that I might fetch a good price as an amanuensis and even the rest of the slaves of Ammiane fell on their faces before our master and joined in our petition.

But Nicander angrily spurned us, and the Greek said to Chrestus that he must go to Rome where he would fetch ten times as much as a paltry amanuensis or grammarian because he was as lovely as Ganymede and sure to please some great nobleman

or perchance the Emperor himself; but added he, "Your brother is of no worth to me, for I deal in none but pretty boys; and therefore, my beautiful one, thou must needs make ready to be my companion at once, for I should be by this time well on the road to Tarsus." Hereat Chrestus arose and following the Greek, his master, he would have gone forth without a word more, from the chamber. Nicander, scoffing at his misery, called him back to say farewell to me, "for," said he, "it may be some time before you see your brother again." But Chrestus remained silent; only, as he went out at the door, he turned round to me and held up the little token round his neck. But that silence was better than many words, and the memory of it abides with me unto this day.

So long as Chrestus was in the chamber I restrained myself for his sake lest I should break his heart with my weeping and passion; but when he was gone forth I again attempted to bend Nicander with prayers and entreaties. But finding all in vain, I leaped up from the ground in fury, and invoked curses upon him, threatening that I would slay him if ever I found occasion. At the word he clapped his hands and calling in the slaves of his household, "Take this young rebel," he said, "to the upper quarries, and put him to hard labor with the lowest class, till the brat understand his condition, and learn to be a slave and submit himself to his betters." So while Chrestus was being carried away to Tarsus, I was dragged to the quarries, which were in a wild place, void for miles round of all human habitation, about twenty miles north of Tyana. In these quarries there labored a large gang

of slaves, with scant food and scantier clothing, forced to work in chains under the burning sun all day, and at night locked up like sheep in a foul den under ground; and if any died, little heed was taken of it, for it was cheaper to buy new slaves than to treat the old slaves well. But I doubt not that Nicander, who had good reasons for wishing to be rid of my brother and me, did what he did wittingly and with forethought, supposing that I should soon have succumbed to the hardships of the place and the life, and that the quarries should have been my grave and his deliverance.

On the morrow I began my labors amid a new sort of companions, creatures to all outward appearance resembling apes and dogs rather than human beings, some stamped and branded on their foreheads with T for "thief," or M for "murderer"; others having their backs discolored with the weals of the lash or torn and bleeding with the marks of fresh punishment; others with collars round their necks, or clogs and fetters shackling their legs and feet; others laboring beast-like under a kind of fork or yoke; all were chained in some fashion, and all had one side of the head shorn, so that they might be recognized at once if they should break away and escape any distance. Speech was not allowed among us; and as we toiled on from sunrise to sunset amid the heated rocks, the only sounds that could be heard (beside the clinking of the tools upon the stone) were the threats and curses of the overseers and the crack of the whip followed by the scream of some stricken slave. All the more leisure was there for thought of Chrestus, whose fate

was infinitely worse than mine, because he was to go to Rome and there to be sold for his beauty; and I knew well the saying of the philosopher that "What is counted impurity in the free-born must be counted a necessity in slaves." Thinking on these things I felt such an agony that neither the heat nor the parching thirst could be compared with it; and even the first feeling of the slave-whip upon my shoulders, though it maddened me for the moment, could not drive out the thought of Chrestus. But hatred and thirst for revenge and distrust of the gods began to blend themselves with my love of my brother; and whereas at first I had prayed to Ephesian Artemis to preserve him, now I began to doubt whether prayers availed anything.

I had been scarce a week in the ergastulum when, as we came forth in the morning to be marshalled and numbered, according to our wont, before going to our several places in the quarries, I heard the voice of Hermas behind me giving some message to Syrus our overseer. But when I leaped forward to embrace him, he spoke roughly to me, calling me a fool and a rebel, and saying that he would have no speech with me till I had submitted myself to the worthy Nicander. I shrank back quickly to my place, feeling myself friendless indeed now that Hermas had turned against me. By this time we were on our way from the ergastulum to the quarries, and I with the rest in my place in the rear. But when the crack of Syrus's whip showed that he was at some distance in the front of the long column, I heard my name called in a low voice and Hermas was by my side. He told

me in few words that he had accompanied the slave-dealer to Tarsus, but that on the way Chrestus, either slipping or casting himself down in a narrow and precipitous part of the road, had fallen down a high cliff and had been taken up sorely gashed and wounded, and within two or three hours afterwards he had died. In my heart I knew that Hermas spoke the truth, but I refused to believe his tale, saying that he was in league with Nicander to deceive me; else, why had not he brought some token? But the old man with tears in his eyes, declared that he would have brought me the charm that hung round my brother's neck, but one of the slaves had stolen it; however, in his last moments Chrestus had written some message on his tablets for me; and so saying he produced the tablets which I knew to be indeed my brother's. Now all my hopes fell, and I knew that I was alone in the world; yet could I neither speak nor weep but walked on without a sign; but the old man looking anxiously in my face bade me trust in him, and seeing Syrus approach, he pressed my hand and departed. For almost all that day the overseer—perchance because he suspected something amiss, having caught sight of Hermas stealing away—would not depart from my neighborhood but kept his eyes so fixed on me that I dared not stop my work for an instant to pluck the tablets from my bosom where I had thrust them; and what I did I knew not, but I could neither think, nor weep, nor do anything but toil on, like some machine. But toward sun-down, a little before we were marshalled that we might go down into the ergastulum, seizing my occasion I plucked out the

tablets and upon the first leaf of them I found traced in faint characters, as if by a feeble hand, the words on the token which I had given him, I LOVE THEE; and when I read them, the tears delayed no longer.

§ 7. OF MY LIFE IN THE ERGASTULUM

If it was a marvel that my body held out against the hardships of the quarries, it was much more marvellous that my soul perished not. Nor do I speak now merely of the words and deeds of darkness wrought by the slavish herd in their underground den, from which the grace of the Lord preserved me; but I speak of the trust in any divine governance of the world which seemed at this time to be in danger to be utterly extinguished, or even to be replaced by a belief in evil. For not only was I becoming day by day more like a brute beast in mind and soul as well as in body, listening with less horror to the obscene jests and tales of my companions and learning to take all evil as matter of course and to expect no good in the world; but also I began to think that, if there were gods indeed, they could not be such as the Epicureans would have us believe, “idle gods that take no thought for mortals,” but they must be bad gods to have made, and to endure, so bad a world.

Now I knew that Ammiane had believed in witches and necromancers and the like; yea, and even Zeno our tutor, though he were a philosopher and of the Stoic sect, had freely confessed that he himself would be unwilling to be persecuted with the charms and incantations of witches. As often therefore as my companions turning from their obscenities and filthy tales, began

to tell of witchcraft (which they were wont to do more especially after earthquakes, when they were under some influence of fear) and stories about Empousæ and blood-sucking monsters, and the raising of spectres and the drawing out of the hearts of living men, at such times I would give an eager ear to all their sayings; and although Zeno had taught me to believe that these superstitions of the common people were no better than old wives' fables, yet now I began to incline to the opinion that these stories were true. And in my present condition the gods of darkness, such as Hecate and Gorgo and the like, seemed to have more substance and real power than the greater gods Zeus and Poseidon, who were worshipped in processions by noble priests in fine raiment with perfumes and flowers and offerings of fat victims, but did nothing for their worshippers. When therefore I heard how one witch had drawn forth oracles from a little babe whose throat she had cut and enslaved its spirit; and how another had obtained vengeance over her enemies by means of the marrow of a child whom she had buried up to the midst in the ground and then left to starve in sight of abundance of food; and others had caused their enemies to pine away by making waxen images to be pierced with needles or melted at slow fires, and the like; then came the thought of Nicander in my mind, thus caused to waste away and to live without a heart and suddenly to drop down dead, and I prayed that I too might learn these mysteries.

One evening more especially I call to mind, when we had been driven earlier than usual to our dungeon because of a great

storm and earthquake, and all the earth seemed in a flux—the crags from the hillsides falling on this side and on that, and whole cliffs swaying to right and left as if we were on sea and not on solid earth—and nine or ten of my companions had been already crushed by the rocks or by the falling in of the sides of the quarries. When we were thrust into our dungeon, sitting in darkness, we could still feel the ground moving beneath us and ever and anon such rockings and rumblings as made the more timid cry out that some gulf would open and swallow us up alive, others, that the sides and roof were falling in upon us. But, of a sudden, amidst the din and tumult of so many voices, a few weeping, but the most part shouting and yelling and blaspheming and cursing the gods, we heard one of the slaves speaking out clearly above all the rest and commanding silence. His name was Nannias, a Colchian by birth; and he bade us desist from our fears and take heart, “for,” said he, “I myself have brought about this storm and earthquake, and as I hope, we shall soon learn that our master has miserably perished in it.”

Then all held their peace and listened to the Colchian, who continued thus: “From my earliest years I was instructed by an old witch (who bought me as a babe) in all the arts of magic; and from her I learned how to raise the winds and how to lull them, and how to make away with a man though he be miles distant, in such wise that none may know the causer of the mischief. From my infancy I have ever taken a delight in all evil. For why not? The cross has been the tomb to all my brothers, my father and my

grandfather; nor will I degenerate from my ancestors. The world is against us; let us also be against the world." At this all shouted in assent; but the Colchian impatiently continued, "My master in Laodicea I destroyed by placing bones and blood, and nails from a cross, together with certain herbs which I will not now mention, beneath the floor of his bedchamber, so that he wasted away and died in less than a month to the astonishment of the physician. And what was best and sweetest of all, I caused the suspicion of the deed to fall on the overseer of the slaves, a tyrannical wretch like Syrus, who was condemned to the wild beasts on the charge of having made away with our master by slow poisons." Hereat all shouted and applauded even louder than before; and then though the earth still rocked and groaned beneath us, and the sides of the ergastulum swayed in and out more violently than ever, yet every one sat silent in the darkness waiting to hear what project the Colchian might have in hand so as to take vengeance on Nicander.

While we all held our breath he cried aloud on Hecate the goddess of darkness and hater of light, who delighteth in blood, to come and seize Nicander, at the same time appealing to other horrible-sounding and unknown gods, and invoking on Nicander the most direful curses. When he ceased, behold, up from the ground (as it seemed) there came a thin voice, not loud but very piercing and such as made my very flesh to creep, saying, "I come, O master, I come, I come." Hereat we all leaped to our feet and some shrieked aloud that the demon was upon them,

and then all rushed this way and that, and many fell in a heap wallowing together on the floor, and such a hubbub as if hell itself were let loose; and methought if the uproar had continued but a few moments longer, many of us would have been mad; but at the instant the guard came in with one bearing a lamp, and nothing could anywhere be seen; and they smote on all sides with their whips till the clamor had well nigh abated; and then they went out leaving us in the darkness as before.

Now during all these many years I had had few or no thoughts of Him in whose name Xanthias had been healed; but on this same evening of the earthquake, while I was musing whether there were gods or no, it came into my mind that besides invoking Hecate and Gorgo and the rest, it might be wise to offer up prayers to the God of the strange prophet whom I remembered in my childhood, that He also might join in destroying Nicander. But blessed be the Lord, He hindered me from thus blaspheming His Holy Name; for whether it was that I remembered that the prophet had said that this God was a God of mercy and would be as a Father to me, or whether it was the memory of the pure and holy face of the prophet which seemed not to agree with my impure and unholy prayers, certain it is that the Lord closed my lips and restrained my tongue that I should not take His name in vain. But when all the rest were at last asleep I lay a long while awake and musing upon the words “the Lord be unto thee as a Father” and wondering what manner of god this “Lord” might be.

§ 8. HOW I WAS SOLD TO PHILEMON OF COLOSSÆ

Not more than three or four days had passed since the prophecy of the Colchian, and it was the 8th month or thereabouts from the time of my first being brought to the quarries, when behold, one morning, coming out of the ergastulum to our work according to custom, we found, in the place of the usual overseers, a band of soldiers; and instead of being drafted off to our several stations in the quarries, we were caused to march in one column through Tyana. As we passed through the town, we heard the reason of our journey. Nicander was dead. However he had not perished, as the Colchian had prophesied, in the earthquake; but having committed an outrage on the wife of one of his slaves, he had been mortally wounded by the man in a fit of passion. Yet had he lived long enough to revenge himself by causing the whole of his household to be put to death, three hundred in all, including those who had been of the household of Ammiane, among whom perished our faithful Hermas, and our old nurse Trophime. On the morrow he died, and the heir, entering on the estate, had ordered all the slaves that were in the quarries to be sent to Tarsus and there sold. So brutal had I become and so hard of heart during my stay in the ergastulum, that even the news of the death of Hermas and Trophime did not greatly move me, and the pain of it was not so

great as the pleasure I took in hearing of the death of Nicander.

When we were come to Tarsus and set up on the slave-platform, and there caused to leap and dance and carry weights and to proclaim aloud what arts and accomplishments we knew, I felt little shame, but only some faint desire to know who would be my master, and at the same time a rebellious hatred against gods and men, as being all alike unjust, and a determination to be avenged on mankind. At this time my knowledge of letters and my skill in transcribing stood me in good stead. For when one of the slave-dealers had seen me give proof of my skill upon tablets, he bought me at a higher price than the rest, and after taking me to the baths and using medicaments to remove or lessen the marks of my stripes, he clothed me decently, and placed me with a Greek teacher to increase my skill in letters; and after two or three months thus spent in Tarsus, I was sold to one Philemon, whose step-son Archippus had been studying rhetoric in the schools. My new master was a wealthy citizen of Colossæ and a man of learning, devoted at that time to Greek literature, and he had come to Tarsus to take note of his son's progress in the schools there and to conduct him home; and by reason of a growing infirmity of sight he desired to buy some slave who could read Greek with understanding and take short notes of such things as he dictated. So he bought me for four minæ, and I accompanied him to Colossæ.

I was now in my eighteenth year, being the last year of the emperor Claudius; but though young I was not so pliant or supple

of nature as might have been expected from a youth. For I was, as it were, old and stiffened with suffering; and however the kind Philemon might shew me favor and allowance, yet would my mind still harp on this, that, if I had my rights, I should be free, and whosoever was my master, possessed me unjustly. Moreover, the terror of my recent life in the quarries never forsook me; and each night I said to myself, "I am pampered and made a plaything to-day, but I may be cast into the ergastulum to-morrow." This bitterness of distrust spoiled all the pleasures with which the good Philemon would have gladdened my new life at Colossæ; and indeed my present freedom from oppression and my very leisure, giving me increased occasions for brooding over my loneliness, made me more morose than ever. Sometimes when I looked at the little token which my brother had given me and bethought myself of the token that I had interchanged with him, I would declare that I had not only bestowed on my poor Chrestus the legend I LOVE THEE, but at the same time I had parted with my very faculty of love—so barren and dry of all affection did my heart now seem—and as for the other legend TRUST ME, I would inveigh against it as idle and deceiving. For whom had I on earth to trust? My parents, who had forsaken me? Or Chrestus or Hermas or Trophime, who were now but dust and ashes? But if I looked elsewhere, to the gods in heaven above, or to the gods beneath the earth, behold, I saw none save beings that either rejoiced in evil or at least had not power to destroy evil; which therefore were either too bad or too weak to claim trust from

men.

But herein is thy hand manifest, O Lord Jesus; for through the loss of earthly love and trust thou wast leading me to thyself, the fountain of all goodness, O thou whom to love is to trust, and to trust is to love, and in the loving and trusting of whom is Life Eternal. Blessed art thou, who dost free the oppressed and guide the wanderer! Blessed art thou, Lord of all Love, who didst take from me unto thyself the earthly love of my dear brother that thereby thou mightest guide me to a better and higher Love, even to thyself, in whom, long afterwards, I found my brother once again.

THE END OF THE FIRST BOOK

THE SECOND BOOK

§ 1. HOW I RETURNED TO THE WORSHIP OF FALSE GODS

Perceiving that my mind was under some trouble or disturbance, my master often turned the discourse to matters of morals and philosophy, and especially to the belief in the gods and the divine government of the world; and I told him plainly that I had no such belief, for that the world seemed to me governed by chance, or by fate, or by evil gods, but in no case by good gods, seeing that ill-doing prevailed in the world. Upon this Philemon, being grieved because of my unbelief, asked me whether I had had much discourse with his friend Artemidorus, the Epicurean, on these matters. When I said no, not much, but that my unbelief arose from my own experience of things, because I had seemed to discern more proof of the power of evil than of good, he bade me take comfort; for he would in due course emancipate me, and meantime I should be to him as a friend. After this he advised me to study the books of Plato and of Chrysippus, if perchance I might thus frame myself to a better mind. But when I urged (which indeed was not my own argument but I had heard it lately from Artemidorus) that the

stories concerning the gods were full of all manner of myths, and fables containing portents, and metamorphoses, such as no sane man could believe, to this he replied that the whole world was full of no less wonders, if a man rightly considered it; for that summer should follow spring, and autumn summer, that storm should follow calm, and calm storm, and that the whole world should be so orderly and evenly governed as it was, this, he said, was a far greater wonder than the metamorphoses of which the poets speak. In particular he pointed out the wonderful things past all common course of nature, which were to be seen in that very neighborhood of Colossæ and Laodicea; and taking me with him up and down the valley of the river, called Lycus, which flows through that region, he shewed me how the water is there changed into stone of a dazzling brightness, so that the hills are in many parts covered with the appearance of snow, and cataracts abound of the same substance, and how other mountains vomit forth smoke and fire, and others have wells and springs bubbling upward hot from the earth. Again on another day he brought me to a certain pool sacred to the goddess Cybele, and bade me mark how sheep and goats and cattle, driven into this pool, straightway fell down and perished, but the priests of Cybele, entering into the same waters, stood upright and unhurt in the presence of many spectators; and upon this he asked me what more proof was wanting of the power of the goddess to protect her votaries? When I could make no reply, he affirmed that all these wonders were placed at hand to convince them that disbelieved in the

gods; for if we were forced to believe in these wonders, being as they were before our eyes, why should we be so loth to believe other wonders that our eyes had not seen?

In course of time the words of Philemon and still more his kind deeds and the kindness of his wife Apphia, had power to quench that rancorous spirit which had inflamed my heart. Other friends also, both at Colossæ and in Hierapolis, moved me in the same direction, I mean towards a belief in the gods. Among these was the good Epictetus (a slave like myself and at that time a very young man) concerning whom I shall have much to say hereafter; and a certain Nicostratus of Laodicea, full of zeal for learning, but devout and liberal, and of a gracious nature. Nor must I forget Heracleas, a great reader of the works of the ancient poets as well as of the philosophers, who had studied for some time in Alexandria. These three, being of the acquaintance of Philemon, treated me with exceeding courtesy, seeking my society and willingly conversing with me; and I soon perceived that almost all the rest of our acquaintance though in no respect given to superstitions, nevertheless agreed in believing that the world was governed by good and divine powers.

§ 2. HOW SOME OF PHILEMON'S FRIENDS AVOWED A BELIEF IN ONE GOD

I soon found that, although the philosophers whom I have mentioned above, believed in gods, yet their belief differed much from that of the common people; for the latter believe in many gods, but the former inclined to acknowledge one god under many names. It was at a symposium, during a public festival in honor of Artemis, that I first heard this opinion broached by Nicostratus who said that “there was in reality but one Power, however He may manifest Himself to mortals by many different shapes and names in several lands and nations, speaking also through different prophets, a Delphic woman in Pytho, a Thesprotian man in Dodona, a Libyan in the Temple of Ammon, an Ionian in Claros, a Lycian in Xanthias, and a Bœotian in Ismenus.” I looked that he should have been reprovèd and put to silence by my master; but Philemon said nothing except that this doctrine was not fit to be taught in that shape to the common people; and the rest seemed to assent to Nicostratus. Heracleas, in particular, said that “though the number of gods and demons, or demoniacal essences, be far more than the 30,000 whereof Hesiod makes mention, yet the mighty King of all this multitude, seated on his stable throne as if He were Law, imparts unto the

obedient that health and safety which He contains in Himself.” To me also, in our private and familiar discourse, the young Epictetus would always speak, not of many, but of One, who guides all things and to whose will we must conform ourselves. As for idols and statues of the gods—of which I had always been wont at Lystra to speak as being themselves gods, so that I could scarce think of the gods apart from them—Nicostratus said openly at this same feast, that it was no marvel if the immortal powers preferred to inhabit beautiful shapes of gold and stone and ivory; which nevertheless were of course to be distinguished from the gods themselves, as being but the integuments of the divine senses; but Heracleas went yet further (and Epictetus with him) saying that one should no more accost an image than a house (instead of the householder); and that images were not needful but only helpful for the forgetful souls of men.

When Heracleas avowed his belief in the myths and metamorphoses and fables about the gods I said to him, “Why, O Heracleas, are there no metamorphoses in our days?” “Because,” replied he, “men have degenerated from their progenitors of ancient date. Therefore it is no marvel that the gods refuse to perform such wonders as of old for mankind upon earth. But in the former days the pious were naturally changed from men into gods, and these are even now honored, such as Aristaeus, Heracles, Amphiaraus, Asclepius, and the like. Having regard to these facts, any one may reasonably be persuaded that Lycaon was changed into a wolf, Procne into a swallow, and Niobe into

a stone. At present, however, now that vice has spread itself through every part of the earth, the divine nature is no longer produced out of the human, or, in other words, men are no longer made gods but only dignified with the title thereof through excess of flattery, as some among us call the emperors gods even while they yet live.” To this Nicostratus assented, but added that “the lies of the multitude are sometimes to blame, pouring contempt upon undoubted facts in the attempt to adorn and exaggerate them, as for example, asserting not only that Niobe was changed into a stone, which is true, but also that Niobe on Sipylus still weeps, which is not true.” More passed between them; but this I discerned clearly that both they and many others, while acknowledging one god under many names, agreed with Philemon (and not with Artemidorus the Epicurean) in believing without doubt the myths and fables about the gods.

§ 3. HOW NICOSTRATUS URGED THAT, WITHOUT THE BELIEF IN THE GODS, THE LIFE OF MAN WOULD BE VOID OF PLEASURE

It happened about this time that there was a great feast in honor of Artemis, and the customary processions and dances, and games also and chariot-races and plays exhibited in the theatre. Being sick at this time and not able to go abroad, Philemon besought Nicostratus to take me with him to the theatre, and to show me the pomps and shows of the festival, which far exceeded anything that I had ever seen in our little town of Lystra. So on the morning of the festival, early before sunrise, I went to the house of Nicostratus; who had no sooner saluted me than he began at once, after his manner, to take occasion of the festival to commend, in a long discourse, the belief in the immortal gods. "For seest thou not," said he, "how to all men, poor as well as rich, slaves as well as masters, the festivals of the gods bring round brightness and gladness?" Methinks he noted that my countenance was altered when he spoke of "slaves," for he hesitated and was silent for a moment; but anon, collecting himself, he continued cheerfully thus: "When I speak of slaves, I mean not such as thou art, being already half emancipated and rather thy master's friend than his servant; but I mean rather

the poor wretches toiling in chains or grinding at the mill, to all of whom the festival brings relief and some gleam of joy. For five days ago, before the feast began, sawest thou not how even at the approach of the holiday all was astir within the city, yea and without too; food and wine and fruits and oxen and sheep for sacrifice being brought in from the country; old garments purified and freshly decked out, new ones bought or borrowed from friends; the statues of the gods taken down and carefully cleansed and polished till they glitter." At this point he was interrupted by a slave who had been waiting to tell him that it was time to go forth to the temple. Descending to the court-yard we found all the household awaiting us, clothed in their best attire, the little children bearing frankincense in their hands and the victims adorned for sacrifice. Regarding them all with a glad countenance and saluting many of them by name, Nicostratus bade me remember that at this same moment every householder in Colossæ, however austere or miserly by nature, was constrained by the observance of the gods to go forth in like manner to offer sacrifice. "And now," continued he in an unbroken discourse, "we shall all go to the great temple. Prayers will be offered up; none but words of good omen will be uttered; no sound of quarrel or abuse or even of ribald mirth will be heard in the whole of the vast assemblage. After this, some offer sacrifice; the rest stand by as spectators. Then begins the feasting, some feasting in the temples, others at home where you and I will make merry together. And as for the rest of the day and

the days following, thou shalt see how pleasantly they will pass. Yet all this is but a copy of that which happens at every festival in every city where the gods are rightly revered. For during the feasting, the whole city resounds with singing, some chanting hymns in honor of the god, others odes and songs, serious or merry, according to each one's pleasure. I omit to speak of the processions and shows, all full of beauty and delight, but not more beautiful here than in a thousand other cities of Asia and Europe."

Here he broke off, to salute some of his acquaintance. "Hail, Charicles! and you, too, Charidemus! I rejoice to see you in the city, and forget not that to-morrow you are bespoke to dine with me." Then turning again to me, "Note, I pray you," said he, "how all the people, both citizens and country-folk, are knit together in concord on such days as these. For there is scarce one citizen in Colossæ but has invited some stranger or some acquaintance from the country to partake of his good cheer. Amid the drinking old friendships are drawn closer, new friendships are begun. After dinner some show strangers about the city; others sit down in the market-place and talk pleasantly together. Throughout the day no law courts are open, no execution is allowed, no debtor need fear arrest, no slave dreads the lash; all quarrel, all strife receives at least a cessation, which sometimes brings about a permanent peace. In the evening the feasting begins again, and all sit down to sup; so many are the torches that the whole city is filled with light; each street resounds with the flutes and

the joyful songs of the revellers. Austere sobriety is laid aside for once, and to drink a little to excess in honor of the gods is esteemed no great disgrace. Thus for three days the feast continues; and when it is over we part with vows of friendship, in peace and good will, praying that we may live long enough to see such another feast come round again. Now," concluded Nicostratus, "take away the gods from out of the world and what cause remains why men should thus meet and rejoice together? For where there are no gods, there are none to be thanked, and therefore no thanksgiving; but thankfulness is the salt of life. Whosoever therefore takes away the gods from the life of man takes away the prime cause of human joy, and must be esteemed the enemy of all mankind."

I felt in my inmost mind that a keen and subtle disputant, such as Artemidorus, might have had much to urge against these arguments of Nicostratus; yet at that time many things joined together to incline me to accept his reasonings. For having been now nearly a year at Colossæ I had received on all sides such tokens of good will, and I may almost say of affection, as had already well nigh won me out of my first condition of distrust; and although it were not according to reason to argue that whatsoever things are pleasant must needs be also true, yet did it appear beyond doubt that life without the gods would be full of dullness and gloom, all men being everywhere wholly given up to cares and self-searchings. And I reasoned thus with myself, "If indeed there be gods, then it were wrong not to acknowledge

them; but if there be no gods, why even then it seems happier to believe that gods exist, and, in that case, how can ‘no gods’ deem belief in gods to be a sin?” So for my part, being at that time recovered from my melancholy, and young, and in good health, and taking pleasure in the pride of life and the pleasure of the flesh, I concluded to take the happier side and to believe that there were gods ruling the world to good ends.

§ 4. HOW PHILEMON, FALLING SICK, INCLINED TO SUPERSTITION

About this time Philemon falling sick, turned to a melancholy, and becoming wholly changed from his former disposition, gave himself up to all manner of superstitions. Resorting in vain to all the physicians of the place, he was led at first to try charms and amulets, and then to consult soothsayers and astrologers and the priests of strange gods; and thus, little by little, partly by the burden of his disease enfeebling his understanding, and partly by reason of the company which he now frequented, he became daily more timorous and superstitious. He offered sacrifice almost every day, and anxiously awaited the report as to the entrails; he resorted often to the priests of all kinds of gods more especially Isis, Serapis, and Sabazius, and sometimes he would invite them to his own house, so that our house became a kind of temple in Colossæ; he purified himself many times a day both with the lustral waters and with other strange purifications; he would wear naught but linen, and abstained from many kinds of flesh, and in the end from all flesh; if he saw a sacred stone he would fall down on his knees before it and anoint it with oil. Nay, once, during this melancholy fit of his, when we had set out after much preparation upon a journey to Ephesus, the sight of a weasel—though we were now fully a mile past the city gate—made him turn back and give up the journey altogether. At last,

when no remedies and no charms availed anything, supposing himself to be under the special displeasure of some unknown god, he took to his bed and could not be persuaded to leave it.

My master having been about a month in this case, growing daily weaker, there came to him one Oneirocritus of Ephesus (the same to whom he himself had been intending to journey) who also himself had been sick of some disease insomuch that the physicians had despaired of him; but he was now quite recovered. This man coming into Philemon's chamber questioned him concerning his condition and symptoms, and the sacrifices he had offered, and the gods he had propitiated. Then he spoke concerning himself and his own deliverance, how after he had been sick nearly twenty years, he had been healed by Asclepius at the famous temple in Pergamus; and he very earnestly exhorted Philemon to go thither with all speed. At the same time he described the wonders wrought by the god on those that believed in him, and the punishment he had inflicted on the impious and unbelieving. Upon this Artemidorus the Epicurean—whom, because of his exact knowledge of medicine and his skilfulness in noting symptoms, Philemon would never exclude from his bed-chamber, even in his most superstitious moods—once more recommended Philemon to try the baths of the neighboring city of Hierapolis, saying that it was not wise to despise remedies merely because they were near and easy and familiar. "For this disease," said he, "arises from no anger of the gods or any such matter, but from some disorder of the liver which may not

improbably be removed by the hot baths of Hierapolis.” “But if the liver be disordered,” replied Oneirocritus, “truth compels me to speak of the virtues of a certain sacred well in the precincts of the temple at Pergamus availing for the healing not of one disease, but of all; for great multitudes of the blind, washing therein, have obtained their sight; others have recovered from lameness; others from asthma and pleurisy; nay, to some even the mere drawing of the water with their own hands, (it being so prescribed by the god) has restored soundness and health.”

Then others of the companions of Oneirocritus added other stories all tending to the honor of Asclepius; some indeed possible and deserving of attention, but others absurd and fit only to move laughter; how, for example, a sculptor in Pergamus had been punished with immediate disease for making a statue of the god with inferior marble, but having atoned for his fault by making a second statue of fit material, he straightway recovered; also how a fighting-cock, wounded in one leg, chancing to take part in the procession of song in honor of the god, extended his leg, no longer wounded but whole, and hopping onwards crowed in harmony with the songs of the choir; and lastly how a certain rich Epicurean having had a dream in the temple of the god, forthwith obeying the heavenly vision, burned the books of Epicurus, and having made a paste of their ashes applied a poultice to his stomach and thus was perfectly healed. This last story seemed to touch Artemidorus (because of the contempt, as I suppose, which it cast upon the doctrine of his master

Epicurus) and he was on the point of making some rejoinder, when Oneirocritus, like one inspired with divine enthusiasm, broke out into a long and passionate discourse concerning the benefits that he himself had received from the god Asclepius: "For seventeen years," he said, "I had kept my bed through disease, and for many more years I had been ailing and infirm, troubled with the falling sickness; yet such hath been the favor of the god toward me, manifested by continual tokens of his presence during my sickness as well as at my recovery, that I would not exchange my state for all the health and strength of Heracles. For I am one of those who have been blessed, not once only but many times, with a new life, and who, for this cause, esteem sickness a blessing. Many a time, half awake, half asleep, have I found myself not indeed seeing the god but conscious of his presence, my eyes full of tears, my hair erect, and a savor of divine odor in my nostrils. Thus have I received the most helpful manifestations. It was thus that the god revealed to me that I must go forth from Apamea, the day before the great earthquake; it was thus, half in a dream half in a vision, that he also showed me how Philoumene the daughter of my foster-mother had devoted her life for mine; and behold on the eighth day she died and I recovered from my disease. Moreover at one time the god appeared to me in no dream but in a vision, having three heads, and his body wreathed in flames; and at another time not Asclepius only but Athene herself also appeared to me and held converse with me. A sweet odor exhaled from the ægis

of the goddess and she bore the shape of the statue of Phidias. My nurse and two other friends, who happened to be sitting by my couch, stared and were astonished, and at first they deemed me to be beside myself; but presently they also understood the discourse and were aware of the divine presence.”

While Oneirocritus was saying these words, his eyes kindled and his voice trembled, and he seemed ready to weep for joy and gratefulness; and there was not one present except the Epicurean who was not somewhat moved to sympathy. But after a pause Artemidorus praised the priests of Asclepius, saying that it was well known that they were wise physicians and prescribed wise remedies, but that their cures might well be believed to be according to nature. To which Oneirocritus replied with exceeding vehemence: “Nay, but let any one consider how strange and past all natural invention, yea, how contrary oftentimes to all the rules of art are the prescriptions of the god, some being bidden to swallow gypsum, others hemlock, others to strip naked and to bathe in cold water, (and these so weak and puling that their own physician durst not prescribe to them to bathe even in warm water) and assuredly, when all this is considered and the great multitude of them that are healed, beholding the sides of the temple all covered with the votive tablets of them that have given thanks for their recovery, surely the veriest atheist will cry out ‘Great is Asclepius, and holy is his temple.’ Therefore, O most excellent Philemon, my counsel is that you also, despising all other waters, whether they be of

Cydnus, or Peneus, or Hierapolis should resort to the sacred well in Pergamus; and, if you do this and the god so will, you shall assuredly return healed of your disease.”

To this the greater part of those present gave assent. Only Artemidorus, when mention was made of the votive tablets of those that had recovered, whispered to me: “But where, O Onesimus, are the votive tablets of those that have not recovered? Or perchance the temple could not find room for so many?” And when Oneirocritus had departed, he did not conceal his judgment that of the things that he had related, some were according to nature, but others only the dreams and imaginations of one that was scarce master of himself. But the rest were entirely against the Epicurean and on the side of Oneirocritus. And so I found it both then and afterwards in most places whereof I had experience, not only in Asia but also in Greece and Italy: those that believed in the gods were many; and those that believed not were men of culture and learning, but very few. And with the multitude in some places to be an Epicurean or an Atheist (for it was all one with the common people) was deemed a crime sufficient to bring down the wrath of the gods in shipwreck, famine, pestilence, or earthquake. The magistrates also everywhere dissembled, even though they were atheists; and they not only offered sacrifice and kept holidays, but also of their own free will, and at their own cost, they built and repaired temples, and set up statues to gods in whom they disbelieved, esteeming this kind of dissimulation to be a sort of piety. But as

for myself at this time, I was in a strait between two opinions; for on the one hand I had begun to despise the excessive and unreasonable superstitions of Philemon, but on the other hand while I respected Artemidorus as an honorable man and a seeker after truth, I shrank from his philosophy as void of hope and happiness. So with my mind I inclined towards Artemidorus, but with my heart not indeed towards Philemon as he now was, but as he had been; and I believed in the gods with my wishes, but I disbelieved in them with my reason and understanding.

§ 5. HOW I ACCOMPANIED PHILEMON TO PERGAMUS

On the morrow Artemidorus came again and would have dissuaded Philemon from going to Pergamus, maintaining more fully than before that he had spoken with many to whom the god had revealed prescriptions and that there was nothing divine in them: “for to some,” said he, “being of a melancholy temperament the god prescribes the hearing of odes, hymns and other music, or sometimes even farces; to others riding on horses; to others bathing in cold water; to others walking or leaping; to others frequent rubbing and careful diet; thus the god gives in each case wise and exact prescriptions such as a skilful physician would use; but in all these, and the cures at issue, there is nothing of the power of a god.” Philemon listened patiently enough, but replied (not without sense as it appeared to me) that if this were so, or were not so, in either case one of two good results might be expected; for if it were a god that prescribed, then he should receive benefit from a god’s prescriptions, but if it were not a god, but only the priests, even then he should have the prescriptions of physicians so skilful that they obtained the praises of Artemidorus and were esteemed by the multitude to have the wisdom of a god. So it was settled that to Pergamus we should go, and in the autumn of that year we came thither. There was much in the place to delight a youth such as I was then; first

the town itself fenced in on two sides by rushing streams and on the north side by rocks scarcely to be scaled; also the stately buildings and especially the library; and as I had the charge of Philemon's books I took pleasure in learning here the art of preparing parchments and smoothing and adorning them; for the place is very full of transcribers of books and the banks of the river (which is called Selinus) are covered with the shops of those who tan skins and prepare them for the use of booksellers. Thus passed seven days, pleasantly enough; and all this time I saw not Philemon, for he spent almost every hour apart from his friends in the temple, engaged in processions and purifications and the like.

But on the eighth day he came to me with a cheerful countenance saying that after he had thrice gone in the sacred processions, and had daily heard solemn music and been present at the thanksgivings of those who each day had departed whole from the temple, a sweet sleep had fallen upon him wherein he had seen a vision, namely, a chasm round and not very large, about five or six cubits in diameter, and himself on the point of going down into it, and behold, one prevented him and went down in his stead. When he recounted the vision to the priests, they bade him be of good cheer, saying that the interpretation of the dream was this, that he himself should not die nor go down to Hades (which was signified by the round pit) but that he should recover and some other should die in his place; and for the rest they bade him bathe daily in cold water, and walk often and hear

cheerful music and abstain from overmuch study. So we returned to Colossæ with lightened hearts; and already Philemon began to shake off his melancholy and to recover apace. But in the second month after we were come back, Apphia fell sick and was nigh unto death. And hereupon Philemon's distemper returned on him worse than before; and as his wife became better, he became worse, insomuch that he began to despair of his life. Then Oneirocritus of Ephesus came a second time to visit him; and he, when he had heard the account of Philemon's vision, how he had seen a round chasm and one descending into it, affirmed that the meaning of the god was that Philemon should go to the cave of Trophonius in Lebadea in Greece, where there is even such a chasm, the same in shape and dimensions also, and men go down to it to learn things to come, and this, he said, was without doubt the intention of the vision; but the ministers of the temple had interpreted it amiss. Now therefore nothing would serve but we must needs go to Lebadea.

§ 6. HOW I WENT DOWN INTO THE CAVE OF TROPHONIUS

As soon as the season of the year came round for a sea voyage, we sailed across to Athens, and thence to Lebadea, where we were to make ready for descending beneath the earth. When the day approached, Philemon was advised by some of his friends (and also by the ministers of the god) not himself to go down, because of his age and infirmities, lest the suddenness of some voice or apparition in the darkness beneath the earth, should affright him and drive him out of his wits or even slay him outright. For although no one that had at any time consulted the oracle had ever suffered anything fatal (save only one Macedonian of the body-guard of Antigonus who had descended for sacrilegious purpose, and in despite of the sacred ministers, with intent to seek for hid treasure, and he had been cast forth dead by some other passage and not by the way he went down) yet did all, whether strangers or natives, look upon the descent as a matter of some peril not to be lightly taken in hand. So when I perceived that Philemon desired me to go down in his place but would not urge nor so much as ask me, lest I should think myself enforced to consent, I willingly adventured to descend.

But I found it was no such short and simple matter as I had supposed. For on presenting my petition to the priests I was caused to wait many days, first of all in a kind of House

of Purification, which was dedicated to Good Fortune, and during all these days I offered up several sacrifices, not only to Trophonius, and to his children, but also to Apollo and to Cronus, and to Zeus the King, and to Hera the Driver of Chariots, and to Demeter called Europa; and even when all these sacrifices had been inspected by the priests and pronounced propitious, yet my good fortune must needs still depend upon one last sacrifice of all. This was to be a ram offered on the last night, whose blood was caused to flow into a trench while invocation was made to Agamedes; which, if it had been unpropitious, would have made all the other sacrifices of no effect, and all my master's money and my pains would have been spent for naught. Although I was in no humor for scoffing at that time, yet on that last evening, while I awaited the report concerning the entrails, I could not but marvel that any god should desire mortals to approach him by paths so costly and so tedious. For had I been a poor man, I had long ago spent all and more than all my substance in the sacrifices which I had offered, and the purifications I had undergone, and the fees I had paid to the ministers of the god. During the period of purification I had abstained from warm baths, and had bathed only in the cold waters of the stream called Hercyna; but on the last night of all, I was bathed with a special solemnity in the same stream by two priests called Hermæ. Then I was made to drink of two fountains flowing forth, one on either hand, whereof the former was called the fountain of Forgetfulness, the other the fountain of Remembrance. All this was done, they told me, that

I might forget the past and remember the future and in particular the response of the god. Last of all they took out of a veil a certain very ancient image of the god, said to have been wrought by Dædalus; and on this they bade me look very reverently and intently even till my eyes were weary. This done, I was clad in a white linen tunic, curiously girt round with garlands, and led towards the cavern.

This was a pit, round at the top, but inside in shape not so much like a cylinder as rather a cone whereof the summit has been cut off; for the base was somewhat larger than the opening, the circumference at the top being about a score of cubits, and the depth, as I should judge, fifteen cubits; but of the circumference at the bottom I cannot speak exactly. The way to go down into the pit was by a ladder. Before I went down the priest told me that when I had touched the bottom I was to feel about for two small round holes in the side, a handbreadth or so from the bottom and near the foot of the ladder, each large enough to hold the foot and the lower part of the leg. Laying myself on my back I was to place my feet in these two holes, "and thereon," said the priest, "though the openings be never so small, yet through these will the god draw inwards the whole of your body, as with the irresistible force of some whirlpool, and then in an inner recess, if he be so pleased, he will hold converse with you either by voice or by apparition, or perchance by both. But be of good cheer, bearing in mind that, except that sacrilegious Macedonian of whom I spoke to you, there was never any one yet that was harmed by

the god.”

When I lay down, and the lights above had been taken away, my mind was all astir, not dizzy nor faint, nor disposed to torpor, but more active than my wont, tossing a multitude of thoughts to this side and that, neither believing nor disbelieving in the god. Then it came into my thoughts that Artemidorus had explained the wondrous pool of Cybele, fatal to cattle, by saying that some kind of creeping vapors adhered to the surface of the water, and he bade me take note at Lebadea, whether any kind of vapor could be seen or felt in the pit. So I drew a long breath or two but could neither feel aught nor taste aught, save only that my mind seemed still busier than before, tossing and retossing thoughts without end. Next, falling on a different course of thinking, I considered with myself whether perchance I was playing a sacrilegious part in thus coming into the midst of the god’s mysteries in order to spy them out and reveal them to Artemidorus; and I resolved that I would submit myself to the god and think only of the image of Dædalus, even as the priest had bidden me. Now all this takes indeed some time to set down, but to think the thoughts needed scarce a moment, and countless other fancies and imaginations and resolutions passed through my mind; but the last determination of all was that I would rebel against the god and not suffer myself to be drawn through the crevices; and scarce had I conceived this rebellious fancy, when lo, my chest began to heave and my heart to beat more and more violently, and I felt the throbbing of the veins in my temples; and

then whether my body was indeed carried into an inner recess, or whether my spirit alone was carried, being separated from the body, or whatever else happened, I know not for certain; but there was as it were the clapping-to of a great door shut with a loud jar, parting me off from all things, and then a singing in mine ears, and a bright light that grew brighter, and then methought I lay as it were living, and yet beyond life, and not able to move hand or foot, yet able to think and hear; and there was a voice from the depths of the cave in the Bœotian dialect “Philemon must go first”; and presently I felt myself drawn upwards and heard the voices of the priests saying that “the man will soon come to himself,” and behold I was being carried to a throne called the throne of Recollection; whereon they placed me and straightway questioned me concerning the things that I had seen or heard while I was still staring and groping about me like one distraught. When I had made reply according to my ability, they wrote down my words on a tablet and gave me back to my friends who led me away, being still unable to guide myself and ignorant both of myself and them. But not many minutes had passed before I recovered my mind; and then a spirit of lightness and mirth possessed me, insomuch that I laughed loud and long and this without cause, and could not restrain myself from laughing; but when I was ashamed thereat and even Philemon was fain to rebuke me, one of the priests that stood by, said that there was no cause either for my shame or for his rebuke, for laughter after this fashion was ever wont to seize those with whom Trophonius

had held converse.

§ 7. HOW ARTEMIDORUS SPOKE AGAINST THE BELIEF IN GODS

That I had received a vision none doubted; but concerning the meaning of the vision there was much dispute. For the priests of Trophonius (though it was not their special duty to interpret the visions vouchsafed by the god, but only to prepare the way for them by introducing those that desired to consult the god) interpreted the words of the voice and the shutting of the gates as meaning evil for my master, namely, that he should enter Hades first, and that the gates should then be shut, so that I should not follow him till afterwards. But I thought, and so did some others, friends of my master that were with us, that the meaning rather was, that Philemon should enter into happiness first, but that I should be shut out; and even now methinks that was the truer interpretation; for Philemon indeed entered first into the Kingdom of Light, and I followed after. Notwithstanding at this time, between these two interpretations, we knew not what to think; and my master returned to Colossæ even more melancholy than before. Artemidorus said, scoffing, that we had a goodly time with the gods, only that they were slow of speech or fond of circuits; for Oneirocritus had sent us to Asclepius, and behold, that god had given us a dream but not the interpretation of the dream; and afterwards we had gone to Trophonius, and he had given us a vision, and an oracle in broad Bœotian to be the

interpretation of the dream; and now nothing remained but we should go to Delphi to obtain some oracle that might serve as the interpretation of the dream; or last of all, if the son of Zeus should answer, like the rest, doubtfully and darkly, then must we go to Zeus himself in Dodona that the Father might enlighten for us whatever the Son might have left too obscure. I was not greatly moved by the gibes of Artemidorus; for the vision that I had seen, or seemed to have seen, weighed with me more than his mockery; nor did I then believe the word of the Epicurean, who constantly affirmed that the fit which had befallen me had arisen from the vapor of the cave, aided by the trickery of the priests and the force of imagination. But another scruple (so the Lord willed it) troubled me much more, coming into my mind again and again; I mean that all these rites and ceremonies, purifications, sacrifices, and the like were only possible for the rich, not for the poor; wherefore the religion that required these things was for the few and for the free-born and not for the many, and the miserable and the oppressed.

Yet can I not deny that Artemidorus also had a great share in loosening me by degrees from the worship of false gods. For as Philemon grew more and more melancholy, and I may almost say morose, he shunned all company and mine with the rest, and so left Artemidorus and myself to hold discourse together. At such times, when our speech naturally fell on the metamorphosis (for we could not call it otherwise) of my master, Artemidorus would speak at great length concerning the miseries of religion,

and how great evils it had wrought on mankind, leading them to wicked sacrifices, and orgies, and to self-torturings and agonies of soul, and all to no purpose; and how much more beautiful it was to believe that all the universe is bound together by one fixed and unchangeable order which gives life and decay to all things according to law. And oftentimes he quoted to me the verses of the Latin poet Lucretius, praising those who with a discerning eye can look upon all apparent wonders in heaven and earth, perceiving that there is a cause of each. When I alleged on the other side such wonders as Philemon had spoken of, as being abundant in our own land—the burning mountains, hot wells, fatal vapors, and rivers and cataracts that changed into stone,—concerning all these he had causes and explanations to set forth, as also concerning the thunder and the lightning and many other supernatural things; and when he perceived that some of his explanations convinced me, then he would always add that there was no place left for the gods in the Universe, but that when men had learnt entirely to give up all thought of gods and Elysium and Tartarus, and had attained to seek and expect happiness in naught save a life of virtue upon earth, then all things would go well with us on earth, or at least much better than at present.

Now as for the immortality of the soul and the life beyond the grave, to these things I adhered, mainly because I loved to think of Chrestus as still existing; and as touching the existence of a god also, Artemidorus himself could not make it clear to me how the beginnings of the world came to pass without some

Mind; so that as to these matters, though I was somewhat moved by him, I was not greatly shaken. But as for the myths and fables of the wondrous deeds and transformations of the gods he quite overthrew all my faith in any such things; urging that the order of the world testified against them, and that our often experience of the invention and refutation of like marvels showed that they were necessary for the vacant truth-contemning minds of the multitude, but none the less false and to be discarded by the seekers after truth.

Even to this day do I call to mind the time and place of that particular discourse of Artemidorus which most moved me. We were walking near the city of Hierapolis (which lies close upon Colossæ) amid the hills covered with the snow-like marble made out of water, whereof I wrote above, and I had taken him to see some of the vaporous springs which Philemon had shown me, inferring from such wonders the existence of the gods. Then Artemidorus spoke his mind to me freely, after his cynical manner, concerning these and other so called metamorphoses and miracles. For after he had with very great clearness and not a little cogency of words and reasons set forth his theory concerning the marble cataracts, finding me obstinate against his conclusion that all things are according to order and that all the stories of the metamorphoses are false, he suddenly changed his humor and said mirthfully, "But come now, most devout of mankind, lest perchance I should seem to you unfair, pressing unduly the argument on the one side but neglecting

what might be said on the other side, see, I will take the part of Socrates and will maintain the truth of the ancient stories. At Philemon's supper last night, you heard how stoutly the pious Nicostratus supported our most excellent host in affirming that it was possible that the loving Halcyone was translated into the sea-bird of that name, which is said ever to mourn for her husband. Now mark how far inferior is the devout Nicostratus to the more devout Artemidorus." Then, adjusting his cloak and speaking in a pompous fashion with a sonorous voice after the manner of some philosophers of our acquaintance, "Alas," he said, "blind creatures that we mortals are! Alas, purblind judges of the possible and impossible! For we, deluded ones, pronounce according to the ignorant and dull abilities of faithless men. And therefore many things, in themselves easy, seem to us difficult, and many things in themselves attainable seem to us not to be attained. And this befalls us sometimes through our inexperience, sometimes through the infancy of our minds. For, as compared with the First Cause of all, every man, be he never so old, is but a child; and human life, when compared with eternity, is but a childhood's span. Who therefore shall decide what is likely? For which, think you is the harder or the more unlikely? To raise a stillness out of a blustering tempest, and to spread a cloudless sky over the whole of Europe and of Asia, or to change the shape of one woman into the form of a bird? We see even children every day shape distinct forms and figures from wax and clay. Then certainly God, who is too excellent in greatness and wisdom to

be brought into comparison with the wisest of human beings, can effect more wonderful actions than these which are easy and familiar. Nature, we see, finding in a comb of wax a shapeless worm without legs or feathers, bestows on it wings and feet, and enamelling it with great diversity of fair colors produceth a bee, the wise artificer of divine honey! Seeing therefore this marvellous transformation, why doubt we of thy lesser wonder, O Halcyone, most dutiful of birds? Nay, but from henceforth I will not cease to scoff at the folly of poor puny mortals, who can neither comprehend great matters nor small, but doubt of most things, even of those which concern ourselves, and yet dare to deny the power of the immortal gods to transform halcyons or aught else. And for my part, even as the fame of the fable hath been conveyed to me from my ancestors, so will I extol the praise of thy songs, O thou bird of mourning, conveying it to my children and to their posterity after them; nor will I cease to repeat the story of thy virtuous love for thy husband, thy constancy and thy patience, to my wives Xantippe and Myrto.”

Then, putting aside all mirth, “Do you not see, my dear Onesimus,” said he, “that, upon such reasoning as this, any impostor can palm off any portent upon the credulity of mankind. Nay, so eagerly does the multitude seek after portents that they will oftentimes refuse to pay homage even to the truth, unless it come accompanied with portents: and indeed such is the nature of our Phrygians in this region (and the Paphlagonians are no better) that if a juggler will but play his tricks before

them, taking with him a player on the flute or tambourine or cymbals, straightway they will gape upon him as on a messenger from heaven, and believe as he instructs and do as he commands. But it is not the part of a philosopher, my dear friend, to accept falsehoods through laziness, or credulity, or enthusiasm, but rather to esteem sobriety and incredulity to be the very sinews of the soul, remembering the words of him who said, 'I love Socrates well and Plato well, but Truth best of all.' And surely, if there be a god indeed, as you and your philosophers will have it, and this god a good god, then to such a god that man must be pleasing who most honors truth; but the man who serves falsehood must be unpleasing, whether folly or knavery be the cause of such a servitude."

His words moved me not a little; for I seemed forced at least to this conclusion that whether there were an Elysium or not, whether gods or no gods, in any case truth must needs be better than falsehood; and when he spoke of falsehood as a "servitude" his words galled me all the more because I was a slave; and I confessed in my heart that I had been acting slavishly in resolving to believe what was pleasant, merely because it was pleasant, and without much regard to the truth of it. So I vowed within myself that howsoever Philemon might enforce my limbs to his service, he should not constrain my mind to this or that opinion contrary to what I believed to be the truth; for though my body might be the body of a slave, in my mind and thoughts I would be free.

§ 8. HOW I JOURNEYED WITH PHILEMON TO ANTIOCH IN SYRIA

Now began my old fit of doubt and trouble and moroseness to return upon me. I had long disliked the excessive and, as it seemed to me, pusillanimous superstition of Philemon; and the more because, although he spared no pains nor cost in resorting to oracles and practising new superstitions, he had not yet bethought himself of his promise that he would emancipate me. Lately also he had built for himself a tomb at a very great expense, saying that it was unreasonable to prepare for oneself a sumptuous house wherein we should spend threescore years at the most, and yet to take no thought of that other abode wherein a man needs spend all his time hereafter for many years. But while he made this so costly and careful provision for his bones, he made none for his family nor for his slaves; for it was known that he had some months since destroyed his former will and he had not as yet made another; so that both I and all the rest of the household were in danger to be sold to we knew not what master, if anything evil should suddenly befall Philemon. Yet when Artemidorus urged him to the making of a will, he resented it as if it were done upon some expectation of his death. For at times, in his melancholy, he came to such a point of suspicion as to imagine that all men, even his household, were set against him and wished to murder him. So I began to rebel once more

against the worship of the gods, partly (as before) because it seemed to be a religion for the rich and not for the poor, but partly also because it seemed possible to be religious and yet to be swallowed up with thoughts of self, having no regard unto others. Notwithstanding I gave not up as yet all belief in divine things; but I became a seeker after some religion which should afford redemption not for the few but for the many.

Now it chanced that one Eriopolus, a wool-merchant of Antioch in Syria, coming to Colossæ about this time to buy wool, and finding Philemon well-nigh despaired of, spoke to him concerning a certain sect of the Jews who, said he, were marvellously skilled in exorcising evil spirits and in the healing of certain diseases, adding, however, that not all the Jews possessed this power, but only those who worshipped a certain Chrestus or Christus, in whose name they adjured the demons. Then another, a dyer from Ephesus, confirmed his report, saying that the Jews which worship not this Christus, persecute the others, calling them “magicians;” and, said he, “not many weeks ago, at Ephesus, when some of the Jews which worship not Christus, had assayed to drive out evil spirits in this name, the man that was possessed leaped upon them, and overcame them, and drove them away grievously wounded.” “By what name, then,” asked my master, “are these Jewish magicians known?” “At first,” replied Eriopolus, “they were called Nazarenes or Galileans, but, of late, they go by the name of Christians (so at least the common people call them), and there are certain of them scattered up and

down in several cities of Asia, and one of more than common note among them, Paulus by name, is at this time tarrying at Ephesus. But for the most part they congregate now in Antioch, although, as I have heard, the root and origin of the sect is at Jerusalem, the chief city of Judæa.”

Hearing this my master determined to journey to Antioch to make inquiry of this new sect; and Artemidorus also himself now encouraged him in his purpose, judging that anything was better than thus to remain at home brooding over his ill-health and imagining evil. Apphia also assented. So in the spring of that year (it was the second year of the Emperor Nero, and I was at that time in the twenty-first year of my age) we made ready for our journey. Though I loved to see new sights and faces, after the manner of youth, I was nevertheless loth to go on so superstitious an errand; and besides, I despised the Jews, so far as I knew them, as being a gain-loving people, full of pernicious superstitions, and so inhospitable as not even to eat with strangers. However, I would not willingly have suffered Philemon in his melancholy to go alone, even had I been his friend and not his slave. When we were to set forth, Artemidorus bade me write to him, as often as I had occasion, concerning the Jews at Antioch, and especially concerning this new sect; “for,” said he, “to those who have taken their stand upon the hill of Truth, it is sweet to look down upon the wanderings of them that stray in error, wherefore I ever take pleasure in the hearing of some new superstition or error among men.” So I promised that I would send him letters as often as

messengers went to Asia from Philemon.

Our journey was first by land to Ephesus through a very fertile country; and thence by sea to Seleucia, a city which lies at the mouth of the river Orontes, and it is as it were the harbor of Antioch; which lies higher up the river, about forty miles by reason of the wanderings of the stream, but by the road distant no more than a score of miles or less. If I admired the country between Colossæ and Ephesus, the fruitfulness of the soil, the greatness of the mountains, and the beauty of Ephesus itself and the far-famed temple of Ephesian Artemis, much more did I admire the city of Antioch, which is the third city of the empire for greatness, coming next after Rome and Alexandria; and it lies along the river Orontes, for the space of four or five miles, stretching between the clear waters of the river and the high mountain called Silpius, surrounded by a wall not less than five and thirty cubits high and ten cubits in thickness. Being very spacious and indeed equal to three or four large cities in amplitude, it is divided into four wards or demes; and it has royal streets, built by kings desiring to do favor to the citizens of so goodly a city, and called after the names of the sovereigns that built them, namely, the street of Herod, the street of Seleucus, and others. Through the midst there runs a broad street adorned with four ranks of columns forming two covered colonnades with a wide road between, and along the whole street (which is more than thirty-six furlongs in length) there are statues and busts beautifully wrought of white marble. Greek names have

been given to all the region round about, such as Pieria, Peneus, Tempe, Castalia, insomuch that to hear the names of the villages one might fancy oneself in the haunts of the Muses; and not two hours distant from the city there lies a fair large garden or *paradise* (as the people in these parts call it) Daphne by name, which the citizens of Antioch often frequent, and it is full of all manner of flowers and goodly trees and watered with a great abundance of streams, and noted for the worship of Adonis. Such and so full of all manner of delight was the place in which I now found myself, a city no less populous than spacious (for it numbered as many as five hundred thousand souls) and no less full of mirth than of beauty; for the people of Antioch are known throughout the world for their gayety. Here therefore I laid aside the austerity of my recent thoughts, and forgetting questions of religion and philosophy I disposed myself to be merry with the multitude of those who were making merry around me, so far at least as I could be permitted to do so by the duty of constant attendance on Philemon; and, if I had had my own desire, I should never have set foot in any synagogue of Jews or Christian.

But blessed be thou, O Guide of the misguided, who didst not suffer me for ever to stray in the paths of false pleasure and in the ways which lead to delusion, but in due course thou didst bring me to the door of thy fold; and though I stumbled at the threshold, yet didst thou not suffer me to fall for ever, but didst still uphold me and step by step didst turn me back again to the pastures of eternal peace.

THE END OF THE SECOND BOOK

THE THIRD BOOK

§ 1. OF MY FIRST THOUGHTS CONCERNING THE CHRISTIANS

I am now to describe how I first came to the knowledge of the brethren in Antioch, though I attained not yet to the truth. For I stumbled at questions of philosophy and of tradition, and therefore I entered not into the fold of Christ. But the main reason for my failure was (as I now think), first, that I came not in faith, and secondly that I came not to Christ and the teaching of Christ himself, but rather to a sort of doubtful disputations about Christ, which, whether a man believe or disbelieve in them, do not contain the revelation of the Lord Jesus.

Concerning this part of my life I am in a strait what to set down and what to pass over. For if I should endeavor to call to mind and repeat all the evil things that, in the days of my ignorance, I said and thought about the Saints, then I fear lest I should seem profane and almost blasphemous, thus a second time reviling the Lord Jesus in speaking evil of his church. But if on the other hand I gloss over the truth, blanching and extenuating my error and presumptuousness, then I seem to be dealing falsely and hypocritically, making myself to be better than I was, instead

of magnifying the mercies of the Lord shown forth upon one that was perverse and obstinate in error. In this perplexity having chanced to light upon certain letters which I sent at this time to Artemidorus by his request (but he, long afterwards, not many days before his death, delivered them to me and bade me keep them), these same letters (which till of late I had altogether forgotten) it now seems good to me to set down faithfully word for word, neither altering nor extenuating anything. The first letter shows how I was unwilling at the beginning to go into the synagogue, and what slanders the common people falsely reported about the brethren, which I in my folly supposed at that time to be true. The next (after the reply of Artemidorus rebuking me for my proneness to believe the rumors of the common people) shows how I went for the first time into the congregation of the faithful, and how the Lord began even at that time to draw me towards himself.

“ONESIMUS TO ARTEMIDORUS, HEALTH.

“Concerning Antioch and all the pleasures of this delightful city I wrote to you in my former letter; but whereas you marvel because I have as yet written nothing touching the Jews; you must know that up to this time we have found no occasion to be present at their worship. For we find that there is a greater discord than we had supposed between this new sect of the Jews and the rest, insomuch that the latter will scarce own the new sect to be Jews, nor do they frequent the same temples nor practice the same kind of worship. Hence it happens that these new Jews,

out of fear to be persecuted, do all things in secret, having no public processions nor sacrifices, and allowing none to see the statue of their god (if indeed any of the Jews have any god at all) and celebrating their mysteries in great privacy. However, all the philosophers with whom I have spoken, as well as the men of rank in the city (such as are among Philemon's acquaintance), agree that it is a vile and execrable superstition, which would fain subvert all laws and all the dignity and peace of the empire. It is also commonly reported that none are admitted to their sacred rites until they have committed some monstrous crime; so that, whereas in other religions the priests of the several mysteries say, 'Let none approach but the pure,' the priests of this sect on the other hand say, 'Whosoever is a murderer, whoso a thief, whoso an adulterer, let him draw near that he may be initiated; for all such does our god invite.' Likewise the common folk say that at their sacred rites a most shameful sacrifice is made of a little child, on whose flesh and blood these wretches feast as if they were the choicest dainties, and also that brothers and sisters among them commonly practice incest. But all this I write, not of my own knowledge, but from the general report, which notwithstanding comes from so many different witnesses, that I cannot doubt but it is mainly true. However, I will write no more concerning these people till I have somewhat to say of my own seeing or hearing. But for my part I could be well pleased if the good Philemon would be persuaded not to seek further into this superstition.

“In my last letter I omitted, in so great a multitude of new things, to make mention of a garden belonging to one Onias, a citizen here, which contains not only many goodly flowers, but also runlets and fountains of water quaintly devised, and many apes and peacocks for show and for amusement, and above all several parrots, of which one has been so excellently trained to speak, that it surpasses by far any starling or any other talking bird that I have ever heard before; and the common people say it is possessed. But even you would marvel to see with what aptness and semblance of understanding it collects and most seasonably utters the sayings of those around it, reminding me not a little of the saying which I have often heard from your lips that the reason of some inferior animals borders upon the reason of man himself. Farewell.”

“ARTEMIDORUS TO ONESIMUS, HEALTH.

“Whereas you write that you have resolved to make no further mention of these innovating Jews until you find out something of your own knowledge concerning them, more weighty than such old wives’ fables as are reported by the common rabble, by lazy philosophers, and by pompous town-councillors, all of them indifferent to truth and accuracy, so I beseech you for the future to carry out this resolution; for, believe me, knowledge is not to be thus cheaply and painlessly acquired without judgment and labor. But I hope that before very long you may have discovered something certain of this sect, no less worthy of reporting than your experiences of the parrot of Onias.”

§ 2. OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHRISTIANS

“ONESIMUS TO ARTEMIDORUS, HEALTH.

“Having been now twice present in their temple or synagogue I have much to say of these Christians.

“It happened that, about ten days ago, the friend with whom my master lodges, introduced to us a certain merchant of Cyrene who had some slight acquaintance with one Lucius, a man of Cyrene, and a notable teacher among this sect. So by his means we were invited to be present at their synagogue on a day when the uninitiated are called together, as many as desire to make a trial of the new religion or to learn the truth about it. When we were all assembled to the number of four or five hundred, there stood up one Simeon, surnamed Niger, who delivered a speech by no means so foolish as I had thought likely, and it was to this effect: There was but one God, he said, who had made no distinctions of nations, as Greeks, barbarians, Scythians and the rest, but all men of one blood, intending them to be one brotherhood. This God sent unto mankind signs and testimonies of his good will, giving unto all nations the sun and moon and stars to be for signs and seasons; moreover to the Jews he sent special messengers, or prophets, to proclaim his will. But when, notwithstanding all these testimonies, mankind still disobeyed the divine will, it seemed good to the superior god to send down

to them no longer a prophet or common messenger, but a son, as if the time had arrived when they should no longer grope after God, but apprehend the divine nature.

“Then this Simeon went on to affirm that this son of god had verily come into the world about threescore years ago, during the reign of the Emperor Augustus, in the shape of a man, one Jesus (called also the Nazarene, because he was of the city of Nazareth in the north of Palestine), who had proclaimed a Gospel or Good News, namely, that God is the Father of men, not merely their Maker, but their Father, loving all men as parents love their children. Moreover the Son had manifested the Father’s nature by many works, especially by healing the souls of men, not only taking away sins, but also giving unto his disciples the power to take away sins. In a word the Son had done for the Father, if one might trust Simeon, much the same deeds as Apollo is said to have done in early times for Zeus, introducing into the world purifications of the soul. Then also (quoting, as I was told, from some of the ancient books of the Jews) Simeon declared that this Jesus of Nazareth was the Redeemer of whom those books had prophesied; for, said he, ‘to them that sat in darkness Jesus hath shown forth the light of truth, he hath opened the eyes of them that were blinded by sin and ignorance and caused those whose souls were maimed and were crippled with vice to walk straight in the paths of virtue, and he hath raised up them that were dead in sin.’

“Now followed a marvellous paradox, or rather what our

friend Evagoras the rhetorician would call a *bathos*. For it was actually confessed before us all by this same Simeon that this son of god, who had wrought all these marvellous works, was slain in the sixteenth year of the Emperor Tiberius, and this, not in battle nor in a tumult, but by command of the governor Pontius Pilatus, dying the death of the vilest criminal, being actually crucified! And, not content with this ignominy, they confess also that he was most shamefully insulted and scourged before his death, and that he was rescued neither from insult nor from death by the superior god whom they call the Father. But to compensate for all these disgraces, the speaker affirmed in the first place that this death constituted some kind of sacrifice or expiation, wherein this Christus played at once the part of priest and victim, offering himself up for the sins of the whole world (he having been no unwilling sacrifice but having surrendered himself to death and having indeed predicted his own death as a prophet); and in the second place, as the crowning marvel of all, he affirmed that the superior god had raised up the inferior, that is the Son, after the latter had lain for several days in the tomb, insomuch that, long after his death, he appeared to many of his disciples, of whom some are still living as witnesses.

“Nursery tales”—replies my wise preceptor, nor do I say otherwise. But what filled me with astonishment, almost more than was fitting, was to note the gravity, earnestness and sobriety and yet at the same time the enthusiasm wherewith Simeon delivered himself, especially when he bore witness to the rising

again of Christus (for by this name Jesus is commonly known among them); speaking as if at that very moment he were standing in the presence of him that was risen from the dead, and yet enjoining chastity, truthfulness, honesty, and all other virtue, with such a calmness that not a few of those present, and Philemon among the rest, were well-nigh carried away with the force of the man's belief, and themselves persuaded to believe the like. Nor could I altogether marvel; for it was not possible to suppose that the man was a knave or cheat; yet neither did he appear to be a madman, and certainly he spake not as a fool.

“But I omit too long the main matter for which Philemon came hither, the healing of diseases. Concerning this, Simeon said little; rather taking it for granted, as I judged, than arguing of it or dwelling upon it at any length. But he said that signs had been wrought both by Christus and by his disciples, in the casting out of devils and in the healing of sickness; and he appealed to some of those present, as if they knew this of their own knowledge. Afterwards I spoke with many of them on this matter. Almost all told me that they knew others who had been healed of divers diseases, and some few (not more than three) affirmed that they themselves had been healed of palsy, two of them by one Paulus, of whom I made mention above, and the other by this same Simeon. Of the rest whom they averred to have been healed, some were said to have been healed by Paulus, others by one Petrus, a man of great repute among them, others by this Simeon and not a few by one Philippus, who is even now (as they tell

me) sojourning in Hierapolis. Of these sick folk some have been wholly healed and immediately; others partly and only by degrees; but for the most part more completely and suddenly than any cures wrought by Asclepius. The diseases are mostly palsies (which abound here) and also fevers, and partial dumbness or lameness, and the more severe kind of ophthalmia; but the most common is that kind of insanity which by the common people is termed ‘possession.’

“Of this latter kind one instance I myself witnessed on the very day on which I heard Simeon thus discourse; and it was wrought by Simeon himself in the synagogue. For after he had made an end of the first part of his discourse, he began to call upon all the people to repent, saying that the superior god whom he named the Father, would speedily judge all the world in righteousness, punishing the bad and rewarding the good, and in that day the Son,—namely, that very Christ whom Pontius had crucified,—should come again with great glory. Hereon one cried out in the assembly after the manner of demented people, saying, ‘Avaunt! Away! Away from me!’ adding loud exclamations against the name of Jesus. Simeon forthwith ceased from speaking, and looking very intently on the man’s countenance caused him to be brought near, and stretching out his hand as with authority in a loud voice adjured I know not what evil spirit to go forth from the man. The demented man immediately fell to the ground as one dead; but Simeon took him by the hand, and raised him up and restored him to his friends;

and he went forth from the building delivered from his disease.

“The man happened to be the brother of our host’s door-keeper; and his madness was confirmed to me by many witnesses, as being of long continuance, yea, and I myself had seen him in a pitiable plight, gibbering and gaping as one mad in our court-yard a full month before; and our host himself (who is no friend to the Christians) constantly affirmed that he had been mad for the space of at least fourteen years. Wherefore thus much is certain and not to be denied, that a man who was demented for fourteen years, up till the seventh day of this month, is now on the fourteenth day of this month in his sound mind and to all appearance likely to remain therein; and this has been wrought by certain words uttered by this Simeon Niger. Now if this effect proceeds from natural causes, as the great Epicurus would doubtless assert, the causes (none the less) seem worthy to be sought out and examined.

“When the madman was led forth delivered from his disease, I had much ado to prevent the worthy Philemon from standing up publicly and praying that he also might be initiated into the sacred rites of this new religion by means of purification with water; which they practice not many times, as with us, but once for all, and with more than usual solemnity; and I suppose that Christus himself instituted this purification; at all events no one is admitted without it. But I besought the excellent man not to do so rash a thing with such precipitate haste, and at least to wait till he should have discovered whether those who are initiated into the

Christian rites, are also to submit themselves to the whole of the law which the more ancient religion of the Jews enjoins upon that nation. For the time I succeeded and kept him from his purpose. But I could wish that Archippus or Apphia were here present with him, and I not alone. For I greatly fear that, if he be so violently moved a second time, I may no longer be able to restrain him. Concerning the second visit to the synagogue, having many things to write, and the messenger of Philemon being already on the point to depart, I must defer what I would further say to another occasion.

“One matter had almost slipped my memory; and it is perhaps hardly worth setting down. Going this day to the garden of Adonis I saw the youths and maidens passing in procession through the golden gate of Daphne; and there calling to my mind other processions such as I had seen in my youth (but this far surpassed them all) I remembered how I was wont as a child to make comparisons between a certain Diosdotus, a priest of Zeus of a goodly presence and lofty stature, and a certain unknown wandering priest or juggler, mean of aspect, bald-headed and hook-nosed, who in my presence had healed one that was lame and known to have been lame for thirty years. This happened when I was a mere child, scarcely (as I think) past my tenth year; but to-day it came into my mind that both that wandering priest and this Simeon—albeit differing greatly in countenance and appearance, Simeon being tall and the other short or inclining to shortness—nevertheless agreed in this one point, that they spoke

of things invisible not only as if they saw them, but also in such wise as to make others fancy that they saw them. And, if I err not, that prophet also spoke, as did Simeon, concerning a certain Son of God whom the superior God had sent into the world. Wherefore I now conjecture that that same wandering prophet belonged to no gods of the Greeks, but was, even as this Simeon, a Jew, and one of this sect that believes in Christus.

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