

Eusebius Pamphili of Caesarea  
**Demonstratio evangelica**

BOOK III  
CHAPTER 7 Oracles about Christ.



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**CHAPTER 7**

*Oracles about Christ.*

"WHAT I am about to say may seem surprising to some. It is that the gods have pronounced Christ to have been most holy and immortal, and they speak of Him reverently."

And lower down he adds:

"To those asking the question, 'Is Christ a God?' the oracle replied:

That the soul goes forth immortal after (its severance from) the body.

Thou knowest, severed from wisdom it ever roams.

That soul is the soul of a man signal in holiness."

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He certainly says here that He was most holy, and that His soul, which the Christians ignorantly worship, like the souls of others, was made immortal after death. And when asked, "Why did He suffer?" the oracle replied:

The body of the weak has ever been exposed to torments,

But the soul of holy men takes its place in heaven."

And he adds after the oracle:

"Christ, then, was holy, and like the holy, went to the (d) heaven. Wherefore you will say no evil about Him, but pity the folly of men."

So says Porphyry even now. Was He then a charlatan, my friend? Perhaps the friendly words of one of your kidney may put you out of countenance. For you have our Saviour Jesus, the Christ of God, admitted by your own teachers to be, not an enchanter or a sorcerer, but holy, wise, the justest of the just, and dwelling in the vaults of heaven. He, then, being such, could only have done

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His miracles by a divine power, which also the holy writings bear witness that He had, saying that the Word of God and the highest Power of God dwelt in man's shape and form, nay, even in actual flesh and body therein, and performed all the functions of human nature. (135) And you yourself may realize the divine elements of this power, if you reflect on the nature and grandeur of a Being who could associate with Himself poor men of the lowly fisherman's class, and use them as agents in carrying through a work that transcends all reason. For having conceived the intention, which no one ever before had done, of spreading His own laws and a new teaching among all nations, and of revealing Himself as the teacher of the religion of One Almighty God to all the races of men, He (b) thought good to use the most rustic and common men as ministers of His own design, because maybe He had in mind to do the most unlikely things. For how could men unable even to open their mouths be able to teach, even if they were appointed teachers to only one person, far less to a multitude of men? How should they instruct the people, who were themselves without any education?

But this was surely the manifestation of the divine will and of the divine power working in them. For when He called them, the first thing He said to them was: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." [[Mark i. 17.]] And (c) when He had thus acquired them as His followers, He breathed into them His divine power, He filled them with strength and bravery, and like a true Word of God and as God Himself, the doer of such great wonders, He made them hunters of rational and thinking souls, adding power to His words: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," and sent them forth fitted already to be workers and teachers of holiness to all the nations, declaring (d) them heralds of His own teaching. And who would not be amazed and naturally inclined to disbelieve a thing so extraordinary, for none of those who have ever won fame among men—no king, no legislator, no philosopher, no Greek, no barbarian—are recorded to have ever conceived such a design, or dreamed of anything at all resembling it? For each one of them has been satisfied, if he could establish his own system over his own land only, and if he were able to enforce desirable laws within the limits of his own race.

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Whereas He, who conceived nothing human or mortal, see (136) how truly He speaks with the voice of God, saying in these very words to those disciples of His, the poorest of the poor: "Go forth, and make disciples of all the nations." [[Matt.xxviii. 19.]] "But how," the disciples might reasonably have answered the Master, "can we do it? How, pray, can we preach to Romans? How can we argue with Egyptians? We are men bred up to use the Syrian tongue only, what language shall we speak to Greeks? How shall we persuade Persians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Scythians, Indians, and other (b) barbarous nations to give up their ancestral gods, and worship the Creator of

all? What sufficiency of speech have we to trust to in attempting such work as this? And what hope of success can we have if we dare to proclaim laws directly opposed to the laws about their own gods that have been established for ages among all nations? By what power shall we ever survive our daring attempt?"

But while the disciples of Jesus were most likely either saying thus, or thinking thus, the Master solved their difficulties, by the addition of one phrase, saying they should (c) triumph "In MY NAME." For He did not bid them simply and indefinitely make disciples of all nations, but with the necessary addition of "In my Name." And the power of His Name being so great, that the apostle says: "God has given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," [[Phil. ii. 9.]] He shewed the virtue of the power in His Name concealed (d) from the crowd when He said to His disciples: "Go, and make disciples of all nations in my Name." He also most accurately forecasts the future when He says: "For this gospel must first be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations." [[Matt.xxiv.14.]]

These words were said in a corner of the earth then, and only those present heard it. How, I ask, did they credit them, unless from other divine works that He had done they had experienced the truth in His words? Not one of them disobeyed His command: but in obedience to (137) His Will according to their orders they began to make disciples of every race of men, going from their own country to all races, and in a short time it was possible to see His words realized.

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The Gospel, then, in a short time was preached in the whole world, for a witness to the heathen, and Barbarians and Greeks alike possessed the writings about Jesus in their ancestral script and language. And yet who would not quite reasonably be at a loss to explain how the disciples of Jesus gave this teaching? Did they go into the (b) middle of the city, and stand there in the Agora, and call on the passers-by with a loud voice, and then address the populace? And what were the arguments in their address, which would have any chance of persuading such an audience? How could untrained speakers, quite deficient in education, give addresses at all?

Perhaps you suggest they did not speak in public, but in private to those they met. If so, with what arguments could they have persuaded their hearers?—for they had (c) a most difficult task, unless they were ready to deny the shameful death of Him they preached. And suppose they concealed it, and passing over the nature and number of His sufferings at the hands of the Jews, retailed simply the noble and the glorious incidents (I mean His miracles and mighty works, and His philosophic teaching), they had even so no light problem to solve in gaining easily the adherence of listeners, who spoke strange tongues, and then for the first time heard novelties talked of by men who brought with them nothing sufficient to authenticate

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what they said. Yet such a Gospel would, perhaps, have (d) seemed more plausible.

But in fact they preached, first, that God came on an embassy in a man's body, and was actually the Word of God by nature, and had wrought the wonders He did as God. And next—a tale opposed to this, that He had undergone insult and contumely, and at last the Cross, the most shameful punishment and the one reserved for the most criminal of mankind; who would not have had ground for despising them as preaching an inconsistent message?

And who could be so simple, as to believe them easily when they said that they had seen Him after His death risen to life from the dead, One Who was unable to defend Himself when alive? Who would have believed common and uneducated men who told them they must (138) despise their fathers' gods, condemn the folly of all who lived in the ages past, and put their sole belief in them and the commands of the Crucified—because He was the only-beloved and only-begotten Son of the One Supreme God? I myself, when I frankly turn the account over in my own mind, have to confess that I find in it no power to persuade, no dignity, no credibility, not even enough plausibility, to convince just one of the most simple, (b) But when I turn my eyes away to the evidence of the power of the Word, what multitudes it has won, and what enormous churches have been founded by those unlettered and mean disciples of Jesus, not in obscure and unknown places, but in the most noble cities—I mean in Royal Rome, in Alexandria, and Antioch, throughout the whole of Egypt and Libya, Europe and Asia, and in villages and (c) country places and among the nations—I am irresistibly forced to retrace my steps, and search for their cause, and to confess that they could only have succeeded in their daring venture, by a power more divine, and more strong than man's, and by the co-operation of Him Who said to them: "Make disciples of all the nations in my Name."

And when He said this He appended a promise, that would ensure their courage and readiness to devote themselves to carrying out His commands. For He said to

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them: "And lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world." Moreover, He is said to have breathed into them a holy Spirit, yea to have given them divine and miraculous power—first saying: "Receive ye Holy Spirit," [[John xx.22]] and then: "Heal the sick, cleanse lepers, cast out demons; freely ye have received, freely give." [[Matt. x. 8.]]

You yourself will recognize what power their word has had, for the *Book of the Acts* agrees with their having these powers, and gives consistent evidence, where these men are reported by their power of working miracles by (139) the Name of Jesus to have astonished the spectators present.

They amazed the spectators first most probably by the miracles themselves; they then found men bent on inquiring Who He was, Whose power and Name had caused the wonder; then they taught them and found that their faith had preceded the teaching. For without persuasion by words, being first convinced by works, they were easily brought into the state that the words required. For some are said to have been about to offer sacrifices and libations to the disciples of Jesus, as if they had been gods. [[Acts xiv. 12.]] And the exhibition of

their miracles so struck their minds, that they called one (b) Hermes and the other Zeus. And, of course, whatever they told about Jesus to men in such a state, was naturally after that considered the truth, and thus their evidence for His Resurrection after death was not given by simple or unproven words, but came with the persuasion of the very working, since they could shew forth the works of One living still. And if they preached that He was God, and the Son of God, being with the Father before He came to earth, to this truth they were equally open, and would certainly have (c) thought anything opposed to it incredible and impossible, reckoning it impossible to think that what was done was the work of a human being, but ascribing it to God without any one telling them. Here, then, in this and nothing else is the answer to our question, by what power the disciples of Jesus convinced

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their first hearers, and how they persuaded Greeks as well as barbarians to think of Him as of the Word of God, and how in the midst of cities, as well as in the country, they (d) instituted places of instruction in the religion of the One Supreme God. And yet all must wonder, if they consider and reflect, that it was not by mere human accident, that the greater part of the nations of the world were never before under the one empire of Rome, but only from the times of Jesus. For His wonderful sojourn among men synchronized with Rome's attainment of the acme of power, Augustus then first being supreme ruler over most of the nations, in whose time, Cleopatra being captured, the succession of the Ptolemies was dissolved in Egypt. And from that day (140) to this, the kingdom of Egypt has been destroyed, which had lasted from immemorial time, and so to say from the very beginnings of humanity. Since that day the Jewish people have become subject to the Romans, the Syrians likewise, the Cappadocians and Macedonians, the Bithynians and Greeks, and in a word all the other nations who are under Roman rule. And no one could deny that the synchronizing of this with the beginning of the teaching about our Saviour is of God's arrangement, if he considered the difficulty of the disciples taking their journey, had the (b) nations been at variance one with another, and not mixing together because of varieties of government. But when these were abolished, they could accomplish their projects quite fearlessly and safely, since the Supreme God had smoothed the way before them, and subdued the spirit of the more superstitious citizens under the fear of a strong central government. For consider, how if there had been no force available to hinder those who in the power of polytheistic error were contending with Christian education, that you would have long ago seen civil revolutions, and extraordinarily bitter persecutions and wars, if the superstitious had had (c) the power to do as they willed with them. Now this must have been the work of God Almighty, this subordination of the enemies of His own Word to a

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greater fear of a supreme ruler. For He wills it daily to advance, and to spread among all men. And, moreover, that it might not be thought to prosper through the leniency of rulers, if some of them under the sway of evil designed (d) to oppose the Word of Christ, He allowed them to do what was in their hearts, both that his athletes might display their holiness, and also that it might be made evident to all that the triumph of the Word was not of the counsel of men, but of the power of God. Who would not wonder at what ordinarily happened in times like those? For the athletes of holiness of old shone forth clear and glorious to the eyes of all, and were thought worthy of the prizes of God; while the enemies of holiness paid their meet penalty, driven mad with divine scourges, afflicted with (141) terrible and vile diseases in their whole body, so that at last they were forced to confess their impiety against Christ. And all the rest who were worthy of the Divine Name, and gloried in their Christian profession, passing through a short discipline of trial, exhibited the nobility and sincerity of their hearts, received back again once more their own liberty, while through them the word of salvation shone out daily more brightly, and ruled even in the midst of foes.

And not only did they struggle against visible enemies, (b) but against the invisible, such evil daemons and their rulers as haunt the nebulous air around the earth, whom also Christ's true disciples by purity of life and prayer to God and by His Divine Name drove off, giving proofs of the miraculous signs, which of old were said to have been done by Him, and also, to eyes that could see, of His divine power still active.

And now that these preliminary topics are concluded, in their right order, I must proceed to handle the more mystical theology about Him, and consider Who He was that performed miracles through the visible humanity (of Jesus).

[Footnotes up to p.145 renumbered and placed here at the end. Footnotes after that omitted as tedious to transcribe and of limited value to the general reader.]

