

Justin Martyr, *Second Apology* (ca. 155-157 CE)

Chapter 12

Indeed, when I myself revelled in the teachings of Plato, and heard the Christians misrepresented and watched them stand fearless in the face of death and of every other thing that was considered dreadful, I realized the impossibility of their living in sinful pleasure. For, what sensual or self-indulgent person, who approves of the eating of human flesh,¹ would welcome death that he might be despoiled of his pleasures, and would not rather always try to continue in his present manner of life, and to elude the public officers; and much less would he be apt to denounce himself when the penalty was death? The evil demons have caused these things also to be effected by wicked men. For, after inflicting the death penalty on some because of the false charges lodged against us, they subjected our servants, some of them children and women, to torture, and forced from them by these terrible torments a confession of those fictitious crimes which they themselves publicly commit. But we are not in the least concerned about such crimes, since we do not commit them, having as witness of our thoughts and actions the Unbegotten and Ineffable God. For why did we not acknowledge that we consider these things good, and show how they are divine philosophy, affirming that the mysteries of Saturn² have in homicide and in drinking blood the same effect as what you do before the idol³ you venerate, on which you sprinkle not only the blood of brute animals, but also of men, making a libation of the slain man's blood through the most distinguished and most noble person in your midst? And by imitating

1 An allusion to a favorite pagan accusation against the Christians, which was that of anthropophagy. Cf. 1 *Apol.* 26 n. 6.

2 The favorite victims of the Phoenician Saturn were boys. Cf. Lactantius, *Inst. div.* 1.21; Tertullian, *Apol.* 9.

3 The idol of Jupiter Latiaris. Cf. Tertullian, *Apol.* 9.

Jupiter and the other gods in sodomy and sinful relations with women, might they not, in defense of their actions, cite the writings of Epicurus and the poets? But, because we persuade men to avoid such customs and those who practice them, together with their imitators, as we now have striven hard to persuade you with these words, we are assailed in many ways. But we are not in the least worried, for we realize that God is the just supervisor of all. Would that even now some man would ascend a lofty platform and cry out in a loud voice:⁴ 'Be ashamed and blush, you who accuse the innocent of the very crimes you yourselves openly commit; and things of which you and your gods are guilty, you charge to those persons who have not the slightest part in them. Change your ways, and come to your senses.'

Chapter 13

When I learned of the evil camouflage which the wicked demons had thrown around the divine doctrines of the Christians to deter others from following them, I had to laugh at the authors of these lies, at the camouflage itself, and at the popular reaction. I am proud to say that I strove with all my might to be known as a Christian, not because the teachings of Plato are different from those of Christ, but because they are not in every way similar; neither are those of other writers, the Stoics, the poets, and the historians. For each one of them, seeing, through his participation of the seminal Divine Word, what was related to it, spoke very well. But, they who contradict themselves in important matters evidently did not acquire the unseen [that is, heavenly] wisdom and the indisputable knowledge. The truths which

⁴ Tragic voice, i.e., the loud voice employed in the recitation, through a mask, of Greek tragedies.