

Christianity threatened the livelihood of idol makers. But much of the older paganism was so stagnant and unmeaningful that it often did not constitute a heavy threat to the church. Nevertheless some of the pagan thinkers sought to discredit Christianity while not necessarily championing the older ideas in a truly worshipful way. I mention the following:

1) Lucian of Samosota. Writing about 190 AD he was mostly a literary comedian who made fun or light of the Christian ideals and/or teachings. He is not to be confused with the text critic of the same name who lived about 100 years later.

2) Celsus: with a period of activity ending about 180 AD, Celsus was the premier critic of biblical ideas and concepts. He sought to show contradictions in the Bible and argued against its authenticity. A major work of his was THE TRUE DOCTRINE (sometimes called "word") and we learn a lot more about him from his foes than from himself. The major treatment against him was by Origen: CONTRA CELSUM. We observe that there is very little new in Bible criticism...after you have read Celsus and Prophyry most of the critical lines have been drawn and even the answers are about the same.

3) Crescens: About 180, he was a theoretical thinker (my book says it!) who objected to Christianity in the practical way in which it applied itself to life goals. The system was "cut and dried" to Crescens and the paradigmatic nature of church response did not suit the paganistic understanding of a multiplicity of gods and a complicated substratum of supernatural beings.

4. Philostratus: About 270 this pagan opponent of the church suggested that the real Messiah was Appolonius of Tyana a man who had a reputation for great deeds and miracles and who suffered to the point of a martyr's death. The substitute Christ never had much of a following and the claims perished, in any serious way, with the propagator although every now and then his name will emerge in a theological setting.

In these pagan philosopher/thinkers, one gets a view of how things are going to go in the years to come. An attempt is made to destroy the credibility of the Bible, the reality of Christian life goals, and the person of the Saviour. This is done again and again