Against Marcion 1

Ephrem the Syrian (c. AD 306–373)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Against Marcion 1

S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan. Transcribed from the Palimpsest B.M. Add. 14623 by the late C. W. MITCHELL, M.A., C.F., volume 2 (1921). Against Marcion I.

AGAINST MARCION I.

ANOTHER (DISCOURSE) AGAINST THE (FALSE) TEACHINGS. [P. 50.] To the true Scriptures of the Church all the Teachings bear witness that they are true ; but as for the Scriptures belonging to the Teachings, only the Teachings bear witness concerning them, because the Scriptures of the Church do not appeal to the testimony of the Scriptures of the Teachings. Moreover to our Scriptures the Jews bear witness, for in every place. . . . For inasmuch as God knew that the Teachings were about to go forth into the world He worked great Signs beforehand . . . and the dividing of the sea and the cloud, and the Pillar and the Quails and the Manna and all the Signs and all the Wonders. . . . in order that they might bear witness concerning that people [p. 51, l.4.] that it was the people of God. . . . Moreover (to ?) other countries some of them were scattered formerly, and (they bear witness) to-day concerning the aforesaid Jews and concerning their laws, as that (passage) in which it says, 'The LORD hath brought evil upon this place, as He said.'

But the Edicts which had been written by Nebuchadnezzar and by Darius were deposited among the archives of the aforesaid kingdom first of all, and then they were sent to the (various) countries. And lo ! also the kings of the countries bear witness concerning the books of the Hebrews in the chronicles which belong to them, according to that which is said in Ezra, 'Learn and see that this city is a warlike city from of old,' together with that other (passage in) which he says. 'Learn again and see that [P. 52. Darius commanded concerning this city that it should be built.' Thus the miracles which were wrought in the midst of Egypt were inscribed in the archives of Aegyptus ; and, again, the miracles which were wrought in the midst of Babylon were in the annals belonging to the kings of Babylon, and also (in those) belonging to the Greeks, and the Romans likewise, as well as (in) those of the aforesaid country of Jerusalem. For lo ! even to this day Tablets which are even now inscribed and set up bear witness to the people of the aforesaid city that they must not venture to enter within their limits. All these witnesses which I have enumerated to thee, together with the aforesaid teachings (and) together with the Hebrews, are witnesses to our

Scriptures that they are true. But to the Scriptures of the aforesaid teachings, as I have stated before, those teachings alone bear witness.

And would that they all bore witness to the Scriptures of one another ! For even if this were thought to be in their favour, inasmuch as their witnesses were many, yet it would be all against them that the testimony of each one of them about [P. 53. his fellow was a denial of his own teaching. For how could he be veracious who proclaims Seven Gods, when another asserts after him in confirmation who proclaims only Two Gods ? Or how could he who proclaims Three Gods assert (anything) in confirmation of both of them ? Thus all the teachings are refuted by the Jews, because the Scriptures belonging to the Jews are truer than all the teachings. But the Jews themselves, who by means of their true Scriptures have been able to overcome many teachings, are refuted by the Church. . . .

[l. 29.]Therefore to the one God whom we proclaim, the Jews bear witness together with the Marcionites (?) . . . Bardaisan together with Mani. For though Bardaisan said [seven Entities constitute] the world he nevertheless said concerning the Law that it was given by God. And Mani again, though he said that [He] who spoke, by the Prophets exists as the result of a 'mixture,' nevertheless said concerning Him that He is in heaven. And Marcion, though he introduced a 'Stranger,' nevertheless, (while) he was crying out all the [time (?)] about the [. . .] of [P. 54.] the 'Maker' and about His preaching and about the people that is His, yet our Scriptures that are in the hands of the Marcionites were bearing witness on [our] behalf. But the blasphemies [of] the Marcion[ites]—it is [the books of] the Marcionites only that bear witness to them. The followers [of Marcion] therefore name our God 'the Just One' : yet we see that His worshippers are afflicted in this world, and His prophets were ... in the region of the Maker . . . but on the other hand (lit. side) we see that the unjust and the doers of evil enjoy themselves, and He is found to be good towards evil men and something different towards those who are His own. For He promises enjoyments to those who keep His commandments, and lo ! afflictions surround them. And He said concerning the unjust 'Cursed art thou.' . . . And he who is blessed according to the Law runs on foot in front of him who is cursed in the Scriptures ; for Elijah the prophet ran in front of Ahab the unjust, while Ahab the . . . was sitting in his chariot. [P. 55.] Again, the prophets of Baal were battening at Jezebel's table, and the true prophets [were] housing themselves in caves.

The followers (?) of Marcion say concerning each of these things, that is, concerning the justice of the Just One and concerning the grace of their own (God), that it did not come and bring relief to the just in this world (?). But [see that] the grace of the Maker [lo,] is extended even over the followers of Marcion. And if they say that an Alien Force is opposed to them, who is it, on the other hand, who is opposed to Mercy ? And, again, who constrained Him that His mercy should afford a covering to Philosophers and Magians and all manner of doctrines ? And (as for) the babes and the seed-corn and the plants and the possessions of the followers of Marcion, who causes them to grow ? And who sends down the rain for them, or who causes the sun to shine for them ? Who commands the earth to bear them, and

governs the sky for them ? Thou seest that all the grace of our Maker is (shown) towards the followers of Marcion [P. 56.] and moreover towards those who are ungrateful like them ; but in the case of the righteous and the prophets the contrary of these things (takes place), namely humiliation and ignominy. For Jeremiah the prophet is cast into a miry pit, while Zedekiah, an unjust man, is living in luxury. Or can it then have been the case that an Alien severe One [came and was favouring] the wicked and oppressing the good ?

But it was not the Stranger—who did not exist—that had . . . already announced earthly things to the simple-minded, while, on the other hand, among all of us he taught the likeness of true things by means of his faithful ones and by means of his righteous ones ; by means of these two (methods he taught) two classes of persons, namely the class of the mature (?), and another (consisting) of the simple-minded. For he gladdened the simple-minded with promises of the earth, and oppressed (?) the mature by severe afflictions. But let us see to what our own affliction is like ; is it like that of [the simple-minded] or that of his prophets ? If we are like the prophets in our afflictions, how do the followers of Marcion say that (only) in recent times have afflictions been [P. 57.] announced ? And, again, let us ask the Jews also, that is to say, the Jews and the righteous ones who were among them, Whom ought we to resemble ? [The others] rather than them we ought to resemble.

Let them then look at us and at the righteous, and let them see if we are like them in our afflictions. And if we are like the righteous in our afflictions, it is also the fact that the Law is with us. For unto whom was it right that the Law of the afflicted and destitute ones should be given, to us the afflicted and destitute, or to those who even until to-day are expecting to go up to Jerusalem, and are eagerly looking till now for the milk and honey ? Thou seest, therefore, O Marcion, that if in the midst of all this maturity the simple-mindedness of the Jews has not been outgrown (lit. weaned), since these (qualities) still exist in them, how could numerous countries attain to maturity, seeing that one country (i.e. the country of the Jews) with all this exertion was not able to attain to maturity ?

But if the associates of Marcion, whom we have left behind (in our discussion), come and agree with him and say to us, If the Creator was one and knew that Adam would sin against Him, [P. 58. why then did the Creator create ?—let all the sects (lit. teachings) know that they too are included in this (objection). For why did not their Gods come or prevent (it), so that he (i.e. Adam) should not be created, or so that they might set right and assist that which had been created ? For why did not their Gods prevent the Maker from creating that which is not good ? And if they did not prevent Him at that time, who will send (? after them to-day ? And perhaps it was for that reason that God caused Adam to dwell for nine hundred and thirty years outside the enclosure of the Tree of Life, in order that it might be seen that there was no other God who could be found to break into the enclosure, which the Just One had enclosed by means of the Cherub and the point of the sword, and to bring him (i.e. Adam) in.

For if there had been another God more compassionate than this one and stronger than our Maker, he would have broken into the enclosure—which was not then broken into— and

would have brought the mortal Adam into the presence of the Tree of Life, that he might eat thereof, so that, just as in consequence of his eating of the Tree of Knowledge we all die, [P. 59. likewise in consequence of his eating of the Tree of Life we might all live by means of him. But if he remained for nine hundred and thirty years outside the enclosure of Paradise and did not find any other God to bring him inside the enclosure of Paradise, and afterwards (God) dissolved him and caused him to return to his dust, and no other God was found to raise him from the dust—acknowledge, O Marcion, the justice of Him who said, I am God and there is none beside Me !

But if Marcion says that the sole reason that the Stranger did not come previously was that at the last his grace might be seen, [let him know] that God had already shown a small measure of grace in connection with His justice, so that His great grace was not deemed strange when it was manifested in its time. And therefore He who showed a small measure of grace towards Adam at that time—when no strange God had shown his grace towards him—is known to be the same (God) who showed great [P. 60.] grace at this time, (a grace) of which they say that it is the grace of the Stranger. For God had decreed this in His justice concerning Adam, (saying) that 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' For our God decreed justly and in order that He might in His love warn Adam who was existing in a good state, lest he should exist in an evil state. But when Adam did not take warning and fell from grace, Justice overtook him, according as it (had) decreed that 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' But God turned in [the way] of grace and tempered the harshness of justice, that Adam might not die that very day but that he might live nine hundred and thirty years [and] then die.

[As He gave to Adam] nine hundred and thirty years at that time on account of His compassion, (so) He has kept him alive even now in the life everlasting on account of His grace. For He gave to him in the beginning a temporal life, in order to show that. . . . For He gave to Adam in mercy—which (signifies [P. 61.] that) He gave to him by means of our Lord—life everlasting. But if they apply the term 'strangeness' to every (?) grace, then (?) also in relation to Adam 'strangeness' was displayed. For the same (God) decreed that, 'In the day that thou eatest thou shalt die'—and how is He found keeping him alive for nine hundred and thirty years ? About John, again, from whence ... let the Jews therefore be asked whether John did come, or no. . . . [If he says] that John did come, from whence hast thou this, O Marcion ? [1.38.] Perhaps he says from the testimony to Isu. . . .

[P.62] The Jews say that in the days of the Messenger the King's Son [l. 6.] also comes, seeing that John also when he [heard] the report of [Isu] that he had come [asked] him, 'Hast thou then come, or look we for another ?' And he (i.e. John the Baptist) does not say, 'they look,' but 'we look,' in order to show that he and his contemporaries, in his own days and in those of his contemporaries, were looking for Him.

If therefore the Jews say that if Elijah comes the Messiah also has come, and (as) John thought concerning Isu, when He came, that He was he, was not this because he firmly believed that he was to come in his own days, even John's ? On that account he thought

concerning Him, when He came, that it was he, or did not even John know when the Messiah was to come ? And why then did he (i.e. John) come ? If he came to smooth the way before Him, then he came to clear away stones. But if he came to call sinners to repentance and to baptize the [P. 63.] repentant, he was sent to purge away sins by means of water. It is evident that these were prepared as it were for the guest-chamber of Him that was to come, and it is manifest that He has come. If He dwells in pure hearts, He is therefore spiritual; but if He who was coming was not spiritual, because He was David's Son, let him (i.e. Marcion) explain to us which was the way that John (was) smoothing for Him. For in honour of kings, or kings' sons, ways are levelled and stones cleared away before them. But before (the coming of) this One he said that minds should be purified. What is probable ? That David's Son . . . not to David himself ? Or can it be that David also, in the days of his sovereignty, was dwelling in minds and not in palaces ? And if David was dwelling in palaces, and also David's son is to dwell in palaces, what (was) John preparing for him ? minds instead of palaces ? Or can it be that John smoothed ways and prepared palaces, though he was not even dwelling in the cultivated land ?

[P. 64.] But nevertheless, although John was the Messenger of the kingdom, he did not go straight to the capital of the kingdom. Why did he leave the cultivated land and go out to the desert ? Or can it be that he who sent him came into the desert and that on that account he who was sent also was preaching in the desert ? But if they drove him out, did they not treat him rightly ? For what did they see in him that was likely to make them believe that he was the Messenger of Him who was coming ? Perhaps (they were convinced by) the fact that he was imprisoned, or that he was removed, or that the girl played with his skull! But perhaps thou wilt say that they did these things to John by the power of Herod. And if he is the Messenger of that Messiah to all nations, was he really not greater than Herod even there ? Or can it be that even the general of Herod was greater than the King of the. nations ? . . . But if thou sayest that these men, on account of their subjection, were more submissive [P. 65.] than . . ., whereas Herod was not subjected and submissive but he subjected. . . .

[l. 20.] For if in truth he was His herald ... a Messenger for the [l. 28.] King. Can it be that he who is coming is really persecuted [1. 34.] like his Messenger ? . . . Or is he really killed like him ? But if at his coming [they did] not [recognise him, how does he] resemble him (i.e. John) ? [P. 66, 1. 29.]. . . For even if he were not 'in his days,' but yet were really like him in every respect, this would suffice, even by itself, to refute them (by showing) that he cannot be 'strange' to one whom he resembled in every respect. And if this one point would suffice to refute them, how much more credible will it be [p. 67.] that he is not 'strange' to this man (?) also who happened to be in his days, seeing that at the mouth of two witnesses every word is established !

But if thou sayest that therefore not (only) John is like Isu, but also Elijah and Jeremiah, who preceded him, thou sayest well. But are these whom thou citest like him or not ? If they are like him, lo ! it is against thee that thou canst not turn round (?) and say that by chance, as it were, John only happened to be like him. But lo ! thou saidst that there are

many men of former times who are like John, and these are all like Isu, so that now we have found that humility existed before Isu. And if humility existed before him, what is that one new thing which he brought with him (and) which was not in those three (i.e. John, Elijah, and Jeremiah) and in their other associates who were like them ?

Why forsooth do they say that there was no fasting (in the world), seeing that when all the scattered groups (lit. fragments) of the followers of Marcion are gathered together they cannot keep the fast of Ezekiel, nor have they (ever) prayed, nor do they (now) pray, a prayer like that of the friends of Daniel ? [P.68] If they say, 'We are praying the whole day,' let us see whether their prayer is accepted. But perhaps they will say, '(It is.) for how do you know that it is not accepted ?' I say, 'From the fact that He does not do for them here (?) anything at all.' And if they say that He does (something) for them, let them show (it) us, and we will accept (it) ! For Daniel used to pray three times a day and by means of his prayer he interpreted dreams and brought back the People from Babylon, and angels used to come to him at the time of his prayer. But the Marcionites, because they pray more than Daniel, as they say, will not accomplish more than he, nor even as much as he, but less than he. But since they pray more than the righteous, as they say, and yet are not answered even as much as sinners (are answered), it is clear that, because they pray to one who does not exist, on that account they are not heard or answered when they pray. But if we pray concerning great and heavenly things, [P. 69, 1.6.] these are additions. . . . What is the new (kind of) prayer which he brought with him ?

[1. 21.] Perhaps thou wilt say that these things were not announced in the Old (Testament), for in the New (Testament). . . . [P. 70.] * * * * * * * [1. 17.] by means of the prophet, and speaks thus that he should give again his cheek to him who smites. . . . [1. 36.] to the prophets he sent it and also to Isu. And if Isu did not send the prophets and the Maker did not send Isu, then from these same sufferings of the prophets Isu [took an example] that [P. 71.] he might adorn himself with them in the midst of the world when he came ; because he saw that these very (qualities) were pleasing (lit. chosen) and agreeable to one who loves, he invested himself with them and made use of them, so that he might attract the inhabitants of our world by the humility which was pleasing to them. And if he attracts us by something that is pleasing to us, how can that which is pleasing to us be strange to our nature ? For even if they had not been in the prophets, but are greatly pleasing to our nature (it would equally follow"). Or do they say that he changed our nature and (the nature) of the former prophets ? Who changed their nature ? Was it Isu ? Wilt thou not then tell us that he was in the world ? And if he was in the world, then the world was in him ; and if the world was in him, he is the Creator's Son, as the Scriptures say, and he is not the Stranger's Son, as the followers of Marcion erroneously assert. But if he was not in the world, who previously sowed in our world the pleasing qualities of Isu ?

Did then the Maker really know that by means of these he (i.e. Isu) was destined to lead created beings astray, and did He give them to us beforehand, in order that we might not go astray [P. 72. after Isu when he came ? And where is that (passage which says) that 'there

is none that knoweth the Father save the Son' ? [P. 72. And again, that which says that 'none of the princes of the world knew him' ? And if it be that because the Maker did know He announced them to us beforehand, did He not thereby really lead us astray so that we should think concerning Isu that he was from Him, when he announced these very things which He also had announced to us ? But let us suppose that these things belong to Isu ; can it be that he actually changed the prophets, and that they were then able to fulfil these commandments ? And if he actually changed the prophets, how can he announce to us that we should accomplish them, when he has not yet changed our nature ? In virtue of the fact that he incites us by 'Blessed are the humble in their spirit,' will he really change our nature ? And if five hundred Beatitudes do not change our nature, if he utters (lit. gives) them we are not able to fulfil in this nature that which we are not able to fulfil in this nature without a change.

Or is it because he cannot that he does not change it ? Or because he does not wish ? If he cannot, how was he able to change the nature of the former ones ? And if, though he was able, he really did not wish, how did he consent to change (that) of the former ones ? And if he [P. 73. did not wish to change (them), why will he change us by means of laws which are strange to our nature ? But if the laws are akin to our nature, and our nature to the laws, where is that' Strangeness ' of the Stranger ? . . .

That thou mayest know that these others also [agree] with [l. 26.] these former ones which I have enumerated to thee [I will cite] the words of David, when he says, 'My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is wasted for want of ointment,' and Job says, 'Sackcloth have I girded on my skin, and I have sprinkled my head with dust.' And again David says, 'I have made sackcloth my raiment.' Who therefore remains to the Stranger ? [P. 74.] . . . of those things which Isu commanded there is found in our Scriptures ; so that if he preached mercy, it is found in David . . . mercy is more (?) pleasing to Him than fasting from bread (?), for he says, ' This is not the fast which I have chosen, saith the LORD, that thou shouldst bend thy neck like a rush and spread out sackcloth and ashes for thyself, but this is the fast which I have chosen, saith the LORD, that thou shouldst loose the bonds of iniquity, and give thy bread to the hungry, and bring the alien into thine house.' And, again, if fasting is pleasing to the Stranger, lo, Elijah and Elishah and the sons of the prophets (are examples thereof), and lo, John, who fasted in his own days (i.e. in the days of the Stranger) ! If then these (persons) are pleasing [to the Just God], as also they are indeed pleasing to Him, why does He torment His friends here ? Either there is something compassionate [in Him and gracious] to these who are here tormented ; or if there is nothing [He is] very wicked, and they are wronged [by Him] on whose account they are here tormented ! And how [is manifested] the Justice of the Just One ?

[P.75] [See] also, O Marcion, that [these] two Gods, namely the Maker and the Stranger, are both of them angry at the same thing, and take pleasure in the same thing, and are gratified by the same thing. For the Maker is angry at hateful things, and the Good (God) also is angry at hateful things — if it be right to admit that the Good (God) is angry with

those who have committed no offence whatever against Him. And so also both of them are gratified by good things, for ... it is evident that they are both angry at adultery and theft and other hateful things, and that they are both gratified by sackcloth and fasting and prayer. For what has happened to these two Gods that they should have one will ? Is it not clear that either there is (only) One God, or that they are both One, for as one they both will with one will ?

And that thou mightest know that this is so, the Maker sanctified Moses and sent him to Egypt, and since Moses wished to take his wife with him by force, He (i.e. the Maker) constrained him by means of an angel to send her back, that He might show how pleasing holiness is to Him. And the Stranger also acted likewise towards Simon (Peter), although he did not [P. 76.] compel him ; and (the fact) that he did not compel him, was it because it did not [become] Him to compel, not only because He is good but also because He is not our Creator ? And again, when the People had been sanctified, He did not allow them to approach the holy mountain because they were turning again to married life ; but the People were standing at a distance, and Moses the holy was speaking, and God was answering with a voice. And again, the disciples also were standing in silence, and Simon only was speaking. And perhaps thou wilt say, Was there not among them John, a virgin, and were not all his companions holy ? (But I reply, Nay—) for here (i.e. at Sinai) also were not the People holy in relation to the Maker ? And Joshua was a virgin, and he (i.e. Moses) was brought in with Joshua only. Lo ! here also it is found that Isu resembles the Maker ; for the Maker sanctified the chief of His prophets, and Isu sanctified the chief of His apostles.

But if on account of the holiness which He preached you [P. 77. think concerning Him that He is a Stranger, then (are we to suppose that) Elijah was caught up to the heavens of the Stranger? For He would not have taken up and made to ascend to His heavens one who by his holiness wished to be the opponent of the Creator, who wished that by means of marriage the creation should be fruitful and multiply. For by the case of Elijah, so to speak, all the creation of the Creator has been made void. But how could Elijah have been received (into the heavens) on account of that one thing? . . . For the [P. 78, l.14. priest was not allowed to enter the Tabernacle unless he was sanctified in his body. . . But if that single [virgin] of the [l.38. Maker had preceded those many [virgins] of the Stranger, it would be right that that Maker who had preceded (the [P. 79. l.16. Stranger) should be called . . . since there is no other who was before him, so as to enable us to say that he (i.e. the former) was the cause of him (i.e. of the latter), and that this one imitated him, since he was the latter and imitated the Maker. How is he the Stranger ?

Since therefore we have found that the prophets are like to one another in humility, and John to all of them, and all of them to Isu, how then can the Stranger, who resembles them all, be strange to them all ? Or can it be that they give the name of 'Strangeness' to that which is similar ? Well, then, the prophets also, who resemble one another, are 'strange' to one another ! And if thou sayest that thou wilt not compare creatures to God — for 'how (? can creatures who have been humbled resemble a God who has been humbled ?' — (I ask) then,

Is it because Isu was humbled whereas the Maker was not humbled that [P. 80. strangeness arises ? Well, then, according to thy reasoning, because the Father of Isu is not humbled together with Isu who was humbled, the Stranger also, who was not humbled, is strange to His son who was humbled. And if the Stranger who was not humbled is not strange to His son who was humbled, then it is not because one was humbled and the other was not humbled that the Strangeness arises but because Strangeness consists in Strangeness to the nature (of some one). But if Isu who was humbled resembles the Stranger who was not humbled, how much more will Isu who was humbled resemble the Maker who was humbled ! For in what consists the fact that Isu was humbled ?

Is it not in this that he was manifested to men and taught them to do what is good ? If this is not also (found) in the case of the Maker, they (i.e. the Marcionites) speak truly. And if not even this was lacking to Him, why do they utter blasphemy by means of the Strangeness which they introduce ? Did He not enter into the abode of Abraham and eat ? And if it was right that we should say that He ate and that He was manifested to Moses and to Elijah and to Isaiah and to Daniel and the rest of the prophets — and that thou mightest not say that He was manifested only to righteous men, whereas the Stranger (was manifested) to sinners—lo, He was manifested [P. 81. to the whole People without exception! And if thou sayest that they were righteous, (I answer) Lo, on account of their iniquity they all fell in the wilderness and, except in the case of two, they did not enter into the land of promise. We have thus compared Isu with the Maker, and it has been seen that the Maker was antecedent to Isu in humiliation. And if thou sayest that Isu was actually crucified, thou sayest that it seemed so (?), and not the truth. And if thou addest that He also went down to Sheol and ascended, thou sayest (it) without believing (it). For thou dost not confess the [coming to life of] the body. But inasmuch as (?

it is true that He was actually manifested, the Maker anticipated Him in manifestation. How therefore canst thou liken Isu to that Stranger, who is strange to Him in every respect ? And (why) dost thou wish, on the other hand, to account Him strange to the Maker when He resembles Him in every respect ?

But if Marcion still persists in cavilling, let him be asked again as to whether he believes the word of the Stranger or not. If he believes it, what did He (i.e. the Stranger) testify concerning John ? That John forsooth was a liar, or a true man ? Did [P. 82.] He say concerning him that he was in error, or that he was an enlightener of such as are in error ? If then John is a true man, and not a reed shaken by every wind, why [therefore] is he shaken and does he think about Jesus that he [was] the Messiah of the Law. And if [John knew] the word of Isu to be 'No,' [lo,] then Isu really lied in that he said concerning John that he (i.e. John) did send to him. But if in truth John was shaken and sent to Isu, the word of Isu was also a lie, when he testified concerning John that he was not a reed shaken by every wind.

Thus both of these assertions cannot stand. For either he was shaken, or he was not shaken. If he was shaken he was a reed, and why did he (i.e. Isu) say that he was not a reed ?

And if he was not a reed, then he was not shaken. And can it be that he wrote (a letter) and dispatched it to him, and sent to him (saying), 'Art thou He that cometh ?' But it is wonderful to hear that John believes in David's Son, and yet Isu bears witness [P. 83.] in saying concerning him that he was not a reed and he has been found to be going astray after the Stranger, though the Messiah who is (mentioned) in the Law is strange to him (i.e. to the Stranger) in every respect. And were it not for the testimony of Isu, who said that he was not a reed, it would have been possible to say that because John was humble and happened (to live) in the days of Isu who preached humility, by reason of his humility which resembled his (i.e. the humility of Isu) he abandoned the exalted Son of David and loved the humble Isu; but that (passage) which says that he was not a reed does not permit us to hold this opinion concerning John.

But as for this John, who erred [in thinking that it was necessary] that he should send to Him, did he really know the time, or did he send to Him though he knew that it was not He ? And what then compelled him to send to Him ? If (it was) that his disciples might learn from Isu . . . * * * * * * * [P. 84.] [l. 40.] And if thou sayest that because He is kind He did not wish [P. 85.] to [injure] John, then because He is kind will He not [condemn] the heathen and the [wicked] and [will] He bear witness to all the [1. 41.] [false] teachings that they are true ? . . . and, what is greater than all things which (consist) of dust and ashes (?), He caused them to attain to all this discernment; if He secretly [P. 86.] punishes them for their grievous sins, He becomes an evil Being (?).

And if they say that the sole reason that Isu said concerning John 'Blessed is he, if he is not offended in me,' was in order that he might show that he did not communicate (lit. deliver over) to him that other (utterance) which he said concerning him, that he was not a reed—why did he say it ? But if the sole reason of his saying it was in order to show that John was true in his teaching, then he did not send to Isu, and Isu himself made him (i.e. the Evangelist) a liar who recorded that John sent to him, when (in reality) John did not send to him. And if what he said is true, namely that he sent to him, then is not John true ? And if Isu had wished to send to him (saying) 'I am He,' would he not have been going astray after him ? But he said 'Blessed is he if he is not offended in me.' Whom then do they call a stumbling-block ? Is it not he who turned back from (being) with him ? John therefore was one who believed in Isu, and on that account Isu sent (saying) 'Blessed is he if he remains steadfast and is not offended in me.' Or can it be that by means of the beatitude he actually wished to deceive John ? And was [P. 87.] John deceived or not ? If he was not deceived, then the bribe of the Stranger was lost. And did not the Stranger know that his bribe would not be accepted by John ? And if he knew, why did he allow his bribe to be lost, that is to say, the bribe of that praise of his ?

But concerning Moses and Elijah who were found on the mountain in company with Isu, what do they (i.e. the Marcionites) say that they were doing in his presence ? But they say that they were guardians there. And what. pray, were they guarding, since there was nothing on the mountain ? And if there had been anything on it, the Maker would have

had the Cherub and the point of the sword with which to surround the mountain. And if because Isu was a stranger to Him (i.e. to the Maker) they were guarding the mountain for Him, then, as between the mountain and the sanctuary, which of them was greater to the Maker, that He should cease to guard His city and His sanctuary and send them (i.e. Moses and Elijah) to guard a mountain in which there was nothing ? If He did not set forth [P.88.] some symbol there for us, let them tell us what such persons as Moses and Elijah were doing there. And if they say, 'You are asking us concerning your own (affairs) also,' then leave that (question) of ours as to what they were doing, and tell us (?) your own (opinion), namely on what account Isu went up thither. Was it in order to fight that he went up thither ? . . . did he make war against the Maker or . . . ? . . .

[l. 38. These [two, why] were they sent ? For the Maker had myriads [l. 46. of angels, if to make war [He desired] ... Or were they with [P. 89. him to say to him (i.e. to Isu) : "If thou art really buying, in order to buy mankind, what is the price of mankind ? And if thou art taking mankind, why didst thou beforehand take the Twelve and the Seventy -two from the [flock] of another ? . . . Or can it be that thou art taking mankind [l. 12. hence ? And art thou not, lo, he that said that before the foundation of the world thou knewest them ? Why then didst thou not take them before, when as yet [thou didst not intend to [1. 27. buy ?]"... If again they returned and said to him "[As for] mankind, because thou art about to buy them, if thou didst take them beforehand, nothing hinders (?) : this mountain that thou hast gone up—and why ?—was this mountain also really required for thee ? And if it is required for thee, give the price of it, seeing thou hast gone up ; and if it is not intended by thee to buy the mountain, get down off it; why wilt thou stir up enmity for thyself with the Maker about nothing ? But the price of mankind will not be found by thee to give to the Maker, for He has given no pledge. If such words were [P. 90. put forward (lit.

were in the midst), and things similar to them, [then] it was for war that they had come to him. But if Isu came to (wage) war, he was not a good Being, for he did not purchase ... it would not be right for a good Being to injure, [l. 14. much less those whom he had not yet even purchased ! And were it not that our Maker is good and there is no end to his kindness, He would surely, not have trusted the Stranger so as to give him men to accompany him, when as yet he had not paid their price to Him. Or was there, forsooth, a bargain ? And did Isu say to the Maker, 'Give me men, and I will not depart from Thy house, that is, Thy creation, until I pay Thee their price ' ? And did not the Maker learn from the descent of Isu that he was also to ascend, so that as there was no one who perceived him when he came down, in like manner he would remove those whom he wished to purchase and carry (them) off without any one perceiving him ? But perhaps the Maker [p. 91. said to him these very things, and Isu returned answer to Him and said to Him, 'If I carry (them) off, as Thou thinkest, in virtue of that which I did when coming down, those souls which I am purchasing from Thee, how can I take them up without Thy consent ?'

And that we may not explore too far into the perverse tale of Marcion, this pact that Moses, etc., agreed on with the Stranger in the mountain,—the glory moreover, which He shewed

them in the mountain, for what purpose (was it shewn) ? Can it be (that it was done) in order that He might shew them that what He gave was greater than what He received ? Then also Moses, etc., sold themselves to Him there, on account of that surpassing glory which they saw. And perhaps Isu too shewed them that glory on the mountain in order to incite Moses, etc., so that because Moses and Elijah were accustomed to that surpassing vision of the Maker Isu shewed them that (his glory) surpassed that of the Maker, in order that they might desire it eagerly on [P. 92.] account of its surpassing character. Well, then, in short, they made a bargain with him, because they had loved him.

And if thou sayest that neither for a sale nor for a bargain had Moses, etc., come to Him, then why had they come to Him ? Can it be that they had come to fight ? And very likely It is that men would come to fight against God ! And which of them is it who strikes (the blow), or which is it who is struck ? Or did he on this account take his Apostles with him and cause them to ascend (the mountain), in order that they might wage war with the Prophets ? And which of the sides conquered there or lost ? But that battle, what was it for ? Can it have been on account of the love of their Gods ? And why would not those Gods themselves contend for the love of mankind ? For if the Gods are at peace, why do they contend about mankind ? . . . [l. 39.] For if created things are from One, unadvisedly did Isu [1.42.] interpose, ... If they say that in truth the Stranger went up to heaven, see how much the Maker despised him and . . . [P.93.] against his disciples and against him [who said], 'This is my Son and my Beloved,' [for] He had sent only two against them.

[1.10. But [if] they say, ' If . . . is it not clear that because he was very strong on that account he did not overcome [him ? How] could two men [overcome] three ? [Were they just] two men — and not [both] alive, but one alive and one dead — to fight [a God] ! Was the Maker then really afraid to come, and on that account indeed did not come ? So that if He had come, He would have been killed ! Or can then a Divine Nature suffer pain, either the Maker's or the Stranger's ? And if they did not suffer, why did the Maker not come against him ? Or can it be that He really knew that Moses, etc., would be sufficient to meet the attack of the Stranger, and therefore He did not come ? For lo, even the Stranger did not contend with them, and it is clear that he really perceived that they were stronger than he, and on that account he remained quiet (and refrained) from engaging in battle. And as to his preparing battle with the Maker, if [his desires hankered] after men, why was he [lo,] unable to [P. 94. create this ? And if to create men he was too weak, how much more was he too weak to wage war against God ! Again, the Stranger who proclaimed there, 'This is my Son and my Beloved,' whom did He wish to cause to hear (it) ?

Can it be that He was calling to Moses, etc., that He might make them His disciples ? Or that He might warn them not to say anything to him (i.e. to Isu) ? And from which heavens did He call ? Was it from the heaven of the Maker ? And why did He descend to it ? If, as it were, on account of the aforesaid Maker the Stranger descended to it, then He did not snatch away men only but also the heaven. Or can it be that the Stranger purchased the angels who were in the heaven together with the heaven ? But if those who were above were not

purchased by Him, why did He pass through their abodes ? But if (the voice) came that it might be a witness to the Son, who had no witness on earth, lo ! seeing that the voice came from the heaven of the Maker, who is to tell us that he is [P. 95. not the Son of the Maker, in a case where the voice which came was coming from the heaven of the Maker, especially when the mountain was the mountain of the Maker, and the cloud of Moses, etc., belonged to the Maker, and the prophets likewise who were on the mountain (were the prophets) of the Maker ?

For if the voice had come from the heaven of the Stranger perhaps it would have been reasonable for us to think that in order that mankind might not be mistaken, owing to the mountain and the cloud and Moses, etc., on that account the voice was coming to them from the heaven of the Stranger, so as to overthrow the opinion which they had concerning Isu. But if even the voice which came was from the heaven of the Maker, it did not by any means disown him (by asserting) that he was not the Son of the Maker, but it actually confirmed it that he is the Son of the Maker, and the servants of his Father's house, who had come to do him honour, were witnesses (thereto).

For if there had been a battle, the Maker would not have remained silent, He who even when there was another God did not [P. 96. refrain from (saying) 'I am God and there is none beside.' And if when there were idols, whose nature showed (lit. answered) that they were not gods, He was proclaiming 'I am He and there is none beside,' (can we suppose that) in a case when a God was warring against a God the Creator went into a hiding-place, that the creation might go astray after the Stranger ? For if in connection with idols He had been silent, (yet) here it would be right for Him to cry out. How much more when He was not silent even towards dead idols ! But seeing that the questions relating to a war have, as in a (real) war, overcome and silenced the question of purchase, now that the tale about a war has come to an end, let us turn to the question of purchase. Explain to us then, What is the purchase which the Stranger made, and from whom did He purchase it ? And, moreover, by means of what did He purchase it ? And that thing by means of which he purchased that which He purchased, of what nature was it ? Was that which He gave of the nature of the aforesaid Good Being, or did He really create (something) and give (it) ?

And was not that which the Stranger created fairer than that which the Maker created for Himself ? And if that which He (i.e. the Stranger) created for Himself was fairer, why did He [P. 97] sell unadvisedly and become a laughing-stock ? And if that which He gave was something smaller, the weakness of the Stranger was seen in His creative action. And how was the wise Just Being persuaded to give to the Stranger something great in return [P.98. 17] for something small ? . . . Was it . . . bodies that are from HULE that he bought, or souls ? And if it was souls, then why [did he not buy] the bodies ? . . . they say that [l. 32. because the souls had been polluted (lit. had become turbid) He came to purify them. But if those souls were not polluted, then did not the Stranger who purchased them make a. mistake about them ? And even if the souls were polluted, on which account he came to buy them, [was he not alien to their nature ?]

* * * * * * * [P. 99.]

And if they should say that 'He purifies the nature of [l. 8. the Souls' . . . because 'a fire is kindled in mine anger and [l. 19. it will burn unto the lowest Sheol.' If He is a nature from whom fire is kindled and it then consumes Him in His turn, (in the case of) everything else which is found to belong to that nature fire will therefore be kindled from it and will then consume it in its turn. For if thou bringest some of the water of the sea into a royal city bitterness is (still) in it. And so too. the souls which (come) from the Maker are polluted as the source (lit. root) from which those souls came is polluted. For it is unlikely that they will say that the fruits are changed when the root of the fruits is not changed. And if they say that that root [P. 100. also is changed, then how did He (i.e. the Stranger) not exert Himself in the case of the root as in the case of the fruits, that the perfect goodness of the Stranger might be proclaimed ? But the Apostle says, 'Eve shall live on account of her children' : then the Maker will have lived on account of the souls which (came) from Him. Or did the Maker not wish to live thus ? And how did the souls which (came) from Him consent to live ?

But if the nature of the souls is the same, their will also is the same. And if their will is different, their nature also is strange, and they are not from the Maker. And let them tell us whence are those souls ; for it is probable that they are not from the Maker. For He would not sell them (if they were really His), because He would not hate His own nature and love a nature which was not His own. " And if He was selling His nature for something which was not akin to His nature, there is a great kinship between Him and the Stranger, for lo ! one affection is found in both of them ; and moreover one will belongs to both [P. 101. of them, namely that the Just One should love the nature of the Stranger and sell some of His possessions to Him, and that the Stranger should love the nature of the Just One and purchase from Him. And it will also be (considered) that that nature of the Just One, which is bought as being something precious, surpasses (the other) ; for if the nature of the Just One were not more excellent than that of the Stranger, the Stranger would not have actually purchased it. But what did the Stranger give to those whom He purchased ? And if He gave them a kingdom, can it be that He gave them one greater than that of Elijah and Enoch ?

And why then did He not bring with Him some of His good things hither also ? Or (was it) because our domain is not worthy of them, (and) did He on that account not even introduce them into our domain ? In that case they are greater than the aforesaid Isu, inasmuch as our domain is worthy of Isu and unworthy of His (i.e. the Stranger's) good things. And if (it was) in order that they might not be denied, then he (i.e. Isu) was denied when he entered our domain. . . .

[P. 102.] END OF DISCOURSE AGAINST THE (FALSE) TEACHINGS. Note from Vol. 1 Introduction, p. (10): [Short lacunae are indicated in the translation by dots, and longer gaps by asterisks, but in neither case is the number of the dots or asterisks intended to bear any exact relation to the number of the missing words. In respect to this an approximately correct inference may be drawn by consulting the Syriac text. Double inverted commas mark quotations where the original has [Syriac] Single inverted commas are used in numerous

cases where the words seem to be quotations or to belong to a special terminology. Words in italics inside square brackets are to be regarded as conjectural translations or paraphrases. In a few passages, where the text has suffered great mutilation, italics indicate an attempt to summarise the argument from suggestions in the fragments.] [P.101] indicates page 101 of the accompanying Syriac. [l.2] means line 2 of the current page of the accompanying Syriac. [RP]

FOOTNOTES I have moved the footnotes to the end. Those consisting of "Read [syriac] for [syriac]" or similar have been omitted, as it has not been possible to transcribe the fragments of Syriac. The pages are numbered with Roman numerals. Arabic numbers and line numbers relate to the Syriac text printed at the back of the paper volume. Greek text is rendered using the Scholars Press SPIonic font, free from here.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.